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CONCERN AND ACTION. CARDINAL STEFAN WYSZYŃSKI AND WEST POMERANIA

INTRODUCTION

The historiography of the Catholic Church in West Pomerania comprises the figure of Cardinal Wyszyński – Primate of Poland, thanks to the publication prepared by two priests: Aleksander Ziejewski and Grzegorz Wejman. It constitutes a record of a scientific conference, which took place in Szczecin on 30th November 2012¹. However, in 2001 The Pomeranian Library in Szczecin issued an interesting brochure devoted to Primate, where large fragments of Cardinal Wyszyński's speeches during his visits in West Pomerania were submitted there. The selection of documents was conducted by Lidia Milewska². Other publications deal with the contacts

¹ *Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. Remembrance and gratitude in West Pomerania*, ed: priest A. Ziejewski, G. Wejman, Szczecin 2013.

² *Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. Primate of the Millennium 1901-1981*, selection and compilation: L. Milewska, Szczecin 2001.

of Primate of the Millennium with West Pomerania in a broader context of relations and a priestly service of the Church³.

The issues describing the activity of Primate of the Millennium are also very numerous on the national basis⁴.

The objective of the article is the portrayal of the relations which bound Primate of Poland Cardinal Wyszyński with West Pomerania. Three basic aspects were analysed. The fulfilment of the role of the ordinary of Gorzów by Cardinal, solicitations for the canonical institution of the permanent Church organisation in West Pomerania and visits, which were paid not only on occasion of important religious events, but also in relation with a priestly service in the society.

CARDINAL STEFAN WYSZYŃSKI AS THE ORDINARY OF GORZÓW (1951-1967)

Taking advantage of his entitlements, archbishop Wyszyński approved of the election of the Council of Consultors, appointing

³ More on this issue, see: G. Wejman, *The Organisation of the Catholic Church in West Pomerania and Lubusz Land in the years 1945-1972*, Szczecin 2009; K. Kowalczyk, *In the fight for power over souls. The policy of national authorities towards the Catholic Church in West Pomerania in the years 1945-1956*, Szczecin 2003; D. Śmierchalski-Wachocz, *Roman Catholic clergy in West Pomerania, Central Pomerania and in Lubusz Land in the light of national documents from the years 1945-1989, volume 1*, Zielona Góra 2014; Z. Stanuch, *The fight for religion. School and non-school catechism in West Pomerania in the years 1945-1961*, Szczecin 2014; *The history of the Catholic Church in West Pomerania, vol. 1: years 1945-1956*, ed. M. Siedziako, Z. Stanuch, G. Wejman, Szczecin 2016; *volume 2: years 1956-1972*, ed. M. Siedziako, Z. Stanuch, G. Wejman, Warszawa-Szczecin 2017.

More on this issue, see, among others: E. Czaczkowska, *Cardinal Wyszyński. Biography*, Kraków 2013; A. Dudek, R. Gryz, *The communists and the Church in Poland (1945-1989)*, Kraków 2006; J. Żaryn, *The history of the Catholic Church in Poland (1944-1989)*, Warszawa 2003; Z. Zieliński, *The Church in Poland*, Radom 2003.

⁴ More on this issue, see, among others: E. Czaczkowska, *Cardinal Wyszyński. Biography*, Kraków 2013; A. Dudek, R. Gryz, *The communists and the Church in Poland (1945-1989)*, Kraków 2006; J. Żaryn, *The history of the Catholic Church in Poland (1944-1989)*, Warszawa 2003; Z. Zieliński, *The Church in Poland*, Radom 2003.

priest Tadeusz Załuczkowski his general vicar within the area of ordinariate of Gorzów. This event took place on 30th January 1951. Priest Załuczkowski took over his office on 3d February, and a week later he arrived in Warsaw to see Primate, taking a relevant oath to him. Primate Wyszyński conducted this approval, not wanting to tighten up the relation of the Church with the national authorities. Fortunately for the Church in Gorzów, priest Załuczkowski turned out to be a loyal priest towards Cardinal, not making any decisions without prior consultations with him. Unfortunately, this vicar general died a year later. "This premature death causes a very uncomfortable situation for the Church – Primate wrote in his notes – because it is unknown how the national authorities would behave"⁵.

The situation was really difficult. We need to remember that already in April 1951 Wyszyński obtained an episcopal nomination from the pope Pius XII for priest Teodor Bensch. However, the political situation in the state, and additionally the subsequent imprisonment of Primate caused that priest Bensch could not receive his episcopal consecration in an explicit way. He did it only on 21st September 1954 in an archbishop palace in Poznań from archbishop Walenty Dymek. He could formally take over his office of the ruler of the ordinariate of Gorzów only as a result of post-October thaw⁶.

Let us return, however, to 1952, when Priest Załuczkowski died, and Wyszyński, after his "leave for the Lord's house" made the aforementioned comment about the difficult situation of the church of Gorzów. After priest Załuczkowski's death, Wyszyński saw bishop Bensch in the office of the ruler of the ordinariate. Nevertheless, he could not realise his plan, and not wanting to cause irritations with the authorities, he agreed for a compromise. Eventually, Primate approved of the election of priest Zygmunt Szelążek. He did it by

⁵ S. Wyszyński, *Pro memoria*, vol. 1, 1948-1952, ed. P. Skibiński, Warszawa 2017, p. 141.

⁶ G. Wejman, *Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in the process of the organisation of the Catholic Church in West Pomerania*, in: *Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński*, op. cit., p. 49.

a decree of 6th March 1952. He, also as a vicar general, was given relevant proxies.

The afore-mentioned bishop Bensch only after over four years, since priest Załuczowski's death, could take over his office of the rule of the ordinariate of Gorzów. Precisely on 10th December 1956 Wyszynski provided him with relevant authorisations, essential to hold this office, appointing him *de facto* his vicar general, but with the entitlements of a resident bishop⁷. Wyszynski did a similar thing in relations to bishop Wilhelm Pluta, who received his nomination decree on 4th July 1958⁸.

The situation changed in 1967. Then, the Holy See, at the request of Primate, instituted Apostolic Administration of Gorzów by a decree of 25th May, simultaneously appointing bishop Pluta an apostolic administrator⁹. This state lasted until 28th June 1972 when by means of a papal bull *Episcoporum Poloniae coetus* Paul VI divided a big administration of Gorzów into three smaller dioceses: of Gorzów, of Szczecin-Kamień and of Koszalin-Kołobrzeg.

THE ACTIVITIES IN FAVOUR OF THE REGULATION OF THE CHURCH ORGANISATION IN WEST POMERANIA

This division was indispensable, because the area bishops were supposed to govern was vast, which also negatively influenced the priestly work in the society. The situation was not normal in this respect. Realising that, Primate in agreement with other bishops prepared a memorandum, which he submitted to Paul VI on 15th December 1969 in Rome. 56 bishops signed it. The document contained the justification of the attempts to properly regulate the Church administrations in the Western Lands. With reference to the ordinariate of Gorzów it was the following: "The ordinariate

⁷ Ibidem, p. 49.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 50-51.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 53.

of Gorzów amounts to 1 950 000 Christians, 400 parishes and 1002 priests. The Ordinariate of Gorzów comprises 44 000 km², a huge digit for one diocese. You need to cover 600 km to get from one end of to the other”¹⁰. The numbers make us realize the concern and the activities of Cardinal Wyszyński in favour of this division. It was obvious that the governance of smaller dioceses will be easier. Therefore, the memorandum ends with the following request: “We ask the Holy See to allow for the creation the new Polish diocesan centres in the western areas, particularly there where the territories covered by the current Church organisation are too vast”¹¹.

Wyszyński was regularly contacting bishop Pluta and his suffragans: Ignacy Jeż and Jerzy Stroba in case of the division of the administration of Gorzów. The bishops of Gorzów in the document of 10th May 1972, known as *Pro Memoria of Gorzów* presented the arguments for Primate concerning: the regulation of a legal status of the dioceses in the western and northern lands and the division of the current diocese of Gorzów.

The long-awaited decision of the pope Paul VI became a fact on 26th June 1972. However, at his request it was officially announced two days later by a papal bull titled: *Episcoporum Poloniae coetus*. We read in it, among others:

„The diocese of Gorzów will comprise the territory of Zielona Góra Province, which we separate from the archdiocese of Wrocław, from the diocese of Berlin and from the prelature of Piła. The city of Gorzów Wielkopolski will be the episcopal capital. The diocese of Gorzów will belong to the metropolis of Wrocław, and its bishop will be subordinate to the metropolitan bishop of Wrocław, in accordance with applicable law.

The diocese of Szczecin-Kamień will comprise the territory of Szczecin Province; simultaneously we separate the territory above

¹⁰ *The Memorandum of Polish Bishops' Conference to His Holiness the Holy Father Paul VI. 116th Plenary Conference of Polish Bishops' Conference; Warszawa, 1st October 1969.* In: *The inception of the diocese of Szczecin-Kamień*, op. cit., p. 63.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 63-64.

from the diocese of Berlin. The city of Szczecin will be the episcopal capital. The diocese will henceforth belong to the metropolis of Gniezno, and its bishop will be subordinate to the metropolitan bishop of Gniezno, in accordance with applicable law.

The diocese of Koszalin-Kołobrzeg will comprise the territory of Koszalin Province and district of Lębork as well as the parishes of Kostkowie and Wierzchucino, located within the area of Gdańsk Province; the territories above are separated from the diocese of Berlin and the prelature of Piła. Koszalin will be the capital of this diocese. The new diocese and its bishop will be subordinate to the capital of Gniezno and its metropolitan bishop¹².

Thereby, the perennial efforts to regulate the Church structures in the western and northern lands of Poland were successful. The advantageous decision in this issue was possible thanks to the involvement of Cardinal Wyszyński and his model cooperation with the bishops of Gorzów.

CARDINAL WYSZYŃSKI'S VISITS IN WEST POMERANIA

The issues related to the organisation of the Church in the Western Lands were not the only ones Primate of Poland had to face. He was mainly interested in the fate of the people, who, after the end of the war, massively moved to the west. The inhabitants of West Pomerania could experience the meeting with Primate in the following years: in 1950, 1952, 1957, 1961, 1966, 1967, 1972, 1974, 1975, 1977. Sometimes it occurred so that Primate was pilgrimising to West Pomerania twice within a year. It was, for instance, in 1952, 1972 and 1974. The intention of the author of this article is not a detailed description of each of these visits, because it had been done¹³. However, it is worth examining

¹² *The papal bull of Paul VI „Episcoporum Poloniae coetus”, Rome, 28th June 1972. In: The inception of the diocese of Szczecin-Kamień, op. cit., p. 117.*

¹³ Cf. G. Wejman, *Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in the process of the organisation of the Catholic Church in West Pomerania, in: Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, op. cit.,*

the notes of the very Cardinal, which constitute a collection of his own reflections about West Pomerania and its inhabitants.

Apart from his participation in huge Church ceremonies, Primate was also involved in an ordinary priestly service. In spring 1952 he visited Szczecin Province to dispense a confirmation sacrament to youth. He recollected later: "After St. Adalbert's festival, in the early morning, I set off with bishop Baraniak and priest Jan Zaręba, *via* Poznań and Gorzów, to the deanery of Kamień of the diocese of Gorzów. Our objective is to conduct confirmation in Golczewo, Wolin, Świnouście, Międzyzdroje, etc. [...] We arrived in Golczewo at 5:30 p.m. Almost the entire parish with the kids to be confirmed were waiting for us in front of the gate. The official speaker was tongue-tied, similarly to a small girl. But all eyes were smiling with kindness and joy. The people are mostly from Vilnius, from L'viv to a certain degree. They work very hard, on vast fields, today almost entirely sown and cultivated. The towns lie in ruins – not much is done here. However, the roads are diligently being rebuilt: they are perfect anyway [...] Poor people, but sacrificial and overcoming the subversion of transmigration from the far east to the western verge of Homeland"¹⁴. Approximately one thousand five hundred kids and youth were confirmed in Golczewo. Primate also visited Przybiernów, Stepnica, Ładzin, Wolin, Kamień Pomorski and Świnoujście.

In 1952 it was not his last journey to West Pomerania. The second stay was related to the invitation of the academic priest from Szczecin, father Władysław Siwek, PhD. (Society of Jesus). The invitation was strictly related to the liquidation of The College of Religious Knowledge in Szczecin. Primate was hosted in the capital of West Pomerania Province since 29th November to 1st December. His visit went down in history due to one significant event. During his stay in Szczecin he found out that had been nominated to become a cardinal.

p. 58-68; T. Ceynowa, *The stay of Primate of Poland Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in the area of the diocese of Koszalin-Kołobrzeg*, in: *Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński*, op. cit., p. 179-216.

¹⁴ S. Wyszyński, *Pro memoria*, vol. 1, 1948-1952, op. cit., p. 196.

Since that moment Primate of Poland was labelled as “the Cardinal of Szczecin”.

Primate also had to attend important Church events. The celebrations of the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland were apparently one of such events. They took place in the ordinariate of Gorzów on 5th and 6th November 1966, at first in Szczecin, and subsequently in Gorzów Wielkopolski. The relics of five brothers from Międzyrzecz were also brought to Międzyrzecz on this occasion. Cardinal Wyszyński also cared about the recognition of the role of Kamień Pomorski and Kołobrzeg in the history of the Catholic Church in West Pomerania, therefore the millennial celebrations took place in these towns as well. Primate visited the historical episcopal capitals on 1st and 2nd July 1967.

Moreover, Primate of Poland appeared in West Pomerania again in 1972 and 1974. The main reason of his arrival was firstly the ingress of bishop Jerzy Stroba, and subsequently the ceremony of 850th anniversary of the mission of bishop Otto from Bamberg in West Pomerania.

In 1974 Primate of Poland consecrated the first auxiliary bishop of the diocese of Szczecin-Kamień, priest Jan Gałęcki¹⁵ and auxiliary bishop of the diocese of Koszalin-Kołobrzeg, priest Tadeusz Werno¹⁶.

Cardinal Wyszyński visited West Pomerania again on occasion of 975th anniversary of the institution of the metropolis of Gniezno and the episcopate of Kołobrzeg. It was in 1975. Then, two years later he visited the so-called Central Pomerania again on occasion of the fifth anniversary of the institution of the diocese of Koszalin-Kołobrzeg.

While analysing the speeches of Primate during his visits in West Pomerania we may conclude that they mainly concerned, among others: the history of the Church in West Pomerania, or they referred to the times of the institution of the diocese of Kołobrzeg and Kamień and the post-war period. Also, he appreciated the role of the Catholic

¹⁵ G. Wejman, *Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in the process of the organisation of the Catholic Church in West Pomerania*, op. cit., p. 66.

¹⁶ T. Ceynowa, *The stay of Primate of Poland Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in the area of the diocese of Koszalin-Kołobrzeg*, op. cit., p. 190.

clergy and the society in favour of domestication of lands previously belonging to Germany. In this case the words: *Subdue the land!* may be treated as a certain motto for this priestly activity. Primate also called for the Catholic education of children and youth and to care about family.

CONCLUSIONS

With reference to West Pomerania Cardinal Wyszyński was the continuator of the mission of Primate August Hlond. His concern mainly concerned the canonical institution of the permanent Church organisation and the fate of people, who, after the end of the war, massively moved to the western lands. However, the issue of the institution of the permanent Church organisation in the Western Lands was the most important. This objective was achieved in 1972, after signing the treaty between the Polish People's Republic and Federal Republic of Germany (in 1970) and its ratification. Primate's frequent visits in West Pomerania were also significant. They emphasised his bond with the region, and simultaneously they strengthened the society and the clergy in work in favour of domestication of these lands.

The scientific reflection over Cardinal's attitude to West Pomerania currently aims at the attempt to briefly conclude, to concisely refer to what Primate had done for West Pomerania. The analysis of the quoted literature allows for the formulation of the thesis that there was a profound concern of Primate of Poland in his attitude to the former provinces: Szczecin and Koszalin. It was reflected in his very specific actions in this respect. Apart from the specific examples, mentioned here, very specific numbers assist us in the clarification of this statement. Owing to G. Wejman, during his thirty-year Primatial service Cardinal visited the contemporary metropolis of Szczecin-Kamień 19 times¹⁷. It follows that he visited West

¹⁷ G. Wejman, *Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in the process of the organisation of the Catholic Church in West Pomerania*, op. cit., p. 45.

Pomerania every 1.5 years on average. He also participated in huge Church events, e.g.: The Millennium of the Baptism of Poland as well as he also fulfilled his priestly service by dispensing a confirmation sacrament. This frequency is indicative of his profound interest in the fate of the inhabitants of the so-called Regained Lands. He visited the present diocese of Szczecin-Kamień 9 times, and he was in Szczecin seven times¹⁸. Apart from his visits, there were also other forms of contacts, for example, the meetings with rulers of the dioceses on occasion of the conferences of Polish Bishops' Conference. Certainly, during talks run at the conferences the issue of the situation of the Church in the Western Lands was also mentioned.

It all causes that the inhabitants of West Pomerania saw a shepherd in the person of Primate, who was expressing his concern by specific actions.

Summary

While analysing the attitude of Primate of Poland Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński to West Pomerania, we may enumerate three basic aspects. Firstly, the role which Cardinal played by fulfilling the post of the ordinary of the ordinariate of Gorzów. He was then interested, among others, in the provision of the continuity of management in this territory. Secondly, mainly thanks to his efforts and involvement of bishops of Gorzów, they succeeded in 1972 in dividing the big apostolic administration of Gorzów into three smaller dioceses. Thirdly, the issue concerning the relation with the Christians from West Pomerania is equally significant. Primate was very frequently visiting this region. In the opinion of the author of the article, the words "*Concern and action*" reflect best his interest in the fate of the Christians, who appeared after the war in the so-called Regained Lands.

Keywords: Stefan Wyszyński, Catholic Church in West Pomerania, institution of permanent Church organisation in West Pomerania.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

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