

CONSCIENTIOUS RESISTANCE:

COMMUNISM AND CATHOLICISM IN COLD WAR POLAND, 1945-1989

By

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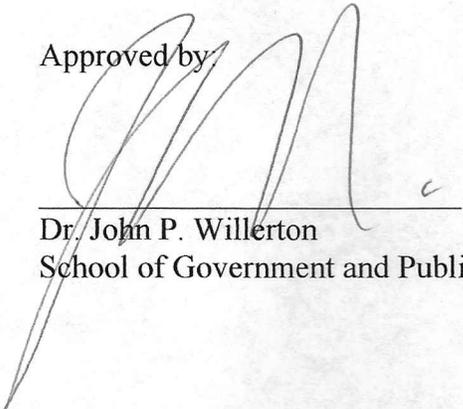
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C.R.H.

The Memorial of St. Joseph the Worker,

May 1, 2015

## ABSTRACT

This thesis will explore the diplomatic relationship between the Soviet-backed, Communist government of Poland and the Roman Catholic Church from the end of World War II until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989. First, I will discuss the Church's approach to the idea of religious liberty, beginning in the Second Vatican Council. Then, the Church's foreign policy position toward the Soviet Union and their satellites during the Cold War known as the *Ostpolitik*, will be discussed. Secondly, I will explain how the Polish Church was able to act as a resistance force against Polish Communism leading to 1978. Thirdly, I will evaluate the changes in the Communist-Vatican diplomatic relationship, as well as changes within Poland such as the rise of the Solidarity movement which coincided with the election of the Polish Cardinal Archbishop Karol Wojtyla as Pope John Paul II in 1978. Lastly, I will show how these events helped contribute to the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1989. I will show how a non-governmental, non-political, social actor, the Catholic Church, both in Rome and in Poland, was able to act as a formidable resistance force in the fight against Communism, contributing greatly to Communism's demise.

This thesis is an account of the Roman Catholic Church as a force of resistance against Soviet communism in Poland from the end of World War II until 1989. I will explain how the Church served as the primary opposition against the communist leadership due to their philosophical and religious opposition to atheistic communism. It is not the purpose of this thesis to show how the Church was responsible for the fall of Polish or even Soviet communism. Nor is a lengthy list of reasons for communism's failure the purpose of this thesis. Even the former Bishop of Krakow, Karol Jozef Wojtyla, who would become Pope John Paul II in 1978, agrees that Catholicism alone did not defeat communism. Upon reflecting on major life events at the end of his papacy, John Paul II wrote:

“Let us take the example of the Communist system. ...a contributing factor in its demise was certainly its deficient economic doctrine, but to account for what happened solely in terms of economic factors would be a rather naive simplification. On the other hand, it would obviously be ridiculous to claim that the Pope brought down communism single-handedly.”<sup>1</sup>

Wojtyla's leadership and moral witness both as Bishop of Krakow and of Rome were instrumental parts of the Church's resistance. I will also show how a social, cultural and religious force was able to serve as a remarkable political force. For those who believe religion has nothing to say to the challenging issues of the modern world, I would ask that they turn to the example of Poland as discussed in this thesis. I wish to show how the Polish people and the Polish Catholic Church were able to make an eloquent dissent against their communist rulers and in doing so, helped sow the seeds for a future of freedom which was unimagined by their communist rulers.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Memory and Identity* (New York: Rizzoli Publishers, 2005), 165.

## Rome's Favorite Daughter

Poland's history as a Catholic nation can be traced back to the year 966 when the Duke of Poland, Mieszko I was baptized as a Christian.<sup>2</sup> Before then, Poland and its Slavic sisters had been evangelized by the disciples Cyril and Methodius a century before Mieszko was baptized.<sup>3</sup> Ever since Stanislaw Szczepanow, the bishop of Cracow was martyred in 1079, because of his protest against King Boleslaus for treating his subjects contrary to the Christian spirit, all Kings of Poland have sworn oaths on the tomb of Stanislaw. Whereas other Slavs had always been part of one Christian empire or another, the Polish people had been partitioned between Orthodox Russia and Protestant Prussia, therefore preventing it from being an entirely Catholic nation for much of the 15th through 18th centuries.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the Catholic Church had come to represent the Polish resistance against the oppression and dominance of non-Catholic, foreign powers. To be a patriotic Pole was to embrace the national roots of the Church.<sup>5</sup>

Not only has Poland seen the Church as her defender, but even more so as a spiritual mother and anchor. For example in December 1655, the Swedish army sought the partition of Poland. The Protestant Swedes surrounded the monastery of Czestochowa, the home of the venerable national shrine to the Virgin Mary, under the title of the Black Madonna.<sup>6</sup> Another example of religious intervention was in 1683 when the Polish King Sobieski defeated the

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<sup>2</sup> Ronald C. Monticone, *The Catholic Church in Communist Poland, 1945-1985 : forty years of Church-State Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 1.

Ottomans in the Battle of Vienna. Writing to the Pope, Sobieski stated that God through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, the Black Madonna, had rescued Poland from her aggressors.<sup>7</sup>

From 1795-1918, Poland rallied behind the Catholic Church as the legitimate form of resistance against foreign armies and ideologies. This was especially the case when Marxism was introduced in Poland. Several factors explain Marxism's lack of appeal in Poland.<sup>8</sup> First, it was a Russian variation of a German ideology. Russia and what had become Germany in the 19th century had been two of Poland's enemies during much of the 19th century. A second reason was that the Communist Worker's Party of Poland was the ideological heir to the Polish Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania, both of which had opposed Polish independence. And lastly and most importantly, Marxism was an atheistic ideology that sought to exclude God and religious worship from social and cultural life. These contradictory forces are best explained here:

“The basic postulates of Marxist-Leninist metaphysics, or dialectical materialism are four: the tangible world is the only reality uncaused and the cause of all; secondly, the tangible world is constantly evolving to ever higher forms; thirdly, man reaches consciousness only at the end of a long period of evolution-his consciousness or spirit, therefore is acquired and not inborn; man is thus the way in which nature reaches a state of consciousness.”<sup>9</sup>

At the end of World War II, Poland and much of its Eastern European neighbors were once again tossed into the arms of a foreign enemy. “By 1945 Stalin exercised dominion over 300,000,000 souls,” according to Anthony Rhodes.<sup>10</sup> Stalin had also absorbed within the Russian frontiers Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, East Prussia, and Moldova. By this year, the beginnings of

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<sup>7</sup> Maciej Pomian-Srzednicki, *Religious Change in Contemporary Poland*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1982), 32.

<sup>8</sup> Monticone, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Pomian-Srzednicki, 32.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Rhodes, *The Vatican in the Age of the Cold War* (Norwich, England: Russell Publishers, 1992), 15.

conflict between the communist-led Provisional Government of Poland and the Church begun to take root.

On September 25, 1945, a state decree made civil marriage the only recognized form of marriage in Poland. Nearly two weeks later, the government had declared the Concordat of 1925 between Poland and the Vatican null and void, ending relations between Poland and the institutional Roman Catholic Church. According to the government, the Vatican had favored Germany during the war. In the terms of the concordat, no part of Poland could be under the episcopal supervision of a bishop who resided outside of Poland's borders. The Vatican under Pope Pius XII responded stating that it was necessary for German bishops to tend to the needs of the Polish faithful given the extraordinary nature of the war at that particular time.<sup>11</sup> By the end of 1945, the Polish Communist Party (PPR) and the Polish Socialist Party had merged and become the Polish United Workers Party (PZPR).

In the same year, Boleslaw Piasecki, a Polish fascist who had favored German-Polish cooperation during the war, founded the Polish Progressive Catholic Movement, known as PAX, in an effort to reconcile Catholicism and communism.<sup>12</sup> PAX sought to give the impression that Catholics supported the communist regime, but in reality it undermined the Church's position which had insisted on non-cooperation with the communists.<sup>13</sup> Two other Catholic groups with communist ties had emerged by the end of the 1940s. The first was sponsored by the government called, Patriotic Priests. Their goal was to gather priests who were loyal to the Church but supportive of the regime on political and social issues.<sup>14</sup> The second group was Znak. Znak's

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<sup>11</sup> Adam Piekarski, *The Church in Poland* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1978), 85.

<sup>12</sup> Monticone, 15.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Hiscocks, *Poland. Bridge for the Abyss* (London, Oxford University Press, 1963), 134.

<sup>14</sup> Monticone, 16.

purpose was to establish a *modus vivendi* between Catholics and Polish communists, with the full realization that the two sides would never overcome doctrinal and philosophical differences.

When Pope Pius XII excommunicated all Catholics who were practicing communists in 1949, it was seen as an act of hostility to the Polish state.<sup>15</sup> Whether as a result of the Pope's action or whether it was an act of anti-Catholic sentiment, a law was passed in August 1949 imprisoning all clergy who refused to perform a sacrament because of a political objection. This would be the beginning of a much larger, more widespread crackdown on the Church. On March 20, 1950, all Church property greater than 50 hectares of land was seized by the government.<sup>16</sup> Such tensions would not be ignored for long. By April 1950, a *modus vivendi* between the Church and the state was agreed upon. As part of the agreement, the Pope was to remain the supreme authority on matters of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The Polish clergy would teach the people to respect the state's authority and laws. What is most significant about this agreement is that this was the first time that the Catholic Church had ever reached a formal political agreement inside a communist state.<sup>17</sup> But the bonhomie would not last long. By February 1953, the state had to approve all appointments of bishops and clergy who were also forced to swear an oath of allegiance to the Polish People's Republic. In fact the state was violating the terms of the agreement, more importantly these instances of the state overruling the Church demonstrates just how difficult it was to remain a religious and a de-facto anti-communist institution within a society that had been absorbed into the communist orbit.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 18.

## Worlds Apart

Given their antagonistic nature, it is necessary to identify several points that have yet to be mentioned about the character of Catholicism and Marxist-Leninist communism as opposing philosophical world views. Given its long and strong history, it was practically unlikely and doctrinally impossible for the Church to change its views. As Dennis Dunn stated, “a reconciliation between the two would only be possible on the assumption that Communism, as practiced in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, had changed the philosophical underpinnings of Marxist-Leninism.”<sup>18</sup> This is because all examples of reality are material in nature and are determined by economic forces. Further, Marxism views man to be valuable only as he is valuable as part of the collective.<sup>19</sup> Religion, based on the spiritual and not the material, was three things. The first was that it was a fantasy; and second, a tool of exploitation. The third was that religion was, according to Friedrich Engels, “the exclusive possession of the ruling classes, and these apply it as a means of government, to keep the lower classes within bounds.”<sup>20</sup>

The truly intriguing thing about Marx’s views on religion was that he believed that it would eventually have less of a significance in the world.<sup>21</sup> This, despite the fact that his ideology said very little about how religion was to be treated on the path to achieving the communist ideal society. He simply paid little attention to religion as an irrelevant force in society. It was Lenin who attacked religion, arguing that it was necessary for the revolution. If religion contained power, and was a barrier to the communist ideal, then it ought to be attacked.<sup>22</sup> Lenin stated, “A Marxist must be materialist, i.e., an enemy of religion...one who organizes the

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<sup>18</sup> Dennis Dunn. *Detente and Papal-Communist relations, 1962-1978*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Publisher, 1979), 6.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Lewis S. Feuer, ed., *Marx & Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy* (New York, 1959), 240.

<sup>21</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Harold J. Laski on the Communist Manifesto* (New York, 1967), 147.

<sup>22</sup> Dunn, 9.

struggle against religion not on abstract, purely theoretical grounds, ...but...on the basis of the currently proceeding class struggle...”<sup>23</sup>

Marxism’s attack of Catholicism comprised of five factors. The first, Catholicism promoted erroneous teachings. The second, Catholicism could not be controlled by communist authorities as it was ruled by Rome, away from communist centers of power. Thirdly, there existed a fear and suspicion of the Church that had existed in Russia, prior to the 1917 Russian Revolution. Fourthly, Catholics had opposed the Communists during the Revolution and in the Polish-Russian War. And finally, the Pope had the loyalty of Catholics, not the communist authorities. Taken together, these five points made Catholicism and communism almost natural enemies.<sup>24</sup>

### **Seeds of a Revolutionary Freedom**

A seminal moment in the history of the Catholic Church in the 20th century was the Second Vatican Council, or Vatican II. Pope John XXIII desired the church to open up its windows to the Holy Spirit and to face the challenges of modernity. One of the most important documents of Vatican II was *Dignitatis Humanae*, or the Declaration on Religious Freedom on the Right of the Person and of Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters Religious. Despite the verbose title, for the first time in the history of the Church, the Vatican clearly stated the Church’s position on religious freedom. Without a question, *Dignitatis Humanae* was one of the most consequential documents to emerge from Vatican II because religious freedom had always had an unusual place in the history of the Church. For the first time, the Church stated

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<sup>23</sup> V.I. Lenin, *Ob Ateizme, Religii i tserkvi* (Moscow, 1969). 72-73.

<sup>24</sup> Dunn, 12-13.

that the first and most fundamental right of human societies was the freedom to exercise one's religious convictions in his or her life.

*Dignitatis Humanae* 2 states, "The council further declares that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself."<sup>25</sup> Here we see a new development in the Catholic conception of freedom. Freedom does not come from any monarch, elected official or government body. Instead, the fact that the human person has been made in the image and likeness of God, by his or her individual dignity, is the foundation for human freedom. It continues by stating, "This right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed and thus it is to become a civil right."<sup>26</sup> This right is to be codified into the legal regime under which the human person lives and finds himself. It is to be a right that is recognized and protected by the sovereign, though its origin does not come from the law, sovereign or not, but is derived from the individual's human dignity. The document continues:

"The freedom or immunity from coercion in matters religious which is the endowment of persons as individuals is also to be recognized as their right when they act in community. Religious communities are a requirement of the social nature both of man and of religion itself."<sup>27</sup>

Religious freedom is also freedom from any barriers or coercion that inhibit the exercise of religious practice. Here, the Council recognizes that the right to religious freedom is not independent of communal responsibilities. Going back to the Aristotelian concept that humans

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<sup>25</sup> *Dignitatis Humanae*, 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

are social and communal creatures, religion must be recognized in the communal or public sphere-not merely in the private confines of personal practice.

Vatican II also taught that accepting the gift of faith must be received free of any coercion. A faith in God that is twisted into a person cannot be authentic faith since it has not first been accepted in the spirit of freedom. Faith cannot be imposed on a person without them first accepting it both freely and completely. The document goes further:

“It is therefore completely in accord with the nature of faith that in matters religious every manner of coercion on the part of men should be excluded. In consequence, the principle of religious freedom makes no small contribution to the creation of an environment in which men can without hindrance be invited to the Christian faith, embrace it of their own free will, and profess it effectively in their whole manner of life.”<sup>28</sup>

The communal or public sphere must be free, such that individuals have the space to freely accept the gift of faith on their own, and not at the will of coercive influence or manipulation.

The Council argues that without this space, faith is threatened.

The Church demands this sort of freedom, not because it is a special institution that ought to be favored in the realm of political or social affairs. Rather, this freedom is necessary for the Church to fulfill its mission in the spiritual and in the temporal realm. Therefore, the freedom is the oxygen which the Church needs, freedom that is intrinsic to its mission and not given to it with any special favor on the part of political and social institutions. This freedom enables the Church to coexist with political and social institutions. Regarding the temporal and spiritual authorities, *Dignitatis Humanae* continues:

“In human society and in the face of government the Church claims freedom for herself in her character as a spiritual authority...upon which there rests, by divine mandate, the duty of going out into the whole world and preaching the Gospel to every creature.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 32.

This freedom cannot be given to the Church; rather it exists intrinsically because of its spiritual mission to evangelize. Not only is this freedom needed because of her spiritual nature, but also because of the Church's corporal or institutional nature of individuals who comprise societies and communities. This is because "The Church also claims freedom for herself in her character as a society of men who have the right to live in society in accordance with the precepts of the Christian faith."<sup>30</sup> Not only is this religious freedom meant for the existence of the Church alone, but also for her role in the world. In this regard we find:

"In turn, where the principle of religious freedom is not only proclaimed in words or simply incorporated in law but also given sincere and practical application, there the Church succeeds in achieving a stable situation of right as well as of fact and the independence which is necessary for the fulfillment of her divine mission."<sup>31</sup>

The Church desires to be part of a well ordered society which is governed by laws that openly and publicly recognize the status of her freedom. While the 20th century has shown the Church has an ability to exist and as this thesis will show, persevere and thrive in the midst of totalitarian non-freedom, the Church desires to exist where her freedom is recognized as part of the wider community. The Church desires to exist alongside other institutions that value and promote this well-ordered freedom.

This independence is precisely what the authorities of the Church claim in society.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, the Christian faithful, in common with all other men, possess the civil right not to be hindered in leading their lives in accordance with their consciences. Therefore, a harmony exists between the freedom of the Church and the religious freedom which is to be recognized as the right of all men and communities and sanctioned by constitutional law. The well-ordered

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 34.

freedom that the Church seeks to fulfill her spiritual and corporal mission seeks to enhance the flourishing of the society, and not to inhibit it. The Church does not seek to be at the head of a theocracy. Instead the Church desires to be part of a political and social community whereby persons are able to freely live according to their conscience, which specifically includes practicing their religion without coercion.

It must be noted that religious freedom has not always been the case in the history of Catholicism. Many instances exist where the Church acted as a tyrant more than it did as a guardian of liberty. This was especially so during times in which power ran too close between the Church and supposedly secular governments. Nonetheless, these are ideals to which the Church aspires to attain; ideals that the church ought to look at as models for engaging the world, as well as exercising her own sovereignty in the internal affairs of the Church, itself.

*Dignitatis Humanae* closes stating, “The fact is that men of the present day want to be able freely to profess their religion in private and in public. Indeed, religious freedom has already been declared to be a civil right in most constitutions, and it is solemnly recognized in international documents.”<sup>33</sup> However, the Church was aware that much of the world did not enjoy the constitutional guarantee and protection of religion. Therefore, the Church supported constitutional guarantees for religious freedom, though the Church did not endorse such constitutional regimes as the only forms of socio-political order under which the Church could exist. Instead, the Church favored these regimes over totalitarian regimes because it allowed the freedom which the Church sought—freedom whereby its members could openly and freely exercise their religious beliefs.

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

It is not a contradiction in terms of policy that the Church would favor governments that guarantee constitutional protection of religious freedom and, at the same time, exist in countries where such protections are nonexistent. It is part of the Church's evangelical and missionary nature to be in all the corners of the world. The Church favors religious freedom because it is conducive to its evangelical mission. It is this desire to exist in a free society whereby believers can worship freely which animates the Church's preferential treatment towards the free society.

### **Unknown Questions**

Once the Iron Curtain fell upon Europe at the end of World War II, it was necessary for the Church to develop a way of approaching the Soviet Union and the various satellite countries it controlled, such as Poland. However, it was clear where the Vatican stood on the issue of communism. Despite the pastoral dilemma of keeping contact with these 150 million faithful Catholics, the Holy See under the auspices of the Pope were clear in their opposition to atheistic communism. In a 1949 address to the crowds outside St. Peter's Basilica, Pope Pius XII stated,

“It is only too well known what a totalitarian, anti-religious state demands of the church as the price of its tolerance: a church that is silent when it should preach; a church that does not oppose the violation of conscience and does not protect the true freedom of the people and its well-founded rights; a church that, with a dishonorable, slavish mentality, closes itself within the four walls of its temples.”<sup>34</sup>

It was clear that the Vatican was not about to let communism overrun Catholicism, wherever it existed. While no pronouncements were ever made, it was clear that, “the church's de facto posture translated into religious and moral support for the Western alliance in its struggle with the East.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> J. Bryan Hehir, “Papal Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Policy* 78, Spring 1990: 28.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

The seminal shift in Catholic-Communist relations is due to the election of Cardinal Angelo Roncalli, a former Vatican diplomat to Turkey, Hungary and Bulgaria as Pope John XXIII in 1958. A believer in opening the doors of diplomatic dialogue, Cardinal Roncalli shocked the world when he announced the opening of Vatican II on January 25, 1959. Promising to open the windows of the Church, Pope John XXIII also had desires to engage the Communist world. According to Hansjakob Stehle, “the Pope had several times expressed himself in his usual circumspect way against communism. What then happened was really not the result of a deliberate diplomacy or planned church policy; it was the expression of spontaneous decisions. They stemmed from an almost ‘unpolitical’ attitude, in which trust in God, worldly piety, and peasant wisdom were combined.”<sup>36</sup> Therefore to state that the diplomatic positions of Pope John XXIII and then later, Pope Paul VI were naive and intrusive into the affairs of the local Churches throughout the East is incorrect. Hansjakob Stehle is quoted as stating, “Diplomacy was and remained for Montini (later Pope Paul VI)...a pastoral instrument, even and especially toward the East, where after all sorts of catastrophes it was often only a matter of ‘*salvare il salvabile*’-saving whatever they could.”<sup>37</sup> For Paul VI, his approach to communism was “To seek a cure for it meant to “battle it not only theoretically, but also practically, to have the therapy follow the diagnosis, healing brotherly love follow doctrinaire condemnation...”<sup>38</sup> Even Paul VI himself stated,

“The Holy See abstains itself from raising, with more frequency and vehemence, the legitimate voice of protest and of disapproval, not because it ignores or neglects the reality of things, but due to a thought of founded on Christian patience and in order not to

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<sup>36</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, *The Eastern Politics of the Vatican, 1917-1979*, (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1981), 301.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 311.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *Il Concilio Vaticano II*, vol. III, p. 13

provoke worse ills.”<sup>39</sup>

Both John XXIII and Paul VI acted as pastors, not politicians, and they understood that only patience and a realistic view of international affairs could help the Church remain active and visible throughout the atheistic Eastern bloc. Nonetheless, John XXIII continued the Vatican’s tough opposition to communism, however with a greater desire for dialogue and diplomacy as a way to give “breathing room” to the Church behind the Iron Curtain. He states:

“The idea was to use Vatican intervention to strengthen the local church across Eastern Europe. The exchange was not over the philosophical divide between the two parties but about specific measures like appointing bishops whom the church could trust and the government could accept and establishing the number of candidates who could be admitted to seminaries.”<sup>40</sup>

The spirit of negotiation and dialogue between the Church and communist regimes escalated with the election of the former Archbishop of Milan, Giovanni Montini, as Pope Paul VI in 1963.

### **The Iron Curtain**

At the beginning of the 1950s, the Communist grip began to fall upon Poland as it was throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Poland was reassured by the head of the Communist Party, Wladyslaw Gomulka that theirs would be a Polish version of communism, not one imposed upon them by Russia.<sup>41</sup> Gomulka was originally appointed as the secretary of the Polish Worker’s Party in 1945, but was defeated by Boleslaw Bierut in the 1945 election of the Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR). Following the end of World War II, the Catholic Church in

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<sup>39</sup> Agostino Casaroli, *The Martyrdom of Patience*, trans. Marco Bagnarol, IMC. (Toronto: Ave Marie Centre of Peace, 2007).

<sup>40</sup> Hehir, 30.

<sup>41</sup> Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 9.

Poland found itself in a surprisingly strong and robust position, rivaling the Communist Party in influence and power.<sup>42</sup> Not only had the Church served as a refuge for those opposed to Nazi terror, but by 1946 no less than 96% of the Polish people were members of the Church's faithful.

<sup>43</sup> This was in contrast to 1773, when only 50% of Poland was Catholic, or 66% in 1921. To avoid conflict with its religious faithful, the atheistic communist government offered a form of compromise. As historian Timothy Garton Ash states, "the Party undertook to refrain from the Church, if the Church undertook to refrain from undermining the State."<sup>44</sup> As part of the terms and conditions, the Church was excluded from media and educational institutions but was allowed to keep contact with the Vatican, as well as make its own appointments of bishop.<sup>45</sup> Nor was the freedom of Catholic Poles to worship abridged.

### **God and Caesar**

For thousands of years, Polish independence and Catholicism had been synonymous. Therefore it was no wonder that in the eyes of the Marxist-inspired communist government, Catholicism had been the major exploiter of Poland. As Russia had been one of Poland's oppressors, alongside Germany and Prussia, Marxism was seen as a uniquely Russian ideology as Russia was the first communist-led government in the history of the world beginning in 1917. Marxism saw itself as the "ultimate development of humankind," which could be achieved through material means only. Catholicism on the other hand saw the soul as being the form of the

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<sup>42</sup> Rosa Maria Bettencourt, *The role of the Catholic Church in elaborating a counter hegemony in opposition to the dominant groups in Brazil and Poland*. PhD dissertation. (University of Southern California. Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI.) Publication No. 9720184.

<sup>43</sup> Davies, 10.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

human body that needed perfecting, which could only be achieved by the grace and mercy of God. Therefore to have two contradictory forces, one an ideological view of the world that is entirely material; and the other, a religious and spiritual force that sees the transcendent, not just the material. It would be this tension that would lead to one of the most important stories of the 20th century. While the two sides fought for nearly half a century, the first true political force that opposed Marxism using the language of the Church was expressed by shipyard workers in the fall of 1981.

### **The Cold War**

The Roman Catholic Church, headquartered in the Vatican in Rome, never formally aligned itself diplomatically with the West or with the United States on the eve of the Cold War.

Pope Pius XII stated,

“We can...demand complete understanding for the fact that, where religion is a living heritage from their forefathers, people view as a crusade the struggle that was unjustly forced upon them by the enemy...We are convinced even today, the only way we can and will save the peace against foe who is determined to impose upon all peoples in one way or another a particular and unbearable way of life, is by the strong and unanimous union of all who love truth and goodness.”<sup>46</sup>

This was consistent with his position on communism as a philosophy. He described it as a “‘false messianic idea’ in which a ‘pseudo-ideal of justice’ is carried by a ‘deceptive mysticism’ about the human condition and its worldly amelioration.”<sup>47</sup>

So serious was the Vatican towards communism, removing Catholics from the Church who claimed to be Communists was justifiable, as far as the Church was concerned. On July 1,

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<sup>46</sup> George Weigel, *The Final Revolution* (Oxford University Press USA, 1992), 67.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 64.

1949 Pope Pius XII excommunicated members of Communist parties through the orders of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith.<sup>48</sup> There were distinctions between those classified as Communists. Those who consciously and voluntarily joined any Communist party was forbidden to receive the Sacraments. Excommunication was only valid to those “believers who espouse the doctrine of materialistic and anti-Christian communism.”<sup>49</sup>

It was not known whether the willingness of the Holy See and communist regimes to communicate with one another would actually allow for “peace and goodwill among the nations” to come to fruition. Some expressed hope, such as Cardinal Eugene Hyginus in his 1976 book, *The Holy See and the International Order*. Referring to the willingness of both sides to engage in dialogue, he wrote, “These factors, combined with a reasonable increase of freedom for the Church to exercise her mission...may in due course lead to the establishing of a more regular and normal relationship.”<sup>50</sup>

The *Ostpolitik*, was the formal diplomatic position of the Holy See beginning with the papacy of Pope John XXIII in the early 1960s and through the papacy of Pope John Paul II in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The principle belief that motivated the *Ostpolitik* was the belief that Eastern Europe would not be freed from communist control in the short-term. Instead, the *Ostpolitik* believed that Marxist-Leninism would be a long-term reality for Eastern European Catholics.<sup>51</sup> The leading executor of this policy would be Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, the Cardinal Secretary of State, appointed by John Paul II in 1979. Prior to this, Casaroli was the

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<sup>48</sup> Stehle, 271.

<sup>49</sup> Stehle, 271.

<sup>50</sup> Eugene Hyginus, *The Holy See and the International Order* (Gerrards Cross, Inc., 1976.), 198.

<sup>51</sup> *The Final Revolution*, 76.

Secretary for the Sacred Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs under Paul VI in 1967.

Upon reflecting what transpired during his time at the helm of the Vatican's foreign policy position, Cardinal Casaroli wrote:

“The dialogue continued to show its limits, yet, within these limits, it even showed its usefulness. In the meantime, it gave the Holy See a possibility that by now the Bishop's rarely had, of clearly insisting upon the requests and the claims of the Church in order to keep them from being forgotten and in better focusing upon the reasons of faith, of reason and of responsibility, upon which they were based. This is not always without some practical result.”<sup>52</sup>

### **Reasons for *Ostpolitik-Detente***

There are several reasons why the Church sought dialogue with Communist states. “The Holy See is not seeking diplomatic relations with the Communist countries, only relations, ‘because they make possible a closer and more continued contact.’”<sup>53</sup> A second reason for is the reality of Catholicism's strength in Eastern Europe, especially in Poland, Croatia and Slovenia. Dunn states, “It would be illogical to assume that the Vatican is conducting *detente* with the Communist governments of these regions in order to weaken the present position of the Catholic Church where it is in a strong position.”<sup>54</sup> This is the reason why Cardinal Casaroli and others were so supportive of a *modus vivendi* between the Church and the communist regimes of the Eastern Soviet bloc.

A third reason and perhaps the most pastoral one from the point of view of the Church, is the possibility that improved diplomatic relations could improve religious toleration of the faithful living under communism. This was the same explanation the Church gave for

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<sup>52</sup> Casaroli, 342.

<sup>53</sup> Dunn, 30.

<sup>54</sup> Dunn, 31.

maintaining relations with Nazi Germany during the Third Reich, to save souls. I believe this was the strongest part of the *Ostpolitik*, although it was not always met with success. The Church in Poland continued to suffer a great deal of persecution, even after Pope Paul VI and Cardinal Casaroli began to implement their *Ostpolitik* approach in the mid-1960s and into the 1970s.

A fourth and I believe the weakest reason for *detente* between the Church and Communist regimes was the hope for character assimilation. The Church believed that collaboration with the Communist regimes would reduce persecution and weaken the Communist mission.<sup>55</sup> If communism was indeed weakened at the time in which *detente* was sought, then perhaps religious freedom may take a stronger hold within Communist societies, more broadly.

### **Catholic Poland and Communist Poland**

Following World War II, Davies writes, “For the first time in history, Poland was a truly Catholic country: and it was this supercharged catholic society which was given an atheist, communist Government.”<sup>56</sup> Despite the deep Catholic presence in Poland, following the war the Polish Communist Party hoped that a schematic Polish National Church would cause a rift between devout Polish Catholics. But the split did not occur on a large scale; the liturgical changes brought about by the Vatican II avoided any potential divisions.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Dunn, 145.

<sup>56</sup> Davies, 10.

<sup>57</sup> St. Mystkowski, *Polski Kosciol Narodowy* (Warsaw, 1923).

## The Five Stages

Communist-Church relations took shape in four different phases, leading up to the election of Karol Wojtyla as the first Polish Pope in 1978. The first was from 1944-45 to 1947 which was characterized by relative toleration.<sup>58</sup> The Church was able to engage in its charitable and social activities, openly publish a variety of journals and newspapers, as well as operate the Catholic University at Lublin. The Church was also exempt from land reform laws passed by the Communists in 1946. Mandatory religious teaching was permitted in public schools. Still, important challenges existed during this time, as well. One was the refusal of the Holy See to recognize bishops for the Oder-Neisse region, which had been gained by Poland following World War II. The Vatican stated that no bishops would be appointed until a formal peace treaty was ratified by Germany and Poland.

A second challenge was the heretical Catholic group known as Pax which sought cooperation between Catholicism and communism. In reality, this group was a puppet of the Communist regime that hoped to divide the Church and challenge the authority of Polish bishops. As Norbert A. Zmijewski stated, "...that Party appreciated Pax's conformity with Marxist ideology, but only as a subversive activity against the Church. Although Pax enjoyed certain privileges, the Party never considered the group as a real or credible political partner."<sup>59</sup>

A third group known as Wiesz, emerged in 1956. Similar to Pax, it sought to marry the ideals of both Catholicism and communism. Wiesz members believed the Church was a social movement that could liberate "man from unjust regimes which violated human rights, as a

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<sup>58</sup> Dunn, 102.

<sup>59</sup> Norbert Zmijewski, *The Catholic-Marxist ideological dialogue in Poland, 1945-1980*, (Dartmouth Pub. Co. ; Brookfield, Vt), 141.

morality prompting social protest.”<sup>60</sup> Their minimalist Marxism was what they hoped would bridge the gap between the Church and communism. But by the 1970s, this project of reconciliation had proved futile since it was Catholicism, not Marxism that “emerged from encounters with Marxism as a strengthened social force which Marxists had to treat seriously in order to survive.”<sup>61</sup>

The second phase in Church-State relations was between 1948 and 1955. This period was an era of “high stalinism” and strong anti-religious persecution.<sup>62</sup> During this time, Caritas, a social service organization operated by the Church was shut down by the government.<sup>63</sup> Many church lands were confiscated by the government, with the exception of small land holdings.

On July 22 1952, a new Polish constitution was enacted establishing the separation of Church and State as a legal decree. This separation meant the Church was now under government decree. On February 9, 1953, a law was passed forcing all ecclesiastical appointments of bishops, priests and religious subject to government approval. The influential Catholic newspaper, *Tygodnik Powszechny* was suspended temporarily in the spring of 1953. Overall, the number of Catholic periodicals nose-dived from 516 to a mere 45. Even the Catholic hierarchy was not immune to attack. Cardinal Wyszyński was removed from his office and placed under guard in a mountain monastery in September 1953. High taxes were placed on churches and schools making it difficult for many to remain open. By the end of 1955, the teaching of Catholic catechism was banned from all Polish schools. By 1956, only 20 Catholic seminaries remained in Poland.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 142.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Dunn, 102.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 103.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 104.

The next period, from 1956 through 1958 was marked by an improvement in treatment of the Church.<sup>65</sup> Cardinal Wyszyński was released from his monastic prison in October 1956. Religious instruction was restored for those who requested it. In the end, more than 90% of Polish school children received religious teaching, per the request of their parents. A new organization of Catholics called Znak Group emerged in 1956. Seen as the ideological opposite of Pax, this group was Catholic *and* vehemently against cooperation with Marxist communism. Znak believed that Władysław Gomułka, the head of the Polish United Workers Party, would place the interests of the nation above ideological interests.

The fourth era, from 1958 to the end of the Gomułka reign in 1970, saw a return to a hard line Stalinist stance on religious issues.<sup>66</sup> The Vatican's refusal to approve bishops for the Oder-Neisse regions as well as the regime's refusal to approve the construction of churches in addition to its exorbitant taxes on church property fueled antagonistic relations between the Church and the State. As a result, religious instruction was banned from public schools. Only in churches or catechism centers could religion be taught. Religious holidays, processions and pilgrimages were all obstructed by government regulations and interferences.

Nonetheless, this was a time of great strength for the Church. By 1967, Poland held five archdioceses, seventeen dioceses, and three diocesan curiae. The clergy numbered 17,986 priests, 3,275 lay brothers, 27,975 nuns, and over 4,000 student seminarians in seventy seminaries.<sup>67</sup> The Church used their numerical strength to routinely speak out against the government in their homilies, careful not to criticize the government too blatantly. The Church continued to grow. By the end of 1977, a decade later, the number of bishops was seventy-seven; priests were up to

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 106.

19,865; 30,000 nuns; and 5,058 seminarians preparing for the priesthood. The number of parishes also increased from 6,376 to 6,716. By 1978, on the eve of the election of the first Polish Pope, 1,007 Polish missionaries could be found throughout Latin America, Africa and Asia.

By the fall of 1966, then-Archbishop Casaroli visited Poland on a fact-finding mission in hopes of laying the groundwork for an agreement between the Holy See and the communist regime.<sup>68</sup> In May 1967, the Vatican appointed four priests of the Oder-Neisse territories from simply vicar generals to apostolic administrators, answerable to the Holy See, not the Church within Poland.<sup>69</sup> In June of that same year, Karol Wojtyla was named Archbishop of Krakow, the second most powerful post in the Polish Church following Cardinal Wyszynski. The breakthrough in Church-State relations was in December 1970, when Polish workers in seaports from Gdańsk to Szczecin began to riot due to the government's raising of food prices. The new leadership of Edward Gierek as head of the Polish Communist Party and Josef Cyrankiewicz as Premier immediately sought the support of the Church in de-escalating the riots. The Polish bishops, led by Cardinal Wyszynski were very clear in their support of the workers against the brutality of the police in suppressing the strike.<sup>70</sup> In light of the assistance provided to the state by the Church, Edward Gierek announced that the government would "strive for a full normalization of relations with the Church."<sup>71</sup>

Relations continued to improve into 1972. The government announced on February 28, that it would no longer require the Church to submit financial documentation related to its

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 108.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 100.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 109.

purchases and assets.<sup>72</sup> On the part of the Vatican, it agreed to recognize the Oder-Neisse territories by granting full ecclesiastical recognition of the areas as part of Poland proper. This act was a huge step in securing improvements between the Church and the Communist government. It is here where the efforts at normalization come to somewhat of a stalemate given that Cardinal Wyszyński was becoming increasingly frustrated with the pursuit of improved relations, led by Cardinal Casaroli: he felt that he and other Polish leaders were being short-circuited by the Vatican. Therefore, it is important to note the significance of the election of Karol Wojtyła in 1978. The late 1970s constituted the breaking point in relations between the Church and the government, therefore the election of a native son as Pope could not have happened at a better time.

### **Unresolved Issues**

The 1950s were marked by a great deal of persecution from the communist regime. One favored technique of the Communists was to divide the Church politically, in the form of various Church-sponsored charitable organizations. Beginning in the 1960s, the Church began a series of unprecedented engagements in the communist world. It began negotiations with communist Yugoslavia, made an agreement with Hungary's communist government, and Paul VI met with the Soviet Foreign Minister at the United Nations.<sup>73</sup>

Despite the Church's persecuted status in Poland, the Church in Rome and the local Church in Poland continued to not see eye to eye on how best to deal with its Communist opposition. How would Catholicism, in Rome, Krakow and Warsaw respond? This is the major

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 112.

<sup>73</sup> The Final Revolution, 74.

problem that existed once Poland fell to communism following World War II, and it continued up until communism's fall in 1989. Who would best deal with the Communist threat; Rome, or Poland itself?

A low point between Polish bishops and the Vatican in dealing with communism came on April 14, 1950 in the form of a communiqué written by Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Primate of Poland, the highest ranking cleric in Poland and the Archbishop of Warsaw. It is clear that while Cardinal Wyszyński wished to remain faithfully obedient to the Pope on matters of faith and Church doctrine, he unequivocally opposed the Vatican intervening in political affairs within Poland between the Church and the communist authorities. Here, Cardinal Wyszyński also alluded to the Catholic principle of subsidiarity which states that matters ought to be dealt with at the lowest levels of power as possible. Cardinal Wyszyński also declared that above all, the Church in Poland remain faithful to the mission of the Church Universal by opposing anything that would inhibit practice of the faith. Here are articles five, six, and seven from the communiqué which state the intentions of the Polish Church and of Cardinal Wyszyński:

“The principle that the Pope is the competent and highest authority of the church refers to matters of faith, morals and ecclesiastical jurisdiction; in other matters, the episcopate is guided by Polish reason of state. Proceeding from the principle that the mission of the church can be realized under various socio-economic systems erected by secular authority, the episcopate informs the clergy that it does not oppose the construction of the cooperatives in the villages, since every cooperative system basically rests on the ethical basis of human nature which is oriented toward voluntary social solidarity and has the general welfare as its goal. True to its principles, to condemn any anti-state behavior, the church will above all oppose any exploitation of religious feelings for anti-state purposes.”<sup>74</sup>

This statement makes it abundantly clear how determined Cardinal Wyszyński was in protecting the integrity and sovereignty of the *Polish* Church. He was not about to let Rome call the shots

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<sup>74</sup> Stehle, 276.

when it was he and the Church that he led which were the singular leader against communism within Poland. In response to this communiqué, the Polish regime agreed not to touch religious instruction, the Catholic university in Lublin, Catholic organizations, pilgrimages, processions, charitable ministries, and the activity of religious communities.

Relations continued to improve throughout the 1950s when on December 7, 1956, the government agreed to release “all imprisoned clerics, promised ‘to remove obstructions which arose in the earlier period in the process of implementing the principle of complete freedom in religious life.’”<sup>75</sup> The Polish bishops in returned agreed to promote civic obedience to the People’s Republic of Poland.

It would be an understatement to say that Cardinal Wyszyński was not an enthusiastic proponent of the *Ostpolitik*. It was clear that he believed that as the highest ranking Catholic official in Poland, he ought to be the one strategizing on how best to overcome Polish communism, not Popes John XXIII, Paul VI and especially not Cardinal Casaroli. So strongly was Cardinal Wyszyński opposed to Vatican interference inside Poland, he raised the stakes again on November 13, 1965 in a sermon at the Warsaw Cathedral, in the presence of Cardinal Casaroli. Attempting to thwart potential advancements between Rome and the Communist regime, he reiterated his desire for independence from Roman interference. He stated,

“We are aware that it will be very difficult, but not impossible, to put the decisions of the Council into effect in our situation. Therefore we ask the Holy Father for one favor: for complete trust in the episcopate and the church of our country. One request may appear very presumptuous, but it is difficult to judge our situation from afar. Everything that occurs in the life of our church must be assessed from the standpoint of our experiences...If one thing is painful for us, it is above all the lack of *understanding* among our brothers in Christ. If anything grieves us, it is only the *lack of trust* that we often feel in spite of the proofs of loyalty to the church and to the Holy See that we have presented in *refusing offers of an easy, more comfortable life...*”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 297.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 341.

This was not to be the case, in the eyes of the Roman practitioners of the *Ostpolitik*. Rome believed that short term battles between the church and state would “not encourage but exhaust the faithful, indeed would leave them susceptible to the secularization that takes place in a growing industrial society even without the assistance of the Communists.”<sup>77</sup> The constant battles and skirmishes between Cardinal Wyszyński and the communist regime were not the foundation for stable, normalized relations between the Church and the government.

At the same time, by the late 1960s, “the curia never wanted to circumvent the Polish episcopate, to ignore it, to be played off against it; but it could also no longer abstain from active participation in the regulation of the Polish church question.”<sup>78</sup> The Polish Church and Rome were constantly second guessing themselves because their strategies were on two different levels. For Rome, it was about saving what could be saved. For the Polish Church, and other local churches throughout the Iron Curtain, it was about fighting their communist rulers, not just coexisting beside them.

### **Letters, Lands and a City without God**

In 1965, Polish bishops announced plans to celebrate the millennium of Christianity in Poland in the year 1966. But first, they decided to write a letter to their fellow bishops in Germany to invite them to attend the festivities. More importantly, the letter was meant to apologize and to ask for forgiveness for the many transgressions and tensions that had existed between the two sides for centuries, between the two nations and the two national churches.<sup>79</sup> In

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 343.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 345.

<sup>79</sup> George Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, (HarperCollins: New York), 178.

practical terms the letter was meant to pave the way to recognizing the lands near the Oder and Neisse rivers as part of Poland, and giving them proper *Polish* dioceses. This was a matter of great controversy given that the official border between the two countries was never officially finalized following World War II. As it happened, not only ecclesiastical recognition but also national unity and reconciliation were paramount. But this olive branch was rejected by the communist government, retorting in a letter of their own, “No one gave a mandate to the Polish bishops to take a position on matters...belonging to the competence of other venues.”<sup>80</sup> The only body “entitled to make pronouncements in the name of the Polish nation is the government of the Polish People’s Republic.” Not only did the German bishops accept the letter of apology written by the Polish bishops, but the retort given by the government didn’t stick. The Polish people understood that there was a need for reconciliation and unity between Poland and Germany which meant overcoming the scars that had existed between the two countries.

Another pastoral and political issue that confronted the young Bishop Wojtyla concerned the city of Nowa Huta in eastern Poland. Communist authorities had hoped to make the city a model socialist city which would be completely void of any expressions of religious identity. Since there was no church, every year since 1959, Father and later-Bishop Wojtyla would celebrate Christmas midnight mass in an open field. On October 14, 1967, this “Godless” city saw the foundation of a Catholic church being built.<sup>81</sup> Cardinal Wojtyla led the groundbreaking ceremony, placing a stone given to him by Pope Paul VI that was part of the tomb of St. Peter, the first Pope, as part of the church’s foundation. The Church would be known as the “Ark Church” since the Church would serve as a maternal ark, representative of the Virgin Mary,

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 179.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 190.

sheltering her people from the harm and danger that existed outside in the form of communism.

In his homily during the mass opening the Church, Cardinal Wojtyla stated,

“This is not a city of people who belong to no one, of people to whom one may do whatever one wants, who may be manipulated according to the laws of production and consumption. This is a city of the children of God... This temple was necessary so that this could be expressed, that it could be emphasized.”<sup>82</sup>

Here again, Cardinal Wojtyla would not accept the fate of a Poland that was not Catholic, or a Poland that was persecuted for its faith. Instead, he would fight the fight of a Polish patriot, defending his faith and his motherland.

### **The Diplomacy of John Paul II**

Karol Wojtyla’s understanding of the human person, and of the world at large, greatly influenced his teachings on religious freedom and freedom of conscience, as Pope John Paul II.<sup>83</sup> He believed that only freedom in Christ would be the bridge out of totalitarian life. Catholic theologian and papal observer George Weigel writes that John Paul II believed, “Communion with God, made possible through Jesus Christ, is not a zero-sum game; dependence on God increases human freedom.”<sup>84</sup>

It is true that Pope Paul VI was not seeking a dynamic diplomatic relationship between the Catholic Church and communism, but rather trying a relationship in which the Church could simply live and exist alongside communism in the best way possible. Weigel states that Pope Paul VI, “was not so much seeking a *modus vivendi*, a way of living, with communist regimes; he was trying to effect a *modus non moriendi*-a tolerable relationship with these regimes-so that

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<sup>82</sup> Adam Boniecki, MIC. *Kalendarium zycia Karola Wojtyly*. (Krakow: Znak, 1979), English translation by Irena and Thaddeus Mirecki et al.

<sup>83</sup> The Final Revolution, 83.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 78.

the Church, even in a diminished or hard-pressed condition, would not die.”<sup>85</sup> Under Pope Paul VI, the *Ostpolitik* became, “Catholic participation in the search for possible areas of cooperation between Catholics and communists based on a mutually respectful philosophical and even theological dialogue.”<sup>86</sup> In contrast, John Paul II “was determined to locate step-by-step diplomacy in the context of a dynamic, aggressive, and comprehensive evangelical campaign, in which he would take a highly visible role.”<sup>87</sup> However, the role that John Paul II would play as a moral witness against communism was not anticipated by Polish communist officials.

Upon his election as Pope, a senior Polish communist official was quoted as stating, “We can expect the Holy See to stick to the path of reconciliation, of *Ostpolitik*.”<sup>88</sup> Poland’s communist authorities believed that because he was ‘non-political’ as a bishop, he would remain politically uninterested in political affairs as Pope. However, some knew that a Polish Pope may pose a threat to Polish communism. This was apparent when Stanislaw Kania, the Communist Party’s Administration Department chief was asked by another official, “What if the new pope decides to come to Poland?” Kania responded, “Those trips alone might pose a danger to the stability of Poland.”<sup>89</sup>

No singular moment in the history of Communist-Catholic relations inside and outside of Poland had a more transforming effect than John Paul II’s visit to Poland in June 1979, less than a year after being elected Pope. One unnamed party directive stated,

“The Pope is our enemy...He is dangerous, because he will make St. Stanislaw...a defender of human rights...[O]ur activities designed to atheize the youth not only cannot

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 88.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 88.

<sup>88</sup> Ed. Chester Gillis, *The Political Papacy: John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and their Influence*. (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 26.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 26.

diminish but must intensely develop...In this respect all means are allowed and we cannot allow any sentiments.”<sup>90</sup>

On the night of June 3, 1979, the night John Paul II arrived from Rome, Edward Gierek and Premier Piotr Jaroszewicz openly feared the “destabilization” that was being caused by the Pope’s visit.<sup>91</sup> It was indeed a destabilizing moment for the Communist government. At his opening mass in Warsaw’s Victory Square, the crowd shouted, “We want God, we want God, we want God in the family circle, we want God in books, in schools, we want God in government orders, we want God, we want God.”<sup>92</sup> Davies writes, “The Pope made no overt comments on the political scene: but the blatant contrast between the authentic spontaneous authority of the Church, and the artificial authority of the Party was exposed to the full view of the television cameras.”<sup>93</sup> It was unnecessary for the Pope to ‘act political’ but rather to maintain his identity as a Catholic leader and as a faithful son of Poland. Weigel called this visit, “the most politically potent intervention in world affairs since the Middle Ages.”<sup>94</sup>

That is what he was asking the Polish people to do: be themselves, and not to conform to the communist dictates from above. Davies continues, “After that, the die was cast. The crack in the crust of the Polish communists’ world had been opened. Only one small disturbance was needed to release a pent-up eruption of popular resentment.”<sup>95</sup> The following day, June 3, the crowds were even larger at the Shrine to Our Lady of Czestochowa. There, the Pope was acting his most political. As historian John Gaddis wrote, the Pope “slyly reminded the authorities that

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<sup>90</sup> John Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, (Penguin Books, 2006), 192.

<sup>91</sup> Gillis, 27.

<sup>92</sup> Quoted by Peter Hebblethwaite in Alexander Tomsy, ‘John Paul II in Poland’, in *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 7, no. 3, autumn 1979.

<sup>93</sup> Heart of Europe, 10.

<sup>94</sup> George Weigel, “Lessons in Stagecraft,” *First Things* May 2015: 26.

<sup>95</sup> Heart of Europe, 10.

the church's teaching on religious freedom 'directly tallies with the principles promulgated in fundamental state and international documents, including the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic.'"<sup>96</sup>

So successful was John Paul II's visit, it was no longer possible to deny the damage done to Polish communism. Wiktor Kulerski, a Solidarity activist a year after the pope's visit stated,

"We're living in a different country. Communism doesn't matter anymore, because nobody submits to it. The pope is here, and he's beyond the reach of the communists. He can say and do the things we can't. They can't get him. People repeat the pope's words, and they know that he's their bulwark."<sup>97</sup>

Polish historian Timothy Garton Ash wrote it is "hard to conceive of Solidarity without the Polish Pope."<sup>98</sup> Philosopher Jozef Tischner called the founding of Solidarity as the "huge forest planted by awakened consciences."<sup>99</sup> Therefore, it could be argued that the Pope's visit to Poland was the soil to this forest, this forest that would change the course of Polish, European and world history.

Even if the Pope did not explicitly support Solidarity, the Polish bishops did. In a statement written on August 16, 1981, they wrote sympathetically to Polish workers, "Working people rightly wish to have the opportunity to control what was jointly produced, the manner in which the fruits of common work was shared." The relationship between the Church and Solidarity remained very close. Walesa's devout piety, the numerous images of support: Walesa being embraced by the Pope, religious chants being heard at Solidarity rallies made it clear that the Church was giving a tacit, if not explicit endorsement of Solidarity's mission.<sup>100</sup> Even though

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<sup>96</sup> Gaddis, 193.

<sup>97</sup> Gillis, 29.

<sup>98</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*. (Yale University Press, 2002), 33.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 280.

<sup>100</sup> *The Heart of Europe*, 51.

the Church still indirectly supported Solidarity, it tried to quietly accept its status as a non-legal entity by the mid-1980s. This was prophetic and politically astute, since it paved the way for Solidarity to enjoy political success in the non-communist elections of 1989, in which Solidarity proved triumphant winning all but one seat in the Polish parliament.<sup>101</sup>

John Paul II would continue to impact Polish politics, this time during the declaration of martial law in 1981.<sup>102</sup> Writing to bishops on August 23, 1981, he stated,

“I am writing these brief words to say how especially close I have felt to you in the course of these last difficult days. I pray with all my heart that the bishops of Poland...can even now help this nation in its difficult struggle for...the safeguarding of its inviolable rights to its own life and development.”<sup>103</sup>

He would even write to Jaruzelski himself, pleading for the need for reconciliation and not martial law.<sup>104</sup>

### **Queen of Poland**

Another key religious element invoked by John Paul II was the image of Our Lady of Czestochowa, also known as the Black Madonna. The Black Madonna is an icon of the Virgin Mary, who is considered the Queen of Poland by generations of faithful Catholic Poles. While visiting the shrine to the Black Madonna at Jasna Gora, John Paul II stated that sovereignty only derives from a state's identity. In the case of Poland, it was her religious identity. He stated, “The state is firmly sovereign when it governs society and also serves the common good of society and allows the nation to realize its own subjectivity, its own identity.” He extolled the intercession of her stating, “Queen of Poland, I also wish to entrust you with the difficult task of those who

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<sup>101</sup> Weigel, May 2015, 29.

<sup>102</sup> Gillis, 35.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 36-37.

wield authority on Polish soil...The state gains its strength first of all from the support from the people.”<sup>105</sup>

## **Solidarnosc**

Solidarity, which became the first non-socialist labor union in communist-occupied Eastern Europe in August 31, 1981, was never officially designated to be a Catholic labor union. However, in a country that was as devoutly Catholic as Poland, the Church provided with its tacit support, the institutional legitimacy that did not exist anywhere else in Polish society.

The first election where Solidarity leaders could freely and openly be elected was on June 4, 1989.<sup>106</sup> At this time, it was so important that non-communist candidates be elected that Solidarity chose one candidate for each seat it was allowed to contest under the conditions of the Round Table agreement.<sup>107</sup> The voting procedures forced the voter to cross out candidates they wanted not to win, instead of selecting the candidates they wanted to win. Despite this having an unusual psychological affect on the voter; it was refuting the names of some candidates by crossing them out, not choosing preferred names; the result was unprecedented. According to Janusz Onyszkiewicz, the national spokesman for Solidarity, the election on June 4 gave way to three things previously unknown in communist Poland. First, the communists lost. Secondly, Solidarity, the first non-communist labor union in Soviet satellite countries, had won. And lastly and most importantly, the communist regime acknowledged that they had lost and Solidarity had

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<sup>105</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on The Fate of Central Europe* (Cambridge, Penguin Books, 1989), 47. More information on John Paul’s travels to Poland as Pope can be found on pgs. 42-54 of *The Uses of Adversity*).

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*.

won.<sup>108</sup> However, this was not all good news for Solidarity. Only 61% of Poland had gone to the polls, and many people felt they had nothing to vote for.<sup>109</sup> Solidarity, which received much of its thought from the Church, had not received the support of the Catholic Archbishop of Warsaw, who instead supported Christian Democrats. Nonetheless, this was a transformative moment in Polish history. “It was the first time that voters could choose freely. That freedom was used for the crossing-off of those who were in power till now.”<sup>110</sup> Even Cardinal Casaroli admitted,

“The Poland of Solidarnosc and of the period following the election of John Paul II as Pope was certainly unforeseeable in the 1960’s. But it was already possible during that time period to notice that it represented the weak link in the chain of the countries of ‘real socialism.’”<sup>111</sup>

But ultimately, none of these things would have taken place on June 4 had it not been for the instrumental presence of Solidarity. Its figurehead and leader was Lech Walesa, an electrician who had been arrested in the Gdansk protests of August 1981. Beneath him was a loose structure of national, regional, and local citizens’ committee that participated in political campaigns. These political bodies were responsible for sending 99 Solidarity members to the 100 member Senate, and 161 of the 460 member lower house, Sejm.<sup>112</sup> The reputation of Solidarity was so strong and the stakes were so high, one observer stated, “A monkey for Solidarity would win, and St. Paul for PUWP (Polish United Workers’ Party) would lose!”<sup>113</sup> At its zenith in 1981, Solidarity made up 10 million members, or one out of every seven Poles.<sup>114</sup> However, Solidarity led by Walesa, was pushed quickly into power. Their time table for transitioning

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>111</sup> Casaroli, 46.

<sup>112</sup> The Uses of Adversity, 33.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 34.

Poland out of communism and into democratic capitalism would have to be disregarded. Economic anxiety caused by price increases and spikes in inflation forced Solidarity into management mode more quickly than it had anticipated.<sup>115</sup>

However, Solidarity was more than the social, economic and political groan against communism during the 1980s. Instead, Solidarity has a more profound and theologically significant meaning that fits with Poland's Catholic character. According to Polish priest and philosopher Jozef Tischner, who served as the first chaplain of Solidarity, to be in solidarity means to "carry the burden of another person."<sup>116</sup> This was especially true for the Solidarity movement as it essentially carried an entire country that had been wounded by its communist rulers. Tischer continues by stating that "the ethic of solidarity intends to be an ethic of conscience. It assumes that human beings are endowed with conscience. Conscience denotes the natural human 'ethical sense'...independent of the various ethical systems."<sup>117</sup> This ethical sense appeals to a normative and universal standard for all people, regardless of the external ideological pressures that are being imposed upon him. This is very similar to the Catholic understanding of conscience, which states that the conscience is the heart listening to the voice of God.<sup>118</sup> Every person must listen to this voice to discover the truth of his surroundings, especially the truth of the conditions of those around him. Tischner states, "solidarity with those who suffer at the hands of others is particularly vital, strong, spontaneous."<sup>119</sup> This spontaneity is explained when one appeals to his ethical sensibilities of what is right and wrong, true and false; then one

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>116</sup> Jozef Tischner, *The Spirit of Solidarity* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 2.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>118</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1777.

<sup>119</sup> Tischner, 2.

is able to more clearly understand what is intrinsically repugnant. This is possible regardless of the external ideologies since truth is not bound to any construction or manipulation but only to what truly is real. It was this discernment and reflection which gave the Solidarity movement the courage to speak to power, forcefully and unequivocally. This would not have been possible without an astute Catholic understanding of solidarity and conscience. To remove the Catholic conception of solidarity from the Solidarity movement is to misunderstand both. This is why understanding the Polish opposition to communism must be viewed from the backdrop of a very Catholic philosophical view of the world and of the human person.

Solidarity, as a movement was also closely tied to freedom and the Catholic conception of work and the dignity of workers. In 1970, the Church began to express its views on non-religious issues, most notably regarding the rights of workers. Even Cardinal Wyszyński spoke out on this issue, stating:

“Man must not only work he also has the right to live in dignity and to work in dignity. The labor of the free, not slaves, makes progress...Though I do not belong to the party I think that as bishop I have the right to make claims on behalf of all people whose rights are limited.”<sup>120</sup>

Tischner also comments on the philosophical underpinnings of freedom and their vulnerability, particularly in the context of a totalitarian setting like communist Poland. He states, “Freedom is indispensable and freedom is disturbing. Without freedom, no deed, no desire, no accomplished function, will be a person’s own deed. People in their deeds ought to be themselves.”<sup>121</sup> This is a distinctly Catholic understanding of freedom, one which John Paul II, as the philosopher Karol Wojtyła would have articulated. This is why the freedom that all Poles sought, not just Catholics and not just Solidarity members, was so earth shattering. Freedom for them was part of their

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<sup>120</sup> Robert Zuzowski, “The State, the Church, and the Intelligentsia in Poland’s Politics,” Austrian Outlook, 42 (August 1988): 107.

<sup>121</sup> Tischner, viii.

identity and to be free, they also had to simply *be themselves* which is exactly what they were not allowed to do under communism. For Poles, this conception of freedom meant that they could genuinely be culturally and socially Polish. This desire took priority over achieving other forms of freedom: social, political, or economic. Simply put, the freedom to be Polish preceded all other kinds of freedom.

### **The Pope and Solidarity**

The Gdansk Accords were formally signed by Lech Walesa, the leader of the Solidarity trade union and Gierek on August 31, 1981 giving Solidarity recognition as the first non-communist trade union in the communist East. Stefan Kisielewski, Catholic writer, noted that the Church was managing the first democratic strike in Poland's history.<sup>122</sup> The religious undertones could not have been more clear. An image of the Black Madonna was on the lapel of Walesa when arrived at the negotiations with other civic leaders. Not only that, the pen used by Walesa used to sign the agreement had an image of Pope John Paul II on it, which was given to Walesa by John Paul II during his visit to Poland just a year prior.<sup>123</sup>

On May 28, 1981, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, the Primate of Poland and the face of Polish resistance to communism for much of the middle third of the 20th century died. Following Cardinal Wyszyński's death, it appeared unclear whether Wyszyński's successor, Cardinal Jozef Glemp would be supportive of Solidarity's efforts. Glemp, a quiet and pious man, was very different from the assertive, tough Wyszyński and the charismatic Wojtyła. Andrew Nagorski stated that "...if Glemp sent out ambiguous signals, other bishops and priests across the

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<sup>122</sup> Gillis, 33.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

country provided practical support that proved indispensable to the opposition's sustained resistance."<sup>124</sup>

The 1980s can be characterized as a time of timid support of Solidarity from Cardinal Glemp, even though "The combination of the presence of a Polish pope in the Vatican and the high moral prestige of the church as the defender of human rights prompted record numbers of young men to enter seminaries."<sup>125</sup> Even with the loss of Cardinal Wyszyński, the Church remained robustly influential and powerful. This was in no small part due to the fact that one of their own was at the helm in St. Peter's.

While I will not describe in detail the events of the Solidarity movement, but rather only its relationship with the Catholic Church and the revolution of conscience that erupted in 1989, the Church played a firm role in the eruption of nonviolent Solidarity protesters. In his book, *The Final Revolution*, Weigel asks the same question, 'What was it about Solidarity? In Poland? At the time that it all took place? He gives one possible answer, "...the strong position of the Church and its identification, in the popular mind, with the national identity."<sup>126</sup>

Solidarity must be placed among the few non-violent movements that was able to achieve important political change without engaging in terrorism or violence. Norman Davies states this must have surprised the communist regime stating, "Yet knowing their adversarial mentality, they must have been pleasantly surprised that in 1980-1981 Solidarity's ten million members, with abundant access to industrial dynamite and technical expertise, never once resorted to bombings or sabotage, and that in 1982 the incidence of terrorism was limited to a small number

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<sup>124</sup> Andrew Nagorski, *Birth of Freedom: Shaping Lives and Societies in the New Eastern Europe* (Simon & Schuster: New York), 237.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> *Final Revolution*, 56.

of bloodless hijackings.”<sup>127</sup> Whereas the government saw nonviolence as weakness, the people of Solidarity and of the nation as a whole saw this as a witness of the principles of the Church. Unlike in Ireland, where religion was used to justify violence in the case of the IRA, in Poland religion was used peacefully to work towards a more just and humane world.

### **Calling Evil by Name**

Did Karol Wojtyla, or his election as John Paul II end communism in Eastern Europe? That would be both a very simplistic and erroneous diagnosis for communism’s demise. Even John Paul II himself stated, “...it would be simplistic to say that Divine Providence caused the fall of communism. In a certain sense communism as a system fell by itself. It fell as a consequence of its own mistakes and abuses. *It proved to be a medicine more dangerous than the disease itself.*”<sup>128</sup> Nonetheless, it was John Paul II’s moral witness and tireless pursuit to defend the dignity of his native Poland which led him to have such an enormous impact on the political stage. John Gaddis wrote, “Real power rested, during the final decade of the Cold War, with leaders like Pope John Paul II, whose mastery of intangibles--of such qualities as courage, eloquence, imagination, determination, and faith--allowed them (the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.) to expose disparities between what people believed and the systems under which the Cold War had obliged them to live.”<sup>129</sup> Leaders like Reagan, Gorbachev, and Thatcher all contributed greatly to the fall of communism. But like everything in life, even the non-political can become political and that is exactly what took place as John Paul II stormed the world’s stage and helped lead a robust revolution of conscience against communist tyranny.

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<sup>127</sup> Heart of Europe, 346.

<sup>128</sup> Gillis, 24.

<sup>129</sup> Gaddis, 196.

Just as Poland stood up in August 1980, the Pope called on the people to “that witness which amaze the whole world, when the Polish worker stood up for himself with the gospel in his hand and a prayer on his lips.”<sup>130</sup> The fight of August 1980 remained the fight of June 1983.

In his June 1983 visit to Poland, his first under Polish martial law, he reminded the crowd,

“This moral victory, however, is not to be won merely by patient suffering in faith. No, it demands ‘living in truth’. ‘It means that I make an effort to be a person with a conscience...I call good and evil by name...’<sup>131</sup>

His visit was marked by noticeable references to the political conditions in Poland, criticizing the “privileges for some and discrimination against others” and “international reconciliation depends on recognition of and respect for the rights to the existence and self-determination, to its own culture and the many forms of developing it.”<sup>132</sup> This is consistent with John Paul II’s motif that was evident throughout his pontificate, that culture and in its heart, religion, was the engine of history, not economics as was argued by Marxist communism. John Paul believed that “at the center of culture is cult, or religion: what people believe, cherish and worship; what people are willing to stake their lives, and their children’s lives, on.”<sup>133</sup>

Here we see another difference between the *Ostpolitik* of John XXIII and Paul VI on the one hand, and John Paul II on the other. John Paul II believed that pushing the political and social realities was only possible by living consciously in the truth. Only at this fundamental level could Polish society not only coexist with Polish communism, but it could transcend it by

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<sup>130</sup> The Uses of Adversity, 45.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Pope John Paul II, “Homily of His Holiness John Paul II to the Pilgrims from Lower Silesia and Silesia” Czestochowa, Poland, June 5, 1979. Vatican Archives.

<sup>133</sup> Weigel, May 2015, 29.

living differently; living in truth, trust and in genuine community.

### **Aftermath**

On February 27, 1985, Polish Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko told John Paul II at the Vatican that the Soviets might be interested in establishing diplomatic relations as well as discussing issues like arms control.<sup>134</sup> General Secretary of the U.S.S.R. Mikhail Gorbachev used the word *perestroika*, the concept of political and economic reforms that took place in the U.S.S.R. in the mid 1980s, as a result of the influence of the Solidarity movement. Gorbachev stated, “Perestroika is an avalanche that we have unleashed and it’s going to roll on. Perestroika is a continuation of Solidarity. Without Solidarity there would be no Perestroika.”<sup>135</sup> Conditions improved on September 11, 1986 when the government announced the release of political prisoners, the most important demand made by the resistance movement since the Gdansk Agreements of 1981.<sup>136</sup>

The Pontiff’s astute presence was felt once again on January 13, 1987 when Jaruzelski met with the Pope at the Vatican. Jaruzelski stated, “I found that [the pope] had a complete understanding of the processes through which we were living. I concluded that the pope saw in the trends and changes occurring in Poland a significance well beyond the Polish framework...that they [were], to a great extent, an impulse for the changes occurring in the other countries, especially in the Soviet Union.”<sup>137</sup> Nonetheless, martial law was not lifted and Poland remained a police state.

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<sup>134</sup> Gillis, 39.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 42.

The power of John Paul II's moral witness was felt on June 8, 1987, his third visit to Poland since becoming Pope. The mood was different than his first visit in 1979. The backdrop was a somber, depressed people although optimism and hope could be felt around the corner. At a mass in Gdansk before 750,000 workers and their families, John Paul II invoked the Gdansk accords stating they "will go down in history of Poland as an expression of the growing consciousness of the working people concerning the entire social-moral order on Polish soil."<sup>138</sup> He went on, telling the emotional crowd, "I pray for you every day in Rome. I pray for my motherland and for you workers. I pray for the special heritage of Polish Solidarity."<sup>139</sup> Once again, history was on the side of the Polish workers and not the communist regime. On January 18, 1989, Jaruzelski announced that Solidarity would be recognized as a legal trade union once again. Given the pressure placed on the communist regime by the witness of John Paul II, it is difficult to imagine Solidarity's electoral victory on June 4, 1989 without John Paul II and his moral and religious leadership.

Norman Davies has written a great deal about the importance of Poland as being the center of major moments of European political and social life, not only in the 20th century but throughout European culture and history. According to him,

Poland "is a repository of moral ideas and ancient values that can outlast any number of military or political catastrophes...Poland is the point where the rival cultures and philosophies of our continent confront each other in the most acute form, where the tensions of the European drama are played out in the flesh and nerves of a large nation."<sup>140</sup>

It must be remembered that it was Hitler's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939 which led to the horrific Second World War and all of its disastrous consequences for Europe

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> The Heart of Europe, 406.

and the world. Poland's brief independence prior to World War II is also symbolic of the lack of freedom that was experienced not just in Poland but throughout Europe in the 20th century. Therefore, given its history with Nazism and communism, it is difficult to imagine the 20th century without including the critical importance of the Polish nation therein. And of course, any mention of Poland must also include a discussion of the contributions of the Catholic Church in Polish life. Davies stated:

“[The Church] has been interceding with the powers that be ever since the Partitions [of the late 18th century], and its stature as the only national institution with genuine authority and legitimacy obliged the Hierarchy to hold the ring between Party and people.”<sup>141</sup>

The Church, perhaps given its divine heritage and that it “embodies the most ancient and the most exalted ideals of traditional Polish life across the centuries” has remained a constant throughout Polish history.<sup>142</sup> A Polish observer wrote, “Kingdoms, dynasties, republics, parties, and regimes have come and gone; but the Church seems to go on forever.”<sup>143</sup> What is even more ironic is that Poland has never had an official church, codified into law. Unlike England, Spain and others where the Church and State were nearly inseparable, religion in Poland always enjoyed a fair amount of independence.<sup>144</sup>

### **Catholic Foreign Policy: Yesterday**

The Church's role is to bear witness to the Truth which she believes to have been revealed to her by Jesus Christ. In order to find this Truth, those who are part of the Church must

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<sup>141</sup> Heart of Europe, 361.

<sup>142</sup> Norman Davies, *God's Playground, A History of Poland, Vol. 2: 1795 to the Present*. (Columbia University Press: New York), 225.

<sup>143</sup> Bp Wincenty Urban, *Ostatni etap dziejow kościoła w Polsce przed nowym tysiącleciem, 1815-1965* (Rome) 555.

<sup>144</sup> God's Playground, 223.

have the opportunity to worship God and live a life in faith, as expressed by the Sacraments and teachings of a Catholic life. Therefore one ought to recognize the achievements of the *Ostpolitik*, despite the fact that it did not allow for the Church to publicly confront communism. Weigel believes that the failure of the *Ostpolitik* was its ability to provide a moral critique of communism, which eventually came to fruition under John Paul II. He states, “The *Ostpolitik* did nothing but make Churches behind the Iron Curtain more vulnerable to Communist persecution and infiltration from the Soviet Union and her satellite states.”<sup>145</sup> But the *Ostpolitik* did allow for the faithful to continue to practice the faith, albeit in a clandestine, and often oppressed way.

However, Weigel’s critique is not entirely erroneous. He states that part of the *Ostpolitik* strategy was for the Church to “make provision for the appointment of bishops and the continuity of the Church’s sacramental life by reaching agreements with existing governments, even if such agreements were deplored by the local underground Church.”<sup>146</sup> Weigel is correct to point out that often the underground, or rather local Churches knew more about the day-to-day situations facing the Church than did clerics in Rome. This is an important feature of Catholic Social Teaching: subsidiarity. According to Church teaching, subsidiarity is defined as “a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order...but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society...”<sup>147</sup> This is an interesting facet that is overlooked in examining the *Ostpolitik*. Often times, it is viewed as simply a diplomatic theory without examining it in relation to the Church’s broader social teaching. Here, I wish to examine this often ignored part of the *Ostpolitik*.

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<sup>145</sup> Weigel, May 2015, 28.

<sup>146</sup> George Weigel, “Papacy and Power.” *First Things* (February 2001).

<sup>147</sup> CA 48 § 4; cf. Pius XI, *Quadragesimo anno* I,184-186.

Was the *Ostpolitik* consistent with subsidiarity? Yes, inasmuch as it uses the superior political mechanisms of the Holy See in doing something that the local churches cannot accomplish on their own: protection of religious freedom and expression. If the *Ostpolitik* does not accomplish some tangible common good, then no, the *Ostpolitik* was not consistent with subsidiarity because it was acting in a way that could have been achieved by the local Churches behind the Iron Curtain. According to Weigel, the *Ostpolitik* undermined the ability of local churches existing and doing the grimy work of fighting and defending the faithful against communist interference and oppression. In his analysis, the *Ostpolitik* was ultimately a failure because it did not forcefully confront the menace of Marxist-Leninist communism by fighting it on moral, philosophical and spiritual grounds. Such was the action of John Paul II, which differed greatly from the *Ostpolitik* of Popes John XXIII and Paul VI which had been exercised prior to his election. Another view to consider is this: perhaps the *Ostpolitik* was not consistent with subsidiarity in that it was crafted by individuals: Italians Roncalli, Montini, and Casaroli, who did not have first-hand knowledge of the situation that existed behind the Iron Curtain. Perhaps it was necessary that the knowledgeable Pole Wojtyla be successful in a way that his Italian colleagues were not. He was simply able to understand the issues better than they did and was able to know clearly that 1978 and the succeeding decade was the time for a moral battle, a battle of the hearts that was different than *salvare il salvabile*, or 'saving what could be saved' in the political and diplomatic sense.

One thing that is perhaps overlooked in the analysis of John Paul II's role opposing communism is the fact that he affirmed the *Ostpolitik* by appointing Cardinal Casaroli as his Secretary of State in 1979. He could have removed the man who was the chief architect in

post-war Vatican-Communist relations. But instead, he gave him the Cardinal's hat in 1978 and the Vatican's chief diplomatic post a year later. In doing so, John Paul II shrewdly couldn't be blamed for opposing dialogue and improved diplomatic relations with the Communist world by removing Cardinal Casaroli from his post. By removing Cardinal Casaroli, John Paul II could have given the signal to both communist officials and clerics behind the Iron Curtain that the invitation to dialogue, previously opened by Casaroli and Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, was now closed. But rather, John Paul II knew that on a delicate world stage, visuals can be more powerful than actions and words.

Further, to state that John Paul II was changing the position of the Church in a partisan way that was different from that of Paul VI and John XXIII is equally incorrect. Unlike in American politics, the papacy constantly speaks with one voice, the voice given to it by Jesus Christ to St. Peter, the first pope. To argue that the styles and approaches of John Paul II were opposed to the efforts of John XXIII and Paul VI fails to see the importance of continuity in papal teachings and in the position taken therein, by the Church.

Ought foreign policy strategies be executed with the needs of the faithful in mind? Yes, absolutely. This was unquestionably the intention of Cardinal Casaroli, Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II. However, whether the *Ostpolitik* was consistent with the principle of subsidiarity remains to be seen. I believe that the difference was the fact that the Slavic Pope simply understood the issues better than Casaroli and Montini and was therefore better equipped to make the bold moral witness that set into motion the Revolution of 1989. Weigel states that John Paul II used "Remnants of a 'Constantinian' approach to playing by the rules of the game which

would be deployed for whatever they might achieve,”<sup>148</sup> meaning the strategy begun by Casaroli and Montini nearly a decade before Wojtyła’s election. However, Weigel continues, “the Pope himself would pursue a ‘post-Constantinian’ strategy of appealing directly to peoples who could be aroused to new, nonviolent forms of resistance and thence to self-liberation through a call to moral arms and a revival of Christian humanism.”<sup>149</sup> Could a non-Slavic Pope have generated the enormous response of unleashing a spiritual movement that was able to confront communism in the way that John Paul II did? I believe it is unlikely. A Slavic son like John Paul II was so powerful and so effective because he was so different. While his evangelical zeal cannot be underestimated either, the fact that John Paul II understood the issues of the Churches in the East in a more intimate and dynamic way, more so than Casaroli and Montini, cannot be overstated. All politics is indeed local, whether those politics are ecclesiastical, diplomatic, international, or on the rare-occasion, a combination of all three.

### **Catholic Foreign Policy: The Future**

In John Paul II’s visit to the United States in 1979, he stated the substance of his ministry.

“My own spiritual and religious mission impels me to be the messenger of peace and brotherhood, and to witness to the true greatness of every human person...It is in this dignity of the human person that I see the meaning of history, and that I find the principle that gives sense to the role which every human being has to assume for his or her own advancement.”<sup>150</sup>

Here, we have a small but profound statement about what should be guiding the socio-political principles viz a viz the Vatican in the modern, secular world. It is the dignity of the human

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<sup>148</sup> Weigel, February 2001.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Pope John Paul II, “Address of His Holiness John Paul II to the President of the United States of America” Washington, D.C., October 6, 1979. Vatican Archives.

person, a conviction with the capability to formally and unapologetically engage the world with the problems facing the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as well as serve as the foundation for a renewed, updated and yet consistent view of Catholic international relations. The Vatican ought not to reinvent the wheel when it comes to foreign policy; though it must boldly and fearlessly call out the injustices and harms that threaten human dignity and promote safeguards of human rights and development which can serve to protect this dignity, regardless of the nation, culture, or time period. The Vatican does not and ought not to lead with militarized weaponry and imperial arrogance, when confronting the modern world. However, the Church must use its missionary witness as the basis for establishing a theory of international relations and foreign engagement. “Not only has the Vatican extracted few concessions to religious freedom in return for its diplomatic support, critics assert, but Vatican policy also strengthens Communist regimes by enhancing both their internal and external legitimacy.”<sup>151</sup>

The decline of the *Ostpolitik* and the pivotal moral and political witness of John Paul II and the Catholic Church highlight something very important in terms of foreign policy and the Catholic Church. While the *Ostpolitik* was said to be a formal foreign policy approach used by the Catholic Church to engage Moscow and her satellite regimes, since the end of communism there has not been a formal theory of foreign policy which has been used by the Vatican to articulate Catholic values when engaging with modernity. The closest the Catholic Church has come to formal statements on socio-political arrangements was in John Paul II’s encyclical, *Centesimus Annus* of 1993 which gave tacit support for democracy, free market and civic, voluntary institutions. Also, in his 2007 encyclical, *Charity in Truth*, *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope

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<sup>151</sup> John M. Kramer. “The Vatican’s ‘Ostpolitik’” *The Review of Politics* 42, no. 3 (1980): 307.

Benedict XVI gave some recommendations on how to structure a just, moral society following the financial crisis of the 2008.

On complicated military and political issues facing the modern world, the Catholic Church has been largely silent. Many commentators have stated they hope Pope Francis, the first Pontiff from the developing world, will speak boldly on urgent political issues. However, stating something in a homily or statement does not have the same kind of institutional legitimacy as a formal foreign policy that can be applied in certain political situations, which was one of the few strengths of the *Ostpolitik*. While it was very weak, the *Ostpolitik* was a tool to be used to engage in communication with 20th century communism. While Pope John XXIII may have been well-intentioned in crafting this policy, he failed to realistically see the evil that communism presented from the perspective of Catholic doctrine.

Nonetheless, the *Ostpolitik* was never fully presented as the official and public position of the Church on issues related to communism. This was the inherent failure of *Ostpolitik*: it failed to adequately articulate the Catholic position in a way that was clear to all parties involved. A similar critique states:

“One of the remarkable things about it, at first blush, is that it was never formulated, never articulated by Pope Paul VI...There was no debate in the Church about the wisdom or effect of the *Ostpolitik*, just a lot of murmuring behind hands from exiles. This was the tradition of Vatican diplomacy: act behind the scenes or under the table, do not expose yourself to the possibility of rebuff; tell people what it means only afterwards.”<sup>152</sup>

While I strongly resist advocating that the Catholic Church should be some sort of political powerhouse, it does have an important role to play in shaping the socio-political configurations of the modern world. Furthermore, the Church’s purpose is not political, primarily. The Church’s

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<sup>152</sup> Peter C. Kent and John F. Pollard (eds.) *Papal Diplomacy in the Modern Age* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 254.

purpose is to be a religious institution, giving witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, believed to be the Son of God, a transcendent religious figure, not a temporal one. Cardinal Casaroli states this clearly when he says,

“The diplomacy of Holy See has this characteristic: it sends its representative to different countries, not only to defend the rights of the Holy See, the Church, but it sends them, to defend the rights and to serve the needs of the people in those countries.”<sup>153</sup>

The Catholic Church, as the religious home of over 1 billion people in every corner of the world, must speak in a formal and compelling voice which advances the needs and rights of all persons, not just Catholics. The most effective way to do this, I argue, is for the Vatican led by the Pope, to have a formal foreign policy which is based on the realistic understanding of the world’s most serious challenges. This ought to be crafted together by theologians and foreign policy experts. Theologians, so that any international policy can be informed by the Christian tradition of church-state relations going back to Augustine, Aquinas, the rich social teaching of the Catholic Church and most recently, Vatican II. Any Catholic foreign policy must be guided by the principles of Christian realism.

One of the most fundamental beliefs of Christianity is recognizing the fundamental reality of God, the relationship between man and God through the history of salvation going back to the creation of the Earth. The Catholic Church believes that God’s active participation and involvement in human affairs is a fundamental, truthful reality that must be grasped with in its totality. These are real beliefs that the Church holds to be true. They are not malleable fads that can change depending on the currents of the times.

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<sup>153</sup> Casaroli, 73.

The way in which the Catholic Church evangelizes to the world has to be marked by how the “signs of the times” impact the present and potentially the future, as emphasized by Vatican II. While this has not always been true in the history of the Church, Vatican II reminded the Church of the need to engage the needs and realities of the modern world as a fundamental need for her mission in evangelization. While this paper cannot comment on the entirety of the issues facing the modern world in which the Catholic Church has an important role to play, I wish now to comment briefly on some urgent issues in which a revised Catholic foreign policy can be of particular value. One of the failures of John Paul II’s papacy on the issue of social and political issues was the failure to develop a revised theory on just war. Weigel highlights the need for a new conversation on just war theory while speaking at Columbia University. He states, “The Catholic Church, because it is the bearer of a great tradition of moral realism applied to world politics, is distinctively positioned to broker a new and wiser conversation throughout the world about the way in which moral truths impinge on the politics of nations.”<sup>154</sup>

Just as the Catholic Church had come to formally embrace religious freedom and pluralism in Vatican II, perhaps the Catholic Church can help Islamic leaders create a theory of religious freedom and pluralism. This would be particularly helpful in navigating the complexities facing the Middle East. Instead of turning to American military prowess or U.N. interventionism, perhaps what is needed is a serious, thoughtful, and most of all, real conversation on the political aspirations of Islam in the context of its religious and cultural heritage. This is the format that took place during Vatican II; a re-awakening of the Catholic perspective on church-state relations that looked at modernity in a serious way. Still, it must be

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<sup>154</sup> George Weigel. “World Order: What Catholics Forgot,” May 2004, First Things Magazine.

noted that Vatican II was only a start. The work of church-state relations, initiated by men like Archbishop Wojtyla, and the American Jesuit scholar John Courtney Murray who focused on reconciling the project of American democracy and Catholic church-state relations, remains the work of today.

While the work of Catholic international relations is an important project for the Church as well as for the world, the words of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World states:

“Christ, to be sure, gave his church no proper mission in the political, economic and social order. The purpose which He set before her is a religious one. But out of this religious mission itself comes a function, a light, and an energy which can serve to structure and consolidate the human community according to the divine law.”<sup>155</sup>

Until the temporal gives way to the eternal, the Catholic Church must concern itself with issues of the here and now. A new theory of Catholic international relations is one such opportunity to do so.

### **Faith, Freedom and Memory**

All persons bring with them the experiences of their past and on up to their present condition. The idea of history and memory is one of profound consequence when seeking to understand the decisions and experiences of John Paul II which led him to articulate a unique view of human freedom. According to Tischner in the introduction of *Memory and Identity*, “You cannot understand John Paul II’s thought if you do not realize that it arose from the world of Auschwitz and Kolyma.”<sup>156</sup> . This freedom is not one that is unique to most Western ears,

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<sup>155</sup> Second Vatican Council. Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI. *Gaudium et Spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World], sec. 42, December 7, 1965.

<sup>156</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Memory and Identity* (New York: Rizzoli Publishers, 2005), vii.

since to them freedom is the ability to do what one wishes with one's life. However, this is not the notion of freedom according to John Paul II. David Hollenbach argues that his conception was "freedom that is not anchored in...[basic] truths about the person is not freedom at all."<sup>157</sup>

First, freedom was in service of the truth about the human person.<sup>158</sup> John Paul II grew up in an environment where the truth was always being compromised for the political needs of the communist regime. For the young Karol Wojtyła, the demands of economic or political ideologies, whether it was Nazism or Stalinism, denied that there was more to the person besides their religious, ethnic or class designation. For him this was not only incorrect from the viewpoint of his religious convictions but also from a rational and philosophical basis. The truth of John Paul II was anchored in understanding that persons were made in the image and likeness of God, but that also freedom could be realized in social life beyond what was offered by totalitarianism. In his 1991 encyclical on social teaching, John Paul II writes,

"Socialism considers the individual person simply as an element, a molecule within the social organism, so that the good of the individual is completely subordinated to the functioning of the socio-economic mechanism. Socialism likewise maintained that the good of the individual can be realized without reference to his freedom choice, to the unique and exclusive responsibility which he exercises in the face of good and evil."<sup>159</sup>

It is here that we see symmetry between the vision of the human person offered by John Paul II's teaching and the vision articulated by Solidarity. This means realizing that the truth of the human person means acting in accordance with human nature itself.<sup>160</sup> To protect and foster individual dignity *a priori*, individual rights must also exist to protect this dignity. Only through

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<sup>157</sup> David Hollenbach, *The Global Face of Public Faith: Politics, Human Rights, and Christian Ethics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 60, 63.

<sup>158</sup> See John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis* note 72 at para 12; *Evangelium Vitae*, note 45 at para 71.

<sup>159</sup> John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, note 72, para 13.

<sup>160</sup> Gerald J. Beyer. "Freedom, Truth, and Law in the Mind and Homeland of John Paul II" *University of Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics, and Public Policy* 21, no. 2. (2007), 33.

protecting human dignity can a society achieve freedom and solidarity. This was the vision sought by Solidarity and articulated in John Paul II's social teaching.

This is a view that has been justified by social psychologist, Erich Fromm. He argues that the resistance to "live into" one's freedom, led people to abandon their duties as persons and seek refuge in authoritarian regimes.<sup>161</sup> The inability to embrace one's individual freedom leads one to embrace the idea that the masses ought to be controlled and cared for by authoritarian governments. This is a way that individuals cope with modern challenges: by "escaping from freedom into the hands of an authoritarian master."<sup>162</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to have the good of the individual, put more clearly as their individual human dignity, not just the dignity and sovereignty of the collective. Instead, it is the freedom in which the individual retains its individuality, but is able to "overcome[s] the isolation of negative freedom by spontaneously loving and being in solidarity with others."<sup>163</sup> These ideas transcend certain economic, political or social conditions of the temporal order and instead point toward what Fromm calls, "inherent laws and mechanism" of the human person and therefore the human person ought not to be seen as "infinitely malleable".<sup>164</sup>

The idea of freedom that is opposed by Pope John Paul II exalts the person as an individual divorced from the community, eschews his solidarity with others, and denies the role of moral, absolute truth of the human person.<sup>165</sup> It is in knowing the conditions of our communities which allows us to overcome the isolation of acting as individual, autonomous agents. The only way to be attentive to the fragility of one's individual freedom is to be aware of

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<sup>161</sup> Erich H. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* 150-51 (First Owl Books, 1994).

<sup>162</sup> Beyer, 33.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*, 36.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

the freedom and lives of those around us. When the equal worth of our neighbors is disregarded, we find ourselves in a similar society to Wojtyla's Poland. Many other examples of disregarding the equal worth of our neighbors are found beyond Poland. One can look at Nazi Germany's treatment of Jews, the Khmer Rouge's slaughtering of Cambodians, and the Rwandan genocide, all of which show that modernity's failures to uphold solidarity are numerous. As Gerald Beyer states, when the truth "about the equal worth and dignity of every human person is eclipsed, the existence of 'freedom' can easily degenerate into 'unfreedom.'"<sup>166</sup> It is this never tiring commitment to the dignity of every human person, to which Pope John Paul II and countless others committed their life to, which ultimately proved successful in overcoming the unfreedom of communist tyranny and the triumph of authentic freedom.

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 37.

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