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## Saving Polish Souls in Ordinary Time: Catholic Evangelization and Poland's Transformation, 1975–1989

In the course of the past four years, we have asked questions about the alarming tendencies in the People's Republic of Poland in our talks with Comrade Gierek... [i]n response, we were told that nothing of special concern was happening, that there was no opposition, and that the PPR and the party were in control of the situation. What happened? Was it carelessness, hubris? Were certain ambitions the cause? I don't know.

Leonid Brezhnev, speaking at the WTO meeting in Moscow,  
on December 5th, 1980<sup>1</sup>

A specter haunts our understanding of the collapse of state-socialism – the specter of peaceful evolutionary change. Did the leadership of Poland's party-state in the 1970s have relatively benign goals? Was the aim of Edward Gierek and his successors to maintain People's Poland as an ideologically stripped-down and "pragmatic" technocracy, or a "union of the ruling class" that they (and even their Soviet masters) were willing to see slowly, willy-nilly – and not with many regrets – absorbed into a hegemonic Western neo-liberal order?<sup>2</sup> Or, for all of the liberal pronouncements of Gierek and his fellow Communists, did

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<sup>1</sup> "Document no. 22: Minutes of Warsaw Pact Leadership Meeting in Moscow, December 5, 1980", in *From Solidarity to Martial Law*, eds. Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2007), 158.

<sup>2</sup> Gierek himself certainly strove to create this impression, especially in reference to Polish–(West) German relations in the 1970s. Edward Gierek, *Smak życia: Pamiętniki* (Warszawa: Polska Oficyna Wydawnicza BGW, 1993), 151–153. David Ost, in his analysis of Poland's political evolution went so far as to attribute Poland's economic integration with capitalist countries to Soviet encouragement. Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 192–193.

the PRL remain an aspiring totalitarian regime whose façade of liberalism – barely – concealed an expansive repressive agenda? Andrzej Paczkowski, who has written of the 1970s as *La Belle Epoque* of “real existing socialism” alludes to both processes being at work. He argues that Gierek’s regime desired to be seen as “liberal” and engaged in wide-ranging consultation with a variety of social and cultural forces – including the Church, to whom his regime made a few significant concessions – even as it gained the long term desiderata of the regime, be these western credits and technology or international recognition of Poland’s Odra-Nyssa frontier.

At the same time Paczkowski acknowledges real internal ideological constraints – especially in relation to the Church – as well as the role of Poland’s “fraternal allies” in setting limits to this “liberalization”. Even when the regime sought to appear most accommodating, its policy faced “extremely strong barriers [of its own making] of both an ideological and political kind [that] caused official policy toward the episcopate to be characterized by about-faces and duplicity”<sup>3</sup>. Like the Church, the regime had a series of positions where its own (and its Soviet masters’) non-negotiable, laicizing *non possumus* resounded loud and clear.

Furthermore, for both the leadership of Poland’s Party-State, and their Soviet masters, the 1970s and early 80s was an era of apparent consolidation – even expansion – of orthodox state-socialism both in its European heartlands and the developing world<sup>4</sup>. This expansion, the seeming permanence of the Soviet bloc acknowledged by the Helsinki accords and what to the authorities appeared to be the continued conceptual infallibility of state-socialist ideology vis-à-vis any possible alternative form of politics within or outside of the Socialist Camp gave the authorities a sense of false confidence vis-à-vis both their external and many internal enemies<sup>5</sup>. The completeness of *ancien regime* socialism’s collapse presents the historian with a difficult imaginative challenge of recapturing the optimism and hubris of party-state elites in Poland – and other state-socialist regimes on the eve of its collapse. The political

<sup>3</sup> Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours. Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom*, transl. Jane Cave (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 391–392.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Andrew, *The World was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), Stephen Kotkin, *Averting Armageddon: The Soviet Collapse, 1970–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 10–30; Alexi Yurchak, *Everything was Forever Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 4–16 – all point to the seeming stability of the state socialism in Eastern Europe both considered in itself and compared to the travails of the West in the 1970s.

<sup>5</sup> In 1978, while discussing the current state of ideological competition between state-socialist regimes and the West, Central Committee functionaries reported that high unemployment in capitalist countries was but one of many signs of the current crisis in Western societies. Archiwum Akt Nowych (henceforth AAN), Komitet Centralny Polskiego Związku Partii Robotniczej (henceforth KC PZPR), Wydział Pracy Wychowawczej XXXIV-10: 146.

monopoly and repressive and propaganda apparatuses of the *ancien regime's* "uncivil society" made it all but impossible for apparatchiks then – as well as to many contemporaries now – to gauge how important was this sense of infallibility in exacerbating the crises of Communism. Even more importantly, it makes it doubly difficult for historians now to utilize the extensive records of state-socialist *ancien regimes* to analyze these crises. These archives often conceal as much as they reveal. This is not only due to the deceit and manipulation that was integral to creating many of the documents of the party-state apparatus, but also the more debilitating analytic failings of the authorities. These analytical failures prevented functionaries of the party-state from being aware of and evaluating the strength of various opposition and dissident elements in People's Poland – particularly that of religious believers – and hid from them the weaknesses in their own repressive strategies of attacking and corrupting and controlling the Church.

In Church-State relations in particular, where the regime's functionaries faced a force they could not simply overawe one gets a glimpse of the (brittle) claws underneath the bloated velveteen padding of the various layers of the party-state apparatus. Stanisław Kania, the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs – and successor to Gierek in 1980 – asserted on numerous occasions in relation to the Church the regime could "deploy in varying ways the force of logic and the logic of force" to coerce the Church to openly and publicly accept the "irreversible character" of socialism in Poland<sup>6</sup>. Even towards the end of the 1970s Kazimierz Kąkol, the head of the Ministry of Confessional Affairs could write how it was the Church that was hindering normalization by refusing to acknowledge that socialism was "the best environment and [the order] which best secures the interests of the nation"<sup>7</sup>. In Michnik's famous formulation the PRL by the late 1970s and early 80s was not so much "socialism with a human face" as it was "totalitarianism with its teeth kicked in"<sup>8</sup>. In the 1970s Poland's state-socialist functionaries still attempted to command obedience and loyalty but lacked both the will to persecute extensively as well as the imagination to persuade or even understand its opponents. In no place

<sup>6</sup> His predecessor in that Ministry, Aleksander Skarżyński, when considering the fact of the ongoing unauthorized building by Poles of Churches asserted that in the face of such overwhelming rejection of the regime's policies the only possible reaction was ever more use of force. Katarzyna Pawlicka, *Polityka władz wobec Kościoła katolickiego: (grudzień 1970–październik 1978)* (Warszawa: Trio, 2004), 75.

<sup>7</sup> "Dokument nr 18: Projekt tego dokumentu na temat aktualnych problemów polityki wyznaniowej sporządzone w Urzędzie do Spraw Wyznań w czerwcu 1978 r.", in *PRL wobec Kościoła. Akta 1970–1978*, ed. Andrzej Friszke (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Biblioteka Więzi, 2010), 220.

<sup>8</sup> "The Polish War: A Letter from Białołęka 1982", in Adam Michnik, *Letters from Prison and Other Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 27–28.

was this more clear than in the regime's ongoing – and “evangelical”<sup>9</sup> – laïcité or the more powerful Catholic evangelical movements of the 1970s that the authorities tried and failed to combat.

## Between Opportunism and Eliminationism

### The Party-State and the challenges of cultural, structural and personal continuity in anti-religious religious policy

In the ideological sense, the Church with its doctrinal superstructure is an anti-socialist element – the negation of the doctrine of Socialism-Marxism. Gen. Konrad Straszewski in a report to the Director of the Ministry of Internal Affairs<sup>10</sup>

With the exception of 1989, postwar Polish political transitions were brought about by violence and bloodshed. The fall of Władysław Gomułka's in December, 1970, after workers' unrest left dozens dead in the tri-city region, saw the Polish party-state determined to secure social peace. As both his predecessor – and his eventual successors Kania and Wojciech Jaruzelski – Gierek, the new General Secretary of the PZPR, received help from the Church's leadership and the working class in overcoming the smoldering anger that had prompted the December protests<sup>11</sup>. Soon Gierek also proclaimed his determination to mobilize Polish society behind a program of rapid socio-economic modernization – to build a “Second Poland”. To achieve these goals, he proclaimed his desire to end the heightened Church-State tensions that Gomułka had pursued since the early 1960s and claimed he would create a more collaborative relationship with the Catholic clergy and believers. This normalization involved both a new, more conciliatory

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<sup>9</sup> The regime's vision of laïcité was “evangelical” the degree to which, as the all too typical remarks of Kania and Kąkol indicate, that many of the authorities were convinced not only that their vision of laïcité represented an unarguable vision of the good that should be “shared” (and if need be, imposed) – upon those with different perspectives for “their own good”. Discussions of this evangelical laicization/atheism can be found in the introductions of both Jacek Wołoszyn's work on youth opposition in Lublin under Polish Stalinism as well as in Katarzyna Maniewska's work on Church-State relations under Gierek. The continuities of analysis are quite striking. See also Catherine Wanner's introduction in *State Secularism and Lived religion in Soviet Russia and Ukraine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) and Jacek Witold Wołoszyn, *Chronić i kontrolować* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2007), 1–2, and Katarzyna Maniewska, *Kościół katolicki w Bydgoszczy wobec prób laicyzacji i dezintegracji społeczeństwa w okresie rządów Edwarda Gierka (1970–1980)* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2007), 7–14.

<sup>10</sup> “Dokument nr 14: Opracowanie dyrektora Departamentu IV MSW gen. Konrada Straszewskiego dotyczące zaangażowania resortu w zwalczanie »negatywnych zjawisk w Kościele Rzymsko-Katolickim«, in *PRL wobec Kościoła*, 184.

<sup>11</sup> Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours*, 353.

tone in the state's public pronouncements about religion as well as small but real concessions on the part of the authorities over perennially controversial question, from the normalization of the Church's presence in the Western/former German territories, a greater (though mostly theoretical) openness to the building of new Churches, and an end to the mass enrollment of Seminarians into the army<sup>12</sup>.

Yet Gierek's regime's only offered the appearance of moderation when it spoke of how all Poles, believers and non-believers should work together to speed the development of a wealthier more socio-economically developed Poland. As it made these pronouncements it pursued a stepped-up, if hidden, conflict with believers throughout the 1970s that helped undermine the unity of the Catholic Church in ways which eventually made it more difficult for Cardinal Glemp and more moderate clergy to restrain those Catholics who supported the growth, expansion and post-Martial Law struggles of Solidarity.

While Poland's religious life evolved and changed in the face of the Vatican Council, both internal developments and East-West international contacts had a very different impact on the party-state's leadership and apparatus in Poland. As the authorities at the highest levels professed a desire for better relations with the Church and (falsely<sup>13</sup>) claimed to pursue a policy of non-discrimination vis-à-vis believers the Służba Bezpieczeństwa (SB), expanded significantly during this period, pursued increasingly extremist tactics in their struggle with the Church and established ever closer ties with the Security Services of other fraternal Socialist countries – not only intensifying the deep and longstanding dependence upon the KGB but also with the Stasi and other socialist security services as well<sup>14</sup>. If part of Poland's quiet revolution of the 70s was the slow but steady growth of an increasingly authoritative opposition and the dramatic increase in religious life, an opposite – if not equal – development was the increasing intrusiveness and militancy of the Security Services and the party-state apparatus vis-à-vis the practice of religion.

The Fourth Department of the SB, charged with combating the Catholic Church and other religious bodies was the second largest of the four departments of the SB, with 887 functionaries by the mid-1970s (only Department III,

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<sup>12</sup> Zygmunt Zieliński, *Kościół w Polsce, 1944–2007* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2009), 163–164.

<sup>13</sup> Pawlicka, *Polityka władz wobec Kościoła katolickiego*, 150–151.

<sup>14</sup> Irena Miklaševič, *Niektóre aspekty współpracy KGB Litewskiej SRR i Służby Bezpieczeństwa MSW PRL skierowane przeciwko Kościołowi katolickiemu w latach 60*, [http://vddb.library.lt/fedora/get/LT-eLABa-0001:J.04~2009~ISSN\\_1392-7450.N\\_30\\_58.PG\\_157-168/DS.002.2.01.ARTIC](http://vddb.library.lt/fedora/get/LT-eLABa-0001:J.04~2009~ISSN_1392-7450.N_30_58.PG_157-168/DS.002.2.01.ARTIC), access: 11 V 2016; on the longstanding collaboration between the UB and KGB in combating ties between Catholics in the Lithuanian SSR and Poland in the 1960s that involved mutual exchange of personnel. Also note that the authorities regarded the relationship between the hierarchies of Czechoslovakia and Hungary as models for Poland to follow – “Dokument nr 1: Memorial A. Merkera z Urz. d/s Wyznań dotyczy zasad i kierunków politycznych wyz. PRL”, in *PRL wobec Kościoła*, 81.

charged with dealing with political opponents was larger, but unlike this Department, Department IV also had the assistance of a much larger administrative bureaucracy tailored specifically to control religious bodies – the Urząd d/s Wyznań whose apparatus was present in every part of the country and which had regular contact with the SB)<sup>15</sup>. Shortly after Gierek’s assumption of power in 1971 Colonel – soon to be General – Konrad Straszewski was at the head of a group of SB officers from Katowice (part of the “Katowice desanty/paratroopers” for how those from Gierek’s home province swooped into positions of power in the Warsaw apparatus), who took over leadership of the Fourth Department. Col. Straszewski formulated policies and operational approaches that soon came to define the SB’s approach to religious life for the remainder of the PRL. Among the policies that Straszewski pursued, with the blessings of the Central Committee, was an intensification of surveillance of the clergy and lay activists, stepped up recruitment of informers, and most importantly, the creation of two new branches of the Fourth Department – a fifth section charged with analytical work and an “independent Group D” charged with carrying out means of struggle “that would not be appropriate in other circumstances”. These methods of struggle – many of them illegal even within the PRL’s flexible categories – came to include the spread of disinformation aimed both at defaming Churchmen and fostering conflict within religious organizations, sabotage of religious events (from puncturing water bottles and damaging vehicles to seeding the luggage of pilgrims and religious activists with pornography), arson, assault, the use of forced internment in psychiatric facilities<sup>16</sup> and eventually murder.

While Group D carried out a variety of these dirty tricks, “disintegration” lay at the heart of its work against the Church (and those of the Security Services’ throughout society) to disrupt its unity and set believers against one another in as many ways as possible – the laity vs. the clergy, religious vs. secular clergy, lower clergy the religious orders vs. the bishops and (for most – but not all of that decade) all of these against Cardinal Wyszyński and any other bishop that the Security Service regarded as particularly reactionary<sup>17</sup>. The degree of suc-

<sup>15</sup> Ryszard Terlecki, *Miecz i tarcza komunizmu. Historia aparatu bezpieczeństwa w Polsce 1944–1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2007), 223 – on the size of Department IV – and “O metodach walki z Kościołem prowadzonej przez peerelowskie Służby Bezpieczeństwa – z Antonim Dudkiem, Janem Żarynem i prof. Andrzejem Witkowskim rozmawia Barbara Polak”, *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* 1(24) (2003): 9.

<sup>16</sup> Lipski’s notes the sporadic use of psychiatric repression by the regime (which was a Soviet innovation) including an incident in which they attempted to use psych repression against an Oasis supporter – terror in a minor but mad key. Jan Józef Lipski, *KOR: Komitet Obrony Robotników. Komitet Samoobrony Społecznej* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> “Nr 19: 1974 Warszawa – Informacja na temat głównych zadań i planów pracy [samodzielnej Grupy “D”] na lata 1974–1975”, in *Plany Pracy Departamentu IV na lata 1972–1978*, eds. Mirosław Bieleśko *et al.* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2007), 134.

cess the SB enjoyed in these endeavors was facilitated by a massive expansion of their work among the clergy which included maintaining extensive intelligence on each and every member of the clergy in operations that were not interrupted regardless of the climate at the highest levels of Church-State relations<sup>18</sup>. These files – TEOK – Teczka Ewidencji Operacyjnej na Księża – for lower clergy and TEOB – Teczka Ewidencji Operacyjnej na Biskupa – for bishops and TEOP – Teczka Ewidencji Operacyjnej na Parafię – enabled the authorities to target potential clerical recruits as TW/Tajni Współpracownicy – Secret Collaborators for a variety of tasks. These ranged from providing insight into the state of clerical personnel politics and attitudes, advice on how to evaluate ecclesial problems to open disruptive work within the Church (usually reserved for the least competent and ambitious among the clergy-collaborators) as well as cultivating a small group of clergy whom the authorities regarded as ultimately loyal to People’s Poland who could function as long-term “agents of influence” that could move the Church as a whole toward subordination to the authorities.

By the mid-1970s the Fourth Department judged to be its’ successes both in initiating a variety of “disintegrating actions” among the clergy as well as – for the first time in the history of People’s Poland – in recruiting a substantial body of clergy ready to function as secret collaborators<sup>19</sup>. Both Gen. Straszewski and the Minister of Religious Affairs, Kąkol asserted to the PZPR’s Central Committee that victory in their struggle to suborn the Church was within sight<sup>20</sup>. Yet, in spite of the quality and quantity of material the authorities gathered on the clergy, and the coordinated efforts of both the SB and the Ministry of Religious Affairs – who in turn worked in conjunction with other elements of the party-state – to foster divisions within the hierarchy, religious life in Poland grew stronger – even as the façade of Catholic unity began to crumble. While this was the result of many factors, in the case of the Light-and-Life Movement, the SB’s various interventions made a complicated situation (for the authorities) worse even as it contributed to the diversity – and splintering – of Polish Catholicism.

<sup>18</sup> Henryk Głębocki, “»Biblia« Służby Bezpieczeństwa: instrukcja 006/70/, wstęp Henryk Głębocki”, *Arcana: kultura, historia, polityka* 46(4)–47(5) (2002): 40–73.

<sup>19</sup> Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski, *Księża wobec bezpieki: na przykładzie archidiecezji krakowskiej* (Kraków: Znak, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> In June of 1978 Kąkol claimed that since 1973 his department had “advanced the process of laicization, and the strategic and tactical premises of [the regime’s] confessional politics”. “Dokument nr 18”, in *PRL wobec Kościoła*, 215. Throughout the 1970s, even as his department reversed fundamental strategic assessments – including the relative threat represented by Cardinal Wyszyński – Gen. Straszewski asserted the success of his Department in combatting the growth of Catholicism and breaking the unity of the Church. *Plany Pracy Departamentu IV*.

## Oases of Freedom in a Desert Called State-Socialism Father Blachnicki, the Light-and-Life Movement and the religious re-imagination of Polish Catholicism in the aftermath of Vatican II

The loss of the Primate of Poland, Fr. Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński has moved all Poles. A famous pastor and great patriot has departed. His key trait was his understanding of historic processes and the responsibility of a man of state for the happiness of the homeland.

Kazimierz Kąkol, quoting from the notice sent by the Central Committee of the PZPR to the Church after the death of Cardinal Wyszyński in 1981<sup>21</sup>

Institutionally and organizationally, the Catholic Church and Catholicism occupied an anomalous cultural and political space not only in People's Poland but in the entire Soviet bloc that made it both a tempting ally and an even more tempting scapegoat for different elements of the party-state in the PRL. Ironically, in spite of the belief of many Communist authorities (especially, but not exclusively, in the Security Apparatus) that the Catholic Church was "the first enemy of socialism and Communism in Poland" Cardinal Wyszyński and many – perhaps a majority – of the clergy were not unsympathetic to elements of the regime's socialist economic program, nor did even many otherwise anti-Communist clergy reject outright the need to appease a Soviet Union whose regional hegemony appeared irresistible<sup>22</sup>. In the 1970s for the most part neither were the majority of the clergy overly attracted to political dissidents whose ranks often contained many militant leftists who, even when they attempted to reach out to the Church often sounded overly opportunistic and confrontational notes<sup>23</sup>.

As the authorities only belatedly discovered – and never fully comprehended – Wyszyński's unique authority, prestige and "dictatorial manner" had played a major role in containing Church-State conflict and – more importantly – conflict between the society and the regime for decades. Yet Cardinal Wyszyński's ability to contain conflict was beginning to give way in the 70s not only as he became older, but also and more importantly, as the Church itself underwent

<sup>21</sup> Kazimierz Kąkol, *Kardynał Stefan Wyszyński jakim go znałem* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Związków Zawodowych, 1985), 140–141.

<sup>22</sup> Katarzyna Maniewska, *Kościół katolicki w Bydgoszczy* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2007), 14; Paczkowski, *Wojna polsko-jaruzelska: Stan wojenny w Polsce 13 XII 1981–22 VII 1983* (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2006), 68.

<sup>23</sup> Father Józef Tischner's negative assessment of one such olive branch, Michnik's *The Church and the Left*, illustrates an awareness on the part of a not unsympathetic priest of the opportunism that informed elements of the leftist dissident effort to build bridges between the Church and the dissident movement. Michnik, *The Church and the Left*, transl. Ost (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 12–14. In their reporting on the Church, the security services also noted that many clergy feared that the authorities simply wanted to use the Church for political purposes. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (henceforth IPN), WR 053/2273: 15.



a variety of deep, structural religious changes brought on both by the Second Vatican Council and the Cardinal's – and the lay and clerical faithful's – successes in building up an increasingly complex and diverse religious life in the PRL. In particular, the decentralized role of pastoral work in Poland – *duszpasterstwo* – especially among the youth and young professionals – represented a path breaking approach to religious life that, complemented by the regime's own efforts to stir up conflict within the Church, would lead to an increasingly decentralized, dynamic and experimental Polish Catholicism.

Among the religious movements that bore the brunt of attacks from a whole panoply of state-institutions (from the PZPR at the national level, the Security Services – especially Department D – to the ordinary *Milicja*, and state administration down to the *gmina* level) in the 1970s was the Light-and-Life Movement/*Ruch Światło-Życie* also often referred to simply as *Oasis/Oaza*. Like the *Duszpasterstwa Akademickie*, Student Pastoral Centers (or DA) that were spreading throughout Poland – much to the alarm of the authorities<sup>24</sup> – the Light-and-Life Movement aimed at providing a modern and intensive religious formation to young Poles. Both the Light-and-Life Movement and “ordinary” DAs focused on the need to apply the teachings of the Second Vatican Council – including the need for ecumenism and ecumenical outreach to Poland's small Protestant and Orthodox communities; liturgical reform, and the Church's social teachings and personal religious formation. To accomplish these missions – and to attract a new generation of young Poles to the Church – youth pastoral outreach deployed innovative use of modern music and culture<sup>25</sup>. Both DAs and the Light-and-Life Movement provided a whole generation of Polish youth “islands of freedom” in a Polish public life dominated by the party-state<sup>26</sup>. Yet the Light-and-Life Movement proved especially innovative in its ability to construct parish-based networks of both clergy and lay persons throughout Poland to continue the work

<sup>24</sup> *PRL wobec Kościoła*, 44.

<sup>25</sup> Izabella Main, “The Avant-Garde of the Catholic Church? Catholic Student Groups at the Dominican Churches in Poznań and Krakow, Poland”, *Social Compass* 58(1) (2011): 122, and Jan Olszsek, Ewelina Małachowska, “Duszpasterstwa akademickie a kultura niezależna w Kościele”, *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, 1–2(122–123) (2011): 60–61. A summary of Fr. Blachnicki's own views on the Parish put forward at the Fourth Congress of the Light-and-Life Movement's leadership meeting in March, 1979 can be found at [www.oaza.pl/polski/dokumenty/1/koslokal.html](http://www.oaza.pl/polski/dokumenty/1/koslokal.html), access: 12 XI 2013. Professor Jan Żaryn, one of the more prolific writers on Church-State relations in the PRL, notes that between the late 1960s till the mid-1980s over two million Polish young people took part in Oasis camps. “Przejście przez Morze Czerwone. Z Ryszardem Terleckim i Janem Żarynem rozmawia Jan M. Ruman”, in *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* 4(75) (2007): 26.

<sup>26</sup> Jan Żaryn, “Stosunki państwo-Kościół katolicki w latach siedemdziesiątych XX w.”, in “*Oaza wolności*”. *Duszpasterstwa akademickie w latach siedemdziesiątych XX w.*, ed. Marta Marcinkiewicz (Szczecin: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2008), 15–17; Milena Przybyś, *Wyspy wolności. Duszpasterstwo akademickie w Łodzi 1945–1989* (Łódź: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2008), 173–174.

of religious formation (unlike DAs which generally were established mainly near universities and functioned according to the rhythm of the academic year) as well as in the depth and scope of its commitment to ecumenism that reached far beyond Poland.

Father Franciszek Blachnicki, the founder of Oaza began this movement in part as a response both to his own experiences as a parish priest and a later charge from the Polish Episcopate in 1967 to help lead liturgical renewal in Poland<sup>27</sup>. In order to develop lay ministers in the spirit of Vatican II, Fr. Blachnicki and a small cadre of lay and priestly collaborators began Oaza/Ruch Światło-Życie in 1969. Father Blachnicki conceived of this task in the broadest possible terms to include a radical change in Polish religious formation – including a focus on Sacred Scripture, Ecumenism, and evangelization – which he intended to serve as a model of pastoral activity throughout Poland<sup>28</sup>. Oaza/Ruch Światło-Życie reached out to school-age students who received ongoing religious formation and education in parishes throughout the country (though the movement was mainly concentrated in southern Poland) on an ongoing basis and provided more in-depth religious formation in a series of retreats (the “Oaza” portion of the movement’s program) offered during the summer<sup>29</sup>.

Father Blachnicki’s ecumenical work represents important – and, considering the effort the SB spent monitoring and attempting to sabotage the Light-and-Life Movement – puzzling problem in the development of Oaza and transnational ecumenism in Poland. This is because Light-and-Life not only sought contacts with Poland’s Protestant communities but actively cultivated close ties with Evangelical Protestant movements not only in Europe (through German and Scandinavian Protestant Churches) but also with American missionary organizations – particularly the movements Youth with a Mission and Campus Crusade for Christ – that had begun sending missionaries to Poland in the early 1970s<sup>30</sup>. Father Blachnicki quickly turned to these young western Evangelical missionaries for a variety of needs. Campus Crusade alone helped lead Oasis retreats, provided funds and technical support to the work of Oasis – including Protestant religious literature, the smuggling of printing presses and paper (some of which after

<sup>27</sup> Ks. Adam Wodarczyk, *Prorok Żywego Kościoła: Ks. Franciszek Blachnicki (1921–1987) – życie i działalność* (Katowice: Emmanuel, 2008), 322–323.

<sup>28</sup> Włodarczyk, *Prorok Żywego Kościoła*, 345; Dariusz Cupiał, *Na drodze ewangelizacji i ekumenii* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1996), 18–38.

<sup>29</sup> Esther Peperkamp, “»There can be no vacation from God«: Children’s retreats, leisure and social change in Poland”, *Religion, State & Society* 34(3) (2006): 271–286.

<sup>30</sup> The Fourth Department expressed concern about the activities of Evangelical groups (tellingly enough, mainly in their aspirations to engage in missionary work in other socialist countries) as early as 1972. See “Nr 4: 1972 Marzec 15, Warszawa – Informacja na temat planu pracy polityczno-operacyjnej Wydziału III Departamentu IV MSW na lata 1972–1973”, in *Plany Pracy Departamentu IV*, 35.

1980 ended up supporting the work of Solidarity), the first showings of Campus Crusade's famous Jesus film abroad, the provision of a million of the 1966 Polish Millennium edition Bibles (printed in Sweden) for Poland<sup>31</sup>, and the transfer of Oasis materials to Catholics in Slovakia (facilitated by Campus Crusade)<sup>32</sup>.

The material help alone that Protestant missionaries provided at times was quite useful to Oasis (in 1981 it appears that without the supply of over ten tons of food stuffs from Sweden and Norway that it would not have been possible to hold Oasis retreats that year<sup>33</sup>). Yet, even more importantly, this deep ecumenism – including not only common prayer and collaboration in ministry, but also the cross fertilization of ideas – appears to have imparted to the Oasis movement increased dynamism from the late 1970s on. Religiously engaged or merely curious Polish young people had opportunities through Oasis camps to encounter and interact with young American, German and Scandinavian Protestants and discover a wspólny język/“common language” of faith commitment and shared social and cultural concerns that was unique in the Polish Catholic Church. The result was the creation of a hybridized religious life that had significant Polish – and even global ecumenical repercussions particularly in its impact on American Evangelical Protestants<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Peperkamp, “Being a Christian the Catholic Way: Protestant and Catholic Versions of the Jesus Film and the Evangelization of Poland”, *The Journal of Sacred Texts & Contemporary Worlds* 1(1.3) (2005): 351–374, David Hill Scott, “Evangelicals and Catholics Really Together in Poland, 1975–1982”, *Fides et Historia* 34 (issue 1; Winter/Spring) (2002): 93–108.

<sup>32</sup> The author has conducted over two dozen interviews American Campus Crusade staff who lived, studied, worked and ministered in Poland on a part-time or permanent basis from the mid-1970s till the mid to late 1990s. These have revealed, among other things, how Campus Crusade personnel helped conduct Oaza camps, how materials and other works of American evangelicals were translated and published for Light-and-Life – including the *Jesus* film and the close collaboration of Fr. Blachnicki with Campus Crusade – also discussed by Fr. Wodarczyk in his biography of Fr. Blachnicki and in Cupiał's study of the role of ecumenism in the Light-and-Life Movement. See Wodarczyk, *Prorok Żywego Kościoła*, 406, and Cupiał, *Na drodze ewangelizacji i ekumenii*, 75–93.

<sup>33</sup> Grażyna Sikorska, *Light and Life: Renewal in Poland* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), 75–76 – on Scandinavian material support for Oaza retreats in 1981; and Wodarczyk, *Prorok Żywego Kościoła*, 411–412 – on the action “A Million Bibles for Poland”.

<sup>34</sup> Cupiał, *Na drodze ewangelizacji i ekumenii*, 75–109. Both John G. Turner and Perry L. Glanzer's studies of Campus Crusade identify a growing tendency of Campus Crusade – one of the single largest (and most well-funded) Protestant para-Church College Ministry's in the United States – to engage in increasing collaboration with both the Catholic and Orthodox Church in the early 1990s. Neither author however discusses the major effort made by CCC in Europe – spearheaded by Bud Hinkson and Larry Thompson – to conduct extensive ministerial work in cooperation with Oaza and Fr. Blachnicki since the late 1970s. Perry Lynn Glanzer, *The Quest for Russia's Soul: Evangelicals and Moral Education in Post-Communist Russia* (Waco in Texas: Baylor University Press, 2002); John G. Turner, *Bill bright and campus crusade for Christ: The renewal of evangelicalism in postwar America* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

In these efforts, Fr. Blachnicki had the full support of the Polish Catholic hierarchy, who by the late 1960s had come to see Catholicism in Poland threatened by “the continuous growth of ideological and changes of world-view in Polish society... [including] processes of laicization and urbanization that were producing a growing number of people with a materialist worldview, who in conditions of increasing prosperity were favorable to the development of consumer outlook” – and which could only be countered by turning for help to Poland’s lay faithful – particularly women, the intelligentsia and the youth<sup>35</sup>. Furthermore, while elements in the episcopate and clergy eventually came to distrust Fr. Blachnicki, due largely (but not exclusively) to the efforts of Group D to circulate misinformation about Oaza’s heterodoxy, Fr. Blachnicki, his clerical supporters and detractors and many of the lay faithful believed that since Oaza was a purely religious initiative related to worship and catechesis, it fell beyond the right of the state to supervise or censor<sup>36</sup>.

The Security Services – especially Department D – saw themselves playing a leading role in struggling with an Oaza that grew by leaps and bounds throughout the 1970s and early 80s<sup>37</sup>. Department D encouraged critics of Vatican II who had doubts about Fr. Blachnicki’s work in liturgical renewal by publicizing defamatory materials about Oaza in “Ancora” – an MSZ publication masquerading as a journal of “traditionalist” Catholicism, seizing the movement’s letterhead and printing theologically suspect materials that were then mailed to clergy<sup>38</sup>. From the mid-1970s on, the SB also coordinated action with other organizations to shut down Oaza camps that provided religious instruction in the summers in southeastern Poland. These efforts, which sought to use a variety of administrative means to attack Oaza camps (often involving fines and other penalties for anyone offering lodging to young campers as well as publicity campaigns highlighting the primitive conditions in which Polish young people lived during the retreats – were part of yearly campaigns termed by their targets as *kar-nawaly*)<sup>39</sup> while they might have limited the growth of Oaza

<sup>35</sup> Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, KA 07/179, t. 5: 41–42.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Derewenda, *Dzieło wiary. Historia Ruchu Światło-Życie 1950–1985* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Światło-Życie, 2010), 317.

<sup>37</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> Department reached this conclusion in the process of preparing a legal case against Fr. Blachnicki after his exile from Poland in 1981. Prior to that time, while there were complaints of the “unhealthy” religious and political atmosphere in Oaza camps there had been no assertion that the movement itself was political. IPN BU 0582/100/1: 202–204.

<sup>38</sup> Andrzej Grajewski, “Oskarżony ks. Franciszek Blachnicki”, *Więź* 5(511) (2001): 4, [www.wiez.pl/czasopismo/s\\_czasopismo\\_szegoly,id,44,art,1184](http://www.wiez.pl/czasopismo/s_czasopismo_szegoly,id,44,art,1184), access: 12 XI 2013; Derewenda, *Dzieło wiary*, 96. Przybysz refers to Fr. Frączkowski as someone whom the Security Services regarded as “hostile” for his active work in the DA at Łódź, hence it is likely that his concerns were real, even if they appear to have been facilitated by the Security Services, which often planned “complex disintegration operations” using a variety of unofficial contacts within the Church. Milena Przybysz, *Wyspy wolności*, 123.

<sup>39</sup> Derewenda, *Dzieło wiary*, 310.

they also added an element of mystique to the program – a mystique which confirmed for the authorities that Oaza was fostering “unhealthy” non-conformist and anti-state attitudes among a section of Poland’s youth and thus needed to be shut down<sup>40</sup>.

## The Theologians’ Apprentices?

### The Costly Failure of State-Socialist Ideology in a “non-ideological” age

Although they act according to routine, your every stumble, your every fall gives meaning to their lives. Your capitulation is no mere professional achievement for them – it is their *raison d’être*.

Adam Michnik, from his essay *Why you are not signing*<sup>41</sup>

For the Security Services, as for the Ministry of Confessional Affairs, all religious divisions were a positive sign that pointed to a brighter future in which – what they regarded as – the monolithic and threatening unity of the Church under Cardinal Wyszyński would give way to a more pliant and manipulable pluralism after his death. For decades they had invested a great deal of effort to foster a more pluralist Catholic ecclesial and religious reality through seeking collaborators as diverse as Piasecki’s PAX and the “Patriotic Priests” movement, to allowing the entry into parliament of Catholic intellectuals affiliated with “Znak”<sup>42</sup>. Though the tactics changed in the 1970s – no more would the authorities attack the Church as openly as did either Bierut or Gomułka – the underlying strategic premises and operational activities of the authorities in attempting to undermine religiosity remained constant and even accelerated<sup>43</sup>.

In this context, the disputes among Polish Catholics over how to implement the wide ranging reforms of Vatican II appeared to be a godsend. The Security Services regarded issues ranging from the role of Marian (versus “Christocentric”) piety to the proper relationships between the clergy, hierarchy and laity to open up a variety of possibilities for manipulation. The SB even began printing

<sup>40</sup> IPN 0639/155, 142. In the midst of hundreds of pages of documents devoted to plans to attack Oasis SB functionaries found time to complain of the “psychosis of threat” (from the regime) that permeated Oasis and demonstrated its de facto hostility to the state-socialist order in Poland. In a Central Europe that too often leads the world in the export of the ironic, the irony-deficiency of the SB in this (and other) instance(s) is quite striking.

<sup>41</sup> Michnik, *Letters from Prison*.

<sup>42</sup> Norbert Zmijewski, “Vicissitudes of political realism in Poland: »Tygodnik Powszechny« and »Znak«, *Europe-Asia Studies* 43(1) (1991): 83–106.

<sup>43</sup> Przybyś, *Wyspy wolności*, 143. Przybyś’s is one of a number of studies that demonstrates important continuities in the regime’s anti-religious practice from the Gomułka throughout Gierek regime, which is scarcely surprising given the continuities in personnel within the party-state apparatus, esp. in the Security Services and the Ministry of Confessional Affairs.

two distinct journals – “Ancora” (which claimed to support wide ranging reform) and “Samoobrona Wiary”/“Self-Defense of the Faith” (an anti-reformist journal which included articles from the schismatic Archbishop Lefebvre<sup>44</sup>). In this context and spirit, the SB sought to foster disputes over ecumenism in Poland. In 1972, in instructions that he or his subordinates would repeat over the course of the decade, Gen. Straszewski proposed that his Department use ecumenism in Poland so as “to discredit the conservative and anti-ecumenical position of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Poland”<sup>45</sup>.

Yet in the midst of its efforts to stir up conflicts between the Catholic Church and other churches in Poland over the hierarchy’s ostensibly anti-ecumenical stance, as contacts between the Light-and-Life-Movement and Protestant organizations blossomed the authorities also strove to exacerbate tensions over ecumenism within the Catholic Church. In 1977 and 1978 the SB (as part of a larger offensive against all DA work as well as Oasis<sup>46</sup>) published a series of articles in “Samoobrona Wiary” – and produced theologically heterodox publications using Light-and-Life’s distinctive logo which it then sent anonymously to various bishops (including the Primate) – attacking Fr. Blachnicki and the Light-and-Life-Movement for its contacts with “Charismatics” and “Jehovah’s Witnesses”. Eventually, a priest in good standing, Fr. Zbigniew Frączkowski, SJ also wrote (anonymously – his identity was only revealed later) to the bishops, claiming that Fr. Blachnicki was facilitating the “infiltration” of the Catholic Church by “Baptists”<sup>47</sup>.

Cardinal Wyszyński moved quickly to quash these disputes. He ordered an inquiry into the activities of Fr. Blachnicki and the Light-and-Life-Movement which was essentially a kangaroo court, given that it was headed by Archbishop Wojtyła, a great patron of Oasis. In January 1978 Cardinal Wojtyła and two other bishops (Archbishop Henryk Gulbinowicz of Wrocław and Bishop Ignacy Tokarczyk) met with Fr. Blachnicki and other representatives of the Light-and-Life-Movement at Zapokane. There they conducted a series of meetings which, while they gave the movement a clean bill of health, did not put to rest continued – and partially suc-

<sup>44</sup> Paweł Piotrowski, “Podpalacze”, *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* 10 (2004): 57; “Nr 10: 1972 luty 15 Warszawa – Informacja na temat podstawowych kierunków pracy polityczno-operacyjnej Departamentu IV MSW i wydziałów IV Komend Wojewódzkich MO na lata 1974–1975”, in *Plany Pracy Departamentu IV*, 72.

<sup>45</sup> “Dokument Nr 4, 15, 23”, in *Plany Pracy Departamentu IV*, 4, 36, 112, 180.

<sup>46</sup> Derewenda, “Bezpieka wobec Ruchu Oazowego, 1977–1981”, *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* 4(75) (2007): 93–94.

<sup>47</sup> Grajewski, “Oskarżony ks. Franciszek Blachnicki”, 4; Derewenda, “Bezpieka wobec Ruchu Oazowego”, 96. Przybysz refers to Fr. Frączkowski as someone whom the Security Services regarded as “hostile” for his active work in the DA at Łódź, hence it is likely that his concerns were real, even if they appear to have been facilitated by the Security Services, which often planned “complex disintegration operations” using a variety of unofficial contacts within the Church. Przybysz, *Wyspy wolności*, 123.

cessful – efforts of the Security Services to discredit Fr. Blachnicki among either the clergy or the laity. Both Fr. Blachnicki and Oaza's stepped up cooperation with Evangelical Protestants in the years that followed as well as Fr. Blachnicki's own personal radicalization and politicization after Karol Wojtyła's election made both him and the Light-and-Light-Movement a major target of the Security Services till the end of Fr. Blachnicki's life in 1986<sup>48</sup>. Yet, while the Security Services had essentially "forced" Cardinal Wojtyła's hand by making him publicly defend Fr. Blachnicki and the Light-and-Light-Movement in ways which might have facilitated further efforts to divide the Catholic Church in Poland, had the situation remained static, the elevation of Cardinal Wojtyła as Pope John Paul II greatly strengthened Oaza to the point that even those Polish Catholics who continued (and still continue) to question or reject Fr. Blachnicki's vision of ecumenism found it difficult to find purchase for their criticism among the faithful<sup>49</sup>. In one sense this SB sponsored effort at *dezintegracja* was a real – if qualified success – in that it brought out into the open and partially legitimized criticisms of Fr. Blachnicki that had been building for several years among some of the clergy. It further helped set in motion a series of events that eventually led to the episcopal takeover of the Light-and-Light-Movement in the mid-1980s in the vastly changed circumstances of Martial Law. In a deeper way, however, the regime's religious policies (and police) helped shape Poland's social order and religious developments in ways chillingly similar to its industrial policy's impact on Poland's natural environment and economic life. Disintegration proved, expensive, short-sighted and strategically disastrous.

Yet even as they struggled with Oaza before and during the advent of Solidarity, the SB did not discover the extent of one of the key (but hardly only) elements to Oaza's success – high-level collaboration with an American Evangelical organization Campus Crusade for Christ in running Oaza camps from the summer of 1977–1981. This collaboration involved both Americans affiliated with CCC, over two dozen of whom I have interviewed for this project – have recounted their work with Oaza during this period, which entailed everything from introducing Poles to American religious folk music, offering presentations on various

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<sup>48</sup> Derewenda, "Bezpieka wobec Ruchu Oazowego", 97–102.

<sup>49</sup> Part of what provided impetus for the SB's efforts at *dezintegracja* was a toxic combination of clerical jealousy at his personal popularity among significant sections of Poland's youth as well as the hostility both towards Fr. Blachnicki's theology – from his ecumenical experiments to his soteriology – as well as the organizational demands that organizing both the Light-and-Light-Movement's retreats as well as its presence in Parishes placed upon many clergy – including the threat of state-sponsored repression. For some of the more contemporary criticisms of the Light-and-Light-Movement as "protestantizing" and overly "therapeutic" and liturgically indifferent – see both Jacek Schmidt, *Jeszcze o ruchu oazowym* and Jarosław Dudyk, *Nowy rytualizm*, <http://www.bibula.com/?p=62377>, access: 19 XI 2013, and <http://web.archive.org/web/20100901011725/http://tygodnik2003–2007.onet.pl/1546,1419308,0,519420,dzial.html>, access: 19 XI 2013.

religious topics to providing numerous copies of CCC's (then) recently produced *Jesus* film (based upon the Gospel of Mark). While the SB in the course of their surveillance of Oaza camps on numerous occasions in the late 1970s through to 1981 in their frequent raids on Oaza camps had noted that Americans were present at some of these retreats, prior to the summer of 1982 the SB had not ascertained that, rather than individual participation of Polish-Americans or others invited as individuals, their presence was part of an organizational collaboration between Oaza and this American Evangelical Protestant ministry<sup>50</sup>. There are several reasons this is important; first, it confirms a key weakness that the SB complained about on numerous occasions in their reports on Oaza – that the organization produced such a “peculiar fanaticism” that recruiting informers among its members proved all but impossible till the early 1980s with the advent of Martial Law<sup>51</sup>.

Furthermore, and more importantly, the ability of Oaza to resist significant efforts by the SB at infiltration for almost 15 years – many hundreds of religious activists and tens of thousands of Polish school children year-in, year-out in the late 1970s and early 1980s participated in an organization that again and again defeated the SBs best efforts to break it up and infiltrate it. If the opening battle of the Polish-Jaruzelski war and Martial Law itself began with a massive demonstration of the regime's competence to shut down open manifestations of public life, the preceding decade had demonstrated that successful evasion and resistance of the Security Services was possible, even when authorities throughout the party-state's various institutions cooperated with the SB in trying to repress Oaza. If, as Andrzej Zybertowicz, in his studies on the transformation of the PRL into a police-state by the early 1980s, has argued, part of the role of mass interrogations was to function as a form of recruitment drive that would create the impression that the regime had eyes and ears everywhere, rendering resistance futile<sup>52</sup>, then the history of Oaza prior to (and during) Martial Law had displayed many of regime's – and especially – the SB's weaknesses. For years Oaza members, in collaboration with the

<sup>50</sup> In the summer of 1979 in Nowy Sącz the SB did identify Americans participating in an Oaza camp, but concluded that they were all Catholics. In January 1980 a report reached the authorities claiming that Fr. Blachnicki was collaborating with American “Baptists” but it was not until July, 1982, in the process of preparing a court case against Fr. Blachnicki that regime prosecutors correctly identified *Agape* (the name of CCC's European ministry) as a major collaborator of Oaza. IPN BU 0713/254: 130, 264; IPN BU 0582/100/1: 10–16.

<sup>51</sup> IPN KA 010/5 t2: 2–5. In a national conference of the Light and Life Movement at Walbrzych in January, 1979 lasting several days consisting of 30 priests, 15 sisters and 225 lay people the SB noted that they had no informers among this group. A similar lack of informers was reported concerning Oaza organizations in Kalisz, IPN BU 0713/254: 31, 106. Such problems bedeviled the authorities repeatedly in relation to Light-and-Life.

<sup>52</sup> Andrzej Zybertowicz, “The Art of Forgetting: The Communist Police State as a non-reality”, in *Legal Institutions and Collective Memory*, ed. Susan Karstedt (Portland: Hart Publishing, 2009), 344–345.



wider Church demonstrated that they had the capacity both openly to defy the authorities and quietly shield religious life from prying eyes – be that resisting regime efforts to shut down its summer retreats, building up a network of supporters and collaborators across the “capitalist” world who operated in Poland from the mid-1970s throughout the early 1980s without the authorities’ knowledge<sup>53</sup>. Yet in the new reality created by the regime’s turn to more open conflict with society during Martial Law, both the regime and Ruch Świątło-  
-Życie entered into a different kind of crisis.

### A House Swept Clean? The Costly Victory Against The Light-and-Life Movement in the Martial Law Era

The Church must realize that, in the centers of power, in the ranks of the party there has been a significant growth in the numbers of people with a hostile attitude to the Church.

Kazimierz Barcikowski, speaking at the Commission of Church-State relations in May, 1982<sup>54</sup>

A number of problems beset our understanding of the changes that occurred in Poland under the Jaruzelski regime. First of all, is the teleology that informs our approach to Poland in the 1980s in assessing the long-term impact the “Polish-Jaruzelski War” wrought on all of Polish society – again, not just of the victims of Martial Law, but also its perpetrators. Those perpetrators both through their actions and the visions that they propagated and developed throughout Martial Law reshaped much of Polish society – and the Polish secularization project – for themselves and those who had little choice but to listen to and obey them. Yet, like most belligerents in most wars, General Jaruzelski and his foreign and domestic allies intended to win their struggle against their enemies – the vast majority of Polish society – and, as often happens in any protracted losing struggle, they fought with persistence and increasing desperation up to (and almost beyond) the bitter

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<sup>53</sup> Derewenda, *Dzieło wiary*, 289, 309 – recounts the failure of a careful and synchronized SB raid on 6 different RSZ sites to net any documents in 1969, and the success of Cardinal Wojtyła and representatives of the episcopate in intervening to defend concentrated efforts by the authorities to shut down Oaza in 1977. Additionally, numerous Campus Crusade American interviewees have informed me of the ways in which locals hid them from the Security Services. Even more importantly, the SB noted as late as 1979, in spite of years of conducting campaigns against RSZ they had had no formal informer placed in it. IPN BU 0713/254, 31.

<sup>54</sup> Zieliński, *Kościół w Polsce, 1944–2007* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2009), 285.

end<sup>55</sup>. Neither on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1981, nor on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1989 was Poland perfectly poised to make a clean break/transition (or draw a “thick line”) between its (decreasingly) repressive past and a (relatively) more free future politically, culturally or socially<sup>56</sup>.

While Martial Law represented a massive broadening of state-sponsored repression, it also undermined key elements of the regime’s anti-religious strategy and operations of the 1970s. From 1980 until 1982, the SB, which had overinvested in its anti-religious apparatus had to reallocate resources in the fight against Solidarity<sup>57</sup>. For over two years Department IV was combined with the MSW’s rural organs due to the tight links between the Church and the nascent Rural Solidarity, so there was a crucial interruption in its efforts to undermine pastoral outreach, especially of the Light-and-Life Movement. At the same time the SB’s place within the state-socialist system become even more elevated as other elements of the party-state (especially the party) lost much of their authority<sup>58</sup>. Finally, the reality of post-Martial Law Poland was one in which the party-state’s dearth of allies and hemorrhaging of members necessity forced the regime both to revive defunct organizations and tired tropes (such as the continuing German threat to the PRL at a time when Polish-German relations were the best they had been in the postwar period<sup>59</sup>) and seek out retired members of the party-state, including retirees of the Security Services, whose own service during the Stalinist period and *Gomułkowszczyzna* were defined by a state that was much more self-confidently repressive than was the PRL in its death throes – and for whom the burgeoning

<sup>55</sup> Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours*, 471 – there were elements in the SB and the party-state who went so far as to envision the possibility of renewing Martial Law in the aftermath of the – for the party-state – disastrous June elections. As Gale Stokes has pointed out, even after those elections there was a great deal of political maneuvering to try to form a Communist-dominated government throughout the summer of 1989. Gale Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down: Collapse and Rebirth in Eastern Europe*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 148–150. See also Aleksander Hall’s discussion of just how limited was the scope of political reform envisioned by Gen. Jaruzelski and many in the regime during and after the Round Table. Aleksander Hall, “Rok wielkiej zmiany”, *Więź* 2(656) (2014): 101–105, [http://www.wiez.pl/czasopismo/s.czasopismo\\_szczegoly,id,579,art,16050](http://www.wiez.pl/czasopismo/s.czasopismo_szczegoly,id,579,art,16050), access: 11 V 2016.

<sup>56</sup> Adam Michnik, *Letters from Freedom: Post-Cold War Realities and Perspectives*, ed. Irena Grudzińska-Gross, transl. Jane Cave (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 268–281.

<sup>57</sup> Paczkowski, *Wojna polsko-jaruzelska*, 246 notes how the MSW’s 4<sup>th</sup> Department more than doubled the number of its employees from 1200 to 2600 functionaries from 1980–1981.

<sup>58</sup> Maria Łoś and Zybortowicz, *Privatizing the Police State: The Case of Poland* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 19; Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours*, 468–469.

<sup>59</sup> Przemysław Gasztold-Seń, *Koncesjonowany nacjonalizm: Zjednoczenie Patriotyczne Grunwald 1980–1990* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2012); Timothy David Curp, “»Roman Dmowski Understood«: Ethnic Cleansing as Permanent Revolution”, *European History Quarterly* 35(3) (2005): 421.

growth of religious life in the 1970s reinforced their own sense of the rightness of their unreformed political beliefs<sup>60</sup>.

In spite of its infusion of grumpy old (Stalinist) men and its immediate inability to sustain its operations against religious life, the “official mind” of Martial Law Poland (which like any other was susceptible to a certain schizophrenia) had a deep faith and a collective demonology animating its activities. During the 80s, a hard core among the over a million party-state functionaries, their friends, families, and fellow travelers who still supported the regime believed that only extreme measures like Martial Law (and the repression that endured even after the formal ending of Martial Law) protected Poland from a complex conspiracy of a Solidarity movement and Catholic Church that had been manipulated by a conspiracy of extremist cosmopolitan and fundamentalist religious forces (which at times the authorities labeled “terrorist groups”) who were empowered from the outside by a hostile capitalist world.

For those authorities still tasked with combatting it (even then still largely unaware of the extent of Fr. Blachnicki’s and Oaza’s ties to Campus Crusade and other western Christian groups) Oaza – a movement primarily concerned with the religious formation of children – remained in their minds as part of this terrorist conspiracy against People’s Poland. Father Blachnicki, who was visiting Italy in December of 1981 and chose to stay in exile to better support both Oaza and anti-regime resistance by Solidarity certainly provided the authorities with a good deal of ammunition in their efforts to demonize him, and by extension, Oaza (which led him to formally end his role as Moderator of the movement in 1982). A Silesian Pole who had worked with German Protestants (and Catholics) as well as Americans in Poland, he chose to continue his ministry in the Federal Republic of Germany at Karlsburg in the Rhineland, where he sought to advance the work of his newest religious initiative (which he began in 1979) – a Crusade for the Liberation of the Person/Man (*Krucjata Wyzwolenia Człowieka*) which aimed to address what even then asserted was a “continuing” and “deepening... political, economic, social, cultural, moral and religious crisis in Poland” and which he would expand into an international, ecumenical initiative – the Christian Service for the Liberation of Peoples/*Chrześcijańska Służba Wyzwolenia Narodów* or ChSWN<sup>61</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> For all the loss of power and positions suffered by many of the former Stalinists she interviewed in the mid-1980s, Torańska’s subjects betray nothing but confidence that in the reality of Martial Law Poland, a recalcitrant and excessively religious population will be brought to heal. Teresa Torańska, *Them: Stalin’s Polish Puppets*, transl. Agnieszka Kołakowska (New York, Harper & Row, 1987); Paczkowski, *Wojna polsko-jaruzelska*, 94–95.

<sup>61</sup> This “crusade” built upon Fr. Blachnicki’s earlier efforts to organize a religiously based temperance movement in Poland in the late 1950s – at first supported by them, later closed down as it became a mass movement. As early as March 1980 at a public address he gave at Ruch Światło-Życie’s 5<sup>th</sup> National Conference began to sketch out a plan for a national crusade. Derewenda,

Official propaganda sought to use the accidents of Fr. Blachnicki's exile in West Germany and his creation of the ChSWN to substantiate the claim that anti-communist politics was the essence of Oaza's work in Poland – though, like most of its efforts, this propaganda largely fell upon stony, unbelieving soil. Jerzy Urban, writing in 1982 in “Tu i Teraz” (the same journal in which he would mark out Fr. Popiełuszko as an “anti-Communist Savonarola” a little over two years later), branded Fr. Blachnicki as “that political fanatic” who was trying to “organize a crusade against Communism under the leadership of the Pope<sup>62</sup>”. Kąkol, by 1985 a former head of the Ministry of Confessional Affairs, both noted Fr. Blachnicki's activities in the 80s even as he took up the same cudgels against Oaza that he had deployed in the late 1970s, asserting that Oaza was and remained an illegal movement that had been infiltrated by dissidents and demonstrated its “support for anti-socialist groups (like KOR)”. Even worse, Kąkol noted how Fr. Blachnicki's new “Crusade” represented a struggle waged “without any concern for reasons of political realism or geopolitics” – that would require Poles to shed Polish blood [*sic!*]<sup>63</sup>.

Urban and Kąkol's blasts were only the tip of an iceberg of propaganda struggle that made the rounds not only Poland but throughout the old Soviet bloc<sup>64</sup>. The most sensational charges against both Fr. Blachnicki and Oaza were made in a series of sensationalized radio and television programs in Poland in the fall and winter of 1982 and 1983 which purported to show that Fr. Blachnicki had formed a small but “fanaticized” elite with a presence all over Poland – “who had to serve as a tool in a struggle with communism, Knights of the Immaculata in a crusade of liberation who had to gather and pass on information on the behavior of the military, militia and members of the party... – names, addresses, members of their families and license plate information – an organization of at least a quarter of a million young people – perhaps even more”. Yet not only did this organization threaten the functionaries and families of People's Poland, even the Church was not safe, since “Blachnicki, feeling his strength deployed

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*Dzieło wiary*, 325 and especially Andrzej Anusz, *Kościół obywatelski. Formowanie społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w PRL* (Warszawa: AKCES, 2004), 279–280.

<sup>62</sup> Ks. Henryk Bolczyk, *Wolny człowiek – wolny naród. Ostatnie dzieło życia ks. Franciszka Blachnickiego – Chrześcijańska Służba Wyzwolenia Narodów* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Światło-Życie, 2012), 129.

<sup>63</sup> Kąkol, *Kościół w PRL: Elementy ewolucji doktryny* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1985), 231–236. Komitet Obrony Robotników and one of the other major dissident movements of Poland in the 1970s demonstrated solicitude for Oaza in its struggle with the authorities in the late 1970s until the beginning of Martial Law. Lipski, Friszke, *Foreword*, in Lipski, *KOR: Komitet Obrony Robotników*, 281, 404; Małgorzata Choma-Jusińska, *Środowiska opozycyjne na Lubelszczyźnie 1975–1980* (Lublin: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2009), 259, 293, 400.

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.zywiecwsieci.pl/category/bez-kategorii/page/7/>, access: 19 XI 2013, cites articles appearing in a variety of Polish journals as well as the Soviet publications “Konsomolskaya Prawda” and “Estonian Youth”.

the slogan of defending the Church against internal as well as external enemies, which he himself understood as part of a path to building a new church, a living church”<sup>65</sup>.

While the SB in its various internal files related either to Fr. Blachnicki or Oaza had never raised any concerns about Oaza as a violent movement, these efforts to demonize both Fr. Blachnicki and Oaza were not necessarily simply propagandistic (though propaganda was an important component)<sup>66</sup>. Rather, the constant invocation of “Polish Ayatollahs” leading hidden hordes of fanatized youths both legitimized the original decision to unleash Martial Law (since only the stalwart functionaries of People’s Power stood between Poland and an abyss of fratricidal strife, religious fanaticism and geopolitical collapse) and represented a real moral panic of the party-state and many of its functionaries and dependents that continued in the years following Martial Law. Judging by their actions in supporting the regime throughout the 1980s many among the authorities and their fellow travelers were repelled and terrified by the very different, religiously-charged worldview, where miracles (like the collapse of Communism) were possible to their countrymen. Jerzy Urban conveyed this vision of Poland in the 1980s well in his interview with Teresa Torąńska:

Torańska: So, how did you explain that they stood at the head of Solidarity?

Urban: The nation had gone mad.

Torańska: Ten million people?

Urban: Would this be the first time in our history? I felt a disgust that I couldn’t manage. Masses, crowds of priests, and the gold character of this movement. Gold like the prewar Christian workers’ unions. I feared their economic claims. An apartment for everyone in five years – that is an absolutely idiotic postulate, stupid, economically blind. Three years of leave for mothers, higher pay for everyone... In any group that you wish, you can see these beautiful, utopian ideas, because every mass movement is an emanation of unfulfilled human dreams of equality and justice. Communism also voiced these. Please don’t deny this. But I didn’t like Solidarity, because it muscled in on the heart of the state’s organizational-order, sought to bring it down, it beat on it with sticks as if the Soviet Union didn’t exist – and our power would fall, and the state would fall as well, oh!<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Derewenda, *Dzieło wiary*, 337.

<sup>66</sup> Prior to 1979 the most Security Services (who had watched this movement for years) could demonstrate about Oaza was that Fr. Blachnicki was convinced that thorough religious formation was the key to solving Poland’s political problems – i.e. they made an a priori (though correct) judgment that Fr. Blachnicki was anti-Communist and saw a connection between religious education and Poland’s politics. Reports even in 1979 indicated that all of the priests involved in Oaza were apolitical. IPN BU 0713/254, 103. While Fr. Blachnicki also had taught both in Poland and in exile that the struggle with totalitarianism did have a religious component he also emphasized that it must be waged non-violently: Ks. Franciszek Blachnicki, *Postsovieticum: czyli nie wolno ci być niewolnikiem* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Światło-Życie, 2004), 244.

<sup>67</sup> Torąńska, *Byli* (Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2006), 237–238.

For Urban, as for many other Poles who supported the regime, the disgust at the (increasing) role of religious faith in what they doubly felt to be their country's public life, as well as their own (visionless) realism were all threatened by the longing for miraculous change and true ruin their unthinking countrymen's faith-based romantic politics threatened to unleash. This old argument of idealism vs. realism was given new urgency by the vibrancy/terrible energy many believers and non-believers displayed prior to December 13<sup>th</sup>, and in their stubborn unwillingness to fully conform to the disciplines that state-socialism imposed during Martial Law.

In one sense it is a mistake to see either Martial Law or the long struggle which followed it as having "radicalized" either Fr. Blachnicki or his collaborators in Oaza/Ruch Światło-Życie (or for that manner many of their opponents, especially in the Security Services). Both Fr. Blachnicki and Oaza – to the dismay of many churchmen<sup>68</sup> – already were radical in their Polish context prior to Martial Law (as had the Security Services, with the backing of a variety of organizations of the party-state). Strikingly, however, given the portrayal of Oaza in the Polish media in the 1980s (and the beginning of criminal proceedings launched against Fr. Blachnicki by Military Procurators) the authorities, while occasionally harassing Oaza did not intervene to halt it, or even cut into its growth (which was considerable during the Martial Law era). For the authorities, careful to husband their repressive resources in a demanding environment and looking for cheap victories the increasingly heavy hand with which both the episcopacy took charge of Oaza in Poland (by 1984 the movement was placed under the ultimate supervision of diocesan bishops), the effective decapitation of the movement with the emigration of the Fr. Blachnicki, solved the immediate problem of how to deal with the movement<sup>69</sup>. For the authorities, as both a hostage and a bogeyman, a functioning Oaza appears to have served double duty for their current desire to placate the hierarchy and any future needs they might have for a secular sacrificial lamb.

Religiously at least, in this atmosphere it was precisely the more nuanced, pastoral approach focused primarily on religious life that Fr. Blachnicki and Oaza had pioneered in the 1970s that was the great loser. In a Poland where state and

<sup>68</sup> Derewenda, *Dzieło wiary*, 56–58.

<sup>69</sup> In over eighty reports on dangerous religious movements made to the Central Committee of the PZPR from 1982–1984 (at a time when the press was speculating about hundreds of thousands of Oasis alumni secretly spying upon the apparatuses of the party-state), Oasis is mentioned once – in reference to the satisfaction of the clergy that the episcopacy was taking effective custody of the movement. *Kościół w stanie wojennym*, ed. Tadeusz Krawczak and Cyprian Wilanowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PAX, 2008), 117. Derewenda notes that placing Oaza under the effective control of the hierarchy was the brainchild of Fr. Danielewski, Fr. Blachnicki's close collaborator, who saw this as a way of protecting the movement from being disbanded in light of Fr. Blachnicki's own activities abroad. Even so, during this time not only did Oaza continue to grow, but it even maintained active involvement in the Crusade for Human Liberation. Derewenda, *Dzieło wiary*, 220, 236–237.

society waged a decade long cold war, many Poles looked to the Church as a means to organize and develop a variety of political and cultural initiatives, while for the authorities and many of their functionaries and supporters, this “clericalization” of Polish society called for the striking of hard blows. In this context, in Polish society, like others caught up in sustained conflicts, a certain “demodernization” or return to more polarizing visions of religious life (and society) appears to have taken place<sup>70</sup>. The circumstances both of Martial Law as well as the Round Table Accords and their aftermath, forced the Church’s leadership to try to be all things to all Poles (accommodating both of the regime and groups like Oaza dedicated to deepening and broadening religious life in Poland), even as it led the authorities to seek and bitterly cling to their own anti-religious conspiratorial myths, fetishes and symbols. Both the losses that state-socialism’s repressive (at times even murderous) *kulturkampf* inflicted on Polish religious life, as well as the staying power of the regime’s anti-religious conspiratorial myths, fetishes and symbols for non-believers, have remained potent even when the alliance of anti-clerical throne and altar collapsed after 1989.

Timothy David Curp

**Saving Polish Souls in Ordinary Time:  
Catholic Evangelization and Poland’s Transformation, 1975–1989**

Summary

The paper *Saving Polish Souls in Ordinary Time: Catholic Evangelization and Poland’s Transformation, 1975–1981* showed both the lived experience of pastoral ministry/evangelization during a time of revolutionary transformation in Poland as well as the failure of party-state elites to understand or address the threat of the first flowering of Catholic evangelization in the 1970s. Much of the scholarship on Catholicism in Poland identifies the sources of the Church’s power (and the party-state’s animus toward religion) in the intersection of historical traditions and national-religious identity. This conception, in part rooted in important aspects of Poland’s religious experience, but also dependent upon secularist readings of Polish religious life, too often ignores the changes that key

<sup>70</sup> Valery Tishkov, in his study of Chechnya in the 1990s sees the deepening religiosity of Chechens as a kind of “demodernization” that rolled back the secularization of Chechen society brought about by the Soviet state. While Tishkov’s analysis is overly teleological (and presumes both that the relative outward secular appearance of Chechen society under Soviet rule did not conceal hidden religious practice as well as that later religious change was not itself a kind of “hypermodernization”), the degree to which long Russo-Chechen conflict acted as a force of cultural/religious polarization seems clear. Compare Tishkov’s discussion of religious radicalization with that of Valery Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 12–15; with James Hughes, “Chechnya: The Causes of a Protracted Post-Soviet Conflict”, in *Civil Wars* 4(4) (2001): 11–48 (esp. 34–35), [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/641/1/Hughes.Chechnya.Civil\\_Wars.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/641/1/Hughes.Chechnya.Civil_Wars.pdf), access: 15 I 2016.

sectors of the Catholic Church in Poland underwent after the Second Vatican Council. From then on, many Poles – especially those involved in pastoral practice (in Polish, *duszpasterstwo*, literally “the care of souls”) – brought about a revolution in grass-roots religious practice by creating new and popular approaches to ministry that focused on religious formation and evangelization.