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## The Standpoint of the Holy See on Communism From Benedict XV to John Paul II

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## The Standpoint of the Holy See on Communism From Benedict XV to John Paul II\*

**Abstract:** The article presents the relations of the Holy See, both as the supreme authority of the Roman Catholic Church and subject of the public international relations law, with the authorities of the European communist states. The first part shows the position of the Holy See towards the communist regime of the Soviet Union in the period from the October Revolution till the end of the Second World War. The Holy See started charitable activities for the benefit of starving Russian population and negotiations with the representatives of the Soviet Union. In the first phase, the communist authorities offered the Holy See the termination of an international agreement and normalization of diplomatic relations, but they were unwilling to stop fighting religion and prosecuting the Church. In the second phase, the contacts between the Holy See and the communist authorities were interrupted. It was then that Pope Pius XI came with critical evaluation of ideological assumptions and methods of the communist governance (the *Divini Redemptoris* encyclical).

The second part contains a review of relations of the Holy See with the states of Central and Eastern Europe that were imposed by the communist rule after the Second World War, and with the Soviet Union—in the period from the end of the Second World War to the collapse of the communist bloc in Europe. At first, the governments of those countries broke off diplomatic relations with the Holy See as well as the concordat, negotiated in the interwar period, starting to limit the freedoms of Church and discrimination of believers. It was then that the Holy See granted special faculties (*facultates speciales*) to the bishops in dioceses in these countries that were to secure the functioning of the Church in a degree that would be close to normal. During the pontificate of John XXIII a dialogue was initiated with the communist governments of the European countries to secure the freedom of religion. Still, those governments aimed at the

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international support of the Holy See for their policies, while they did not stop to limit religious freedoms. During the pontificate of John Paul II the Holy See put a strong emphasis on supporting Solidarity and the right of self-governance of the nations.

Keywords: Church and State, diplomatic relations, concordat, self government, religious freedom, legal regulations, political system

## Initial Remarks

The issue of relations between The Holy See<sup>1</sup> and the communist states includes a broad range of both pragmatic and doctrinal aspects. It is first recommended to start with the identity of the Parties of those relations and their respective aims. In its relations with the communist states—similarly to that with other entities—the Holy See played a double role. The first was that of the highest authority within the Roman Catholic Church, a universal religious community that was performing its mission within territories of numerous countries; the latter—of participant of international relations, equipped with public-legal personality that included the ability to hold diplomatic relations and conclude international agreements.<sup>2</sup> The respective states set their relations with the Holy See depending on their political regime, that is, the sum of ideological assumptions that the state authority based its relation with its society upon, and the methods that it relies on in its relations that society. We can commonly distinguish between two opposing political regimes—the totalitarian and the democratic ones, and the intermediate type—the autocratic regime. There are different versions of these regimes. The Holy See takes position according to ideological assumptions that they rely to set their relations with their societies, the methods for implementation thereof and the possibilities of accomplishing its religious and moral mission therein. In the 20th century the Holy See faced the need to take position relative to the communist states in their Marxist-Leninist version. The first state of this type was the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics that was created in Russia after the October Revolution of 1917. After the Second World War this regime was forcibly imposed in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, we have to distinguish two separate stages in relations between the Holy See and the communist states.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The name “Holy See” or the “Apostolic See” means the Bishops of Rome, that is the Pope as the head of the Roman Catholic Church and the Roman Curia, that is the set of auxiliary institutions, through which the Pope acts in the Church and in the world. See Can. 361 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

<sup>2</sup> More on this subject: Józef Krukowski, *Kościelne prawo publiczne. Prawo konkordatowe* (Lublin 2013), 177–264.

<sup>3</sup> See Hansjakob Stehle, *Tajna dyplomacja watykańska. Papiestwo wobec komunizmu* (1917–1991) (Warszawa 1993). With precision of a chronicle writer the author presented the course of

## From the October Revolution till the end of the Second World War

Prior to the formation of the USSR the Holy See treated socialism and communism as a dangerous roject of a political and economical system. At the end of the 19th-century Pope Leon XIII in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891)<sup>4</sup> conducted a critique of the capitalist system and indicated the need to solve the difficult social issues, especially the worker issues. At the same time, he was warning us against the solutions proposed by the socialists. Then in the encyclical *Graves de Communi* (1901)<sup>5</sup> the pope put forward a proposal of Christian democracy, as opposed to social democracy.

As a result of the October Revolution the first communist state emerged in Russia. The response of the Holy See opened the way to two perspectives, that is, the pragmatic and the doctrinal one. The first one utilized the method of diplomatic dialogue, leading to negotiation of guarantees of completion by the Church of its religious-moral mission regarding the Roman Catholics. When the doctrinal plane is taken into account, it questioned the basic ideological assumptions.

The Holy See initiated its first relations with the USSR during the pontificate of Pope Benedict XI. These included interventions or diplomatic negotiations initiated by Achilles Ratti, the representative of the Holy See in Warsaw (future Pope Pius XI)<sup>6</sup>; Piotr Gasparri, the secretary of state at Benedict XV,<sup>7</sup>

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relations between the Holy See and the representatives of the USSR and other communist states. The description of events concerning those relations in the present publication is largely based on information presented in this publication.

<sup>4</sup> Acta Apostolicae Sedis (AAE) 23(1890/91), 641–70.

<sup>5</sup> AAS (1900/1901), 385–96.

<sup>6</sup> In the summer of 1918 Achilles Rati, the apostolic visitor and the nuncio in Warsaw telegraphed Lenin asking to free the tsarina and her daughters and to save the life of the tsarevitch Grand Duke George. His interventions proved futile. Then he turned to Lenin asking him to free the imprisoned archbishop Ropp, ordinary Mohylew. It proved to be a mistake as the one arrested was not the archbishop himself but his nephew. Still, a little later, in 1919 also archbishop Ropp was arrested with charges of cooperation with Poland. It was then that Mons. Ratti started the efforts to free him with the mediation of Red Cross in Warsaw. This intervention proved successful. On 17 November 1919 archbishop Ropp was released from prison—on principles of exchange of prisoners of war.

<sup>7</sup> In March 1919 two Orthodox archbishops turned to Pope Benedict XV for “compassion” due to prosecution by Bolsheviks. It was then that card. Gasparri turned with a telegraphic appeal to Lenin, asking him to issue “strict regulations that would order respect of clergymen of all religions.” The USSR People’s Commissar of the Foreign Affairs Chicherin cynically replied that “no clergymen of this religion (Orthodox—J.K.) suffered due to his religious beliefs” and that: “Still, against those who participated in conspiracies against the Soviet government and the rule of workers and peasants, are really subjected to the same procedure that is also

and Eugenio Pacelli, the nuncio in München and Berlin (later known as Pope Pius XII).

When in years 1921–1922 thousands of people died in Russia due to famine, Benedict XV introduced an initiative to provide the starving with charitable aid in a way that would be within the limits of law. Based upon the agreement with the USSR government missionaries went to Russia to aid its population by providing food, setting up agricultural and vocational schools and providing religious and moral education. Hope was awakened in Vatican that—pursuant to the prophecy of Fatima—the time has come for Russia to convert. The Communists demanded the Holy See to declare the sums devoted to aid, but did not agree on the religious and educational mission to join the charitable one. The Holy See did not save on the aid, and after the death of Pope Benedict XV on January 22, 1922, it turned out that the treasury was empty. The continuation of aid provided to the famine-struck Russia was only possible thanks to public fundraisers, especially those conducted in America. At the same time, the Soviet authorities ordered the forced requisition of all valuable church property made of gold, silver, and precious stones, and crossed out the religious mission from the draft agreement. The new pope—Pius XI most likely agreed with the opinion of archbishop Ropp saying that the Soviet government was only temporary. That is why on March 12, 1922, the agreement between the Holy See and the government of Soviet Russia was signed. The Soviet government guaranteed the Holy See land concessions for agricultural and educational establishments in Russia. Then the papal diplomacy was included in the talks aimed at reaching an agreement between the western states and Russia. On April 22, 1922, Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy invited the participants of World Economic Conference to Genoa onboard the Dante Alighieri cruiser. Card. Gasparri sent his substitute, mons. Pizzardo to Genoa, to convince the Bolsheviks—on grounds of international law—to make some concessions in their religious policy. And the chancellor of German Reich wanted to use the support of the Holy See for his treaty of Rapallo, which was met with reservations in the West. Both Germans and Russians thus wanted the support of the Holy See for their plans, due to its high moral authority. The pope in turn wished that the Church survived in Russia, where at the moment it was destined to end.

The papal emissaries who went to Russia with charity mission in July 1922 were, as they conveyed in the message they sent back to Vatican, very skeptical about their own possibility for action. The head of the papal mission, rev. Walsh, an American was to negotiate the agreement in the scope that was entrusted in him by the Office of the Secretary of State. Still it soon turned out that the Soviets are not willing to perform their obligations. They allowed the papal envoys

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applied to other citizens"; he also ascribed the responsibility for attacks on orthodox clergy to Catholics.

to deliver food to the starving population, but at the same time they aimed to abolish the Church. On July 22, 1922, abp. Cieplak of Petersburg received an order from the Soviet authorities to submit all “buildings and objects of cult.”

After he protested, the police closed up all Roman Catholic churches, apart from the French-run ones in Russia just three weeks before Christmas of 1922. After that archbishop Cieplak received consent from Vatican to sign the agreement to surrender the churches and underwrite an agreement for their use for religious purposes, still the Soviet authorities were no longer interested in it. On March 12, 1923, abp. Cieplak, general curate rev. prelate Butkiewicz, the Greek-Catholic exarch Fedorow and twelve more clergymen were summoned to Moscow for a trial in front of the Supreme Court for their resistance against the fulfillment of the decree on the division of Church and state and the decree on confiscation of church possessions. During that trial archbishop Cieplak and rev. Butkiewicz were both sentenced to death by shooting “for their counterrevolutionary activities.” In the result of diplomatic intervention of card. Gasparri with Kalinin, the head of the Supreme Soviet, the sentence of Cieplak was changed to ten years imprisonment, while rev. Butkiewicz was executed on March 31, 1923, with a single shot in the back of the head. Even after those events the Holy See did not stop its charitable mission for the benefit of the starving Russian population, with the intention not to abandon contact with the Church in Russia and the dialogue with the Soviet authorities. Rev. Walsh, head of the charitable mission, submitted information pertaining to the failure of the Soviet authorities to observe the conditions of the agreement to the pope. After his arrival in Moscow he presented them with new proposals of an agreement for continuation of the charitable mission of the Holy See in return for some concessions on the part of Soviets, namely: freeing abp. Cieplak and, in particular, lifting a ban on teaching religion to children.

At the same time, a German ambassador in Moscow notified Berlin to notify Vatican to back off rev. Walsh as “he has mixed his charitable mission with diplomatic activities.” Card. Gasparri replied that the personal question is secondary, the more important issue was the Russian failure to observe any promises, for example, a conclusion of a *modus vivendi* concerning the church property. A German monk rev. Edward Gehrman became the new leader of Holy See’s charitable mission.

In early December 1923, the Soviet Ambassador at the Quirinal submitted a proposal to the papal Office of the Secretary of State, for the Holy See, an internationally recognized authority, officially recognized the existence of the USSR in the international arena and concluded an agreement that would transform the charitable mission in a nunciature, changing its current general aid agreement in specific financial obligations. The Soviet authorities offered “freedom of cult” for Roman Catholics, pardoning the imprisoned clergymen and offering the possibility to teach religion to children. Still, by the end of December 1923

a regulation of the Soviet government was published that was forbidding to teach religion to the underaged, even outside of schools in groups larger than three people, without prior consent.

On December 17, 1923, the Congregation for Special Affairs announced that the Holy See withholds the recognition of the USSR and appoints the apostolic nuncio in Moscow, but proposes to establish an apostolic delegate to care for the matters of Church in Russia, who will not be accredited at the head of state, but shall reside in Moscow and negotiate the *modus vivendi* of Church with the Soviet government. Should these negotiations be successful, the Holy See accepts the Soviet state and signs the *modus vivendi* with it.

New aid to be sent for the charitable mission was also made dependant on the outcome of those negotiations. The talks were mediated with the participation of the Soviet embassy and the apostolic nuncio to Berlin mons. E. Pacelli. This is where the reply of the Holy See to the December 1923 proposals of the Soviet government was submitted. Angered by the reply the Soviets notified rev. Ghermann (on March 22, 1924) that the charitable mission of the Holy See was crossed out of the list of approved charities. The Soviet authorities no longer needed the recognition of the Holy See, as such recognition was already granted by Italy, England, Norway, Austria, Greece, and Sweden.

Even though the Vatican-Soviet talks in Berlin continued, there was no progress in reaching a *modus vivendi*. The Soviets did not want to guarantee even the teaching of religion in churches. In August 1924, car. Gasparri ordered rev. Gehrman to close the charitable mission in Russia. During that time, after the death of Lenin, on Stalin's order, commissar Łunczarski, a person competent in matters of religion, further intensified the fight with any signs of religious life, using terror. This tragic reality was addressed by Pope Pius XI during his Christmas speech to cardinals on December 18, 1924. He confirmed the will of the Holy See to continue the aid for the Russian people and appealed to the statesmen to "join forces to push the great and evident evil of socialism and communism away from them and their citizens, at the same time not lessening their feeling of care for the better fate of workers and those unprivileged ones."

The Soviets demanded that the Holy See recognize the USSR in the international arena; the division of Church from the State rule and all the legislation on the religious communities (registration, acceptance of statutes, election of the leader of community by its members, state control of contacts of the Holy See with the religious communities in Russia). The Holy See did not want to accept such conditions. The 1925 Berlin talks of Pacelli were fruitless. Once it was apparent that the diplomatic course for setting the legal basis for the mission of Church in Russia is futile, Pope Pius XI decided to keep the bonds with the Roman Catholic Church in Russia with use of private contacts with followers—keeping them in secrecy from the state authorities. In order to do that, with me-

diation of the French Embassy in Moscow the French Jesuit Michel d'Herbigny, rector of the Papal Oriental Institute in Rome, travelled to Moscow in 1925. After submitting information from his first travel to the pope, d'Herbigny was authorized to embark on another. After acquiring a visa for pastoral purposes that concerned Catholics in the French Embassy in Moscow, he was ordained a bishop in order to be able to ordain bishops in Russia. On Maundy Thursday, April 1, 1926, d'Herbigny reached Moscow again. With the help of the French Embassy d'Herbigny summoned rev. Neveu, a former French journalist, a priest who was secretly leading his pastoral mission in the USSR to Moscow. On April 21, 1926, d'Herbigny ordained rev. Neveu bishop and nominated him an apostolic delegate in the USSR. D'Herbigny ordered him not to announce his competencies, so as not to come under threat of immediate arrest. Then d'Herbigny travelled with him to Ukraine, to cities of Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Odessa, and Kiev. It was there where d'Herbigny nominated rev. Teofil Skalski an apostolic administrator of the Soviet part of Zhytomir Diocese. During this travel, on May 10, 1926, d'Herbigny secretly ordained bishops, Bolesław Sloskans and Aleksander Frison (Greek Catholic). After d'Herbigny's return Pius XI believed that he will be able to build the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church in Russia without the consent of the communist authorities. He established a special Commission for Russia (*Commissio pro Russia*) at the Congregation for the Oriental Churches with d'Herbigny appointed as its leader.

In the summer of 1926, d'Herbigny headed for Russia for the third time. During his visit in Leningrad, d'Herbigny ordained rev. Antoni Malecki bishop. Then, speaking from a pulpit to the followers in Moscow, d'Herbigny announced that the Holy Father has decided that they shall be guided by a bishop. After that event the Soviet official ordered him out of Russia. Prior to his departure, d'Herbigny handed papal documents to bish. Neveu, authorizing him to: in urgent cases—without the need to wait for a papal bulla—establish an apostolic administrator with the reservation that Russia shall not have more than three bishops other than him and that he shall negotiate with state authorities the improvement of the situation of believers. Bish. Fedorow subordinated two further documents to him and authorized him to accept the Orthodox clergy in the Catholic Church. When he was leaving Russia there was a secret church hierarchy in existence, which consisted of four bishops of the Roman Church and one bishop of the Greek Catholic Church.

Pacelli, the papal nuncio to Berlin received a document signed by commissar Chicherin in which the Russian communists no longer proposed a concordat, but acceptance of limitations of freedom. In the end, on October 15, 1926, the Soviet of the People's Commissars in Moscow adopted a resolution stating that the government of the USSR, until different regulations are adopted, will not consent for travel of foreign clergymen that arrive in the USSR in religious purposes or to lead the religious communities that are existing in the USSR.

On October 6, 1927, nuncio Pacelli declared to the Soviet ambassador in Berlin that The Holy See is ready to take into account the political reservations that the Soviet government might have to the candidates for the offices of bishops and asks for the possibility: (a) to open theological seminars; (b) to send clergymen who are acceptable for the government to Russia; (c) to support those clergymen and their work. The Soviet authorities did not reply to this proposal. Under those circumstances, on December 27, 1927, Pope Pius XI announced to card. Gasparri that as long as there was persecution in Russia there would be no further negotiations with the Soviets.

The Soviet authorities started the liquidation of church hierarchy in Russia. Bish. Sloskans was sentenced to three years of penal colony on Solovetsky Islands. On January 27, 1928, rev. Skalski the apostolic administrator of Zhytomir was sentenced to ten years in prison. Exarch Frison was sentenced to labor camp on Solovetsky Islands on White Sea, where 22 other Catholic priests were also held. It was there that he was shot dead in 1937.

On April 8, 1929, at the Presidium of the Central Committee a permanent religion commission was appointed, led by Szmidowicz and a new decree on division of Church and state issued, that was even more prohibiting than the previous regulations. This decree remained in force for 60 years. This was also used as a template by the so-called socialist countries after the Second World War.

It was then that pope Pius XI summoned the believers of all around the world for “a praying crusade” which in turn made soviets even further increase the terror. Replying to the note of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs E. Pacelli, the new papal secretary of state was explaining that the pope did not call for a “military crusade” but for a spiritual mobilization and influencing the moral condition of the world. The “Izvestia” daily announced in Moscow that the pope became the world leader in the fight against the Soviet Union. On 6 April 1930 the pope made the Commission for Russia independent, separating it from the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, with the leadership remaining in hands of bish. D’Herbigny. In 1934 it was joined with the Congregation for Unusual Events in Church.

Pope Pius XI—after fruitless attempts at entering into a dialogue with the communist authorities—defined his relation to communism in two social encyclicals. First, in the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931)<sup>8</sup> he stigmatized both capitalism and communism. Among others he said that:

Communism, both in theory and in practice has two aims: the most extreme class fight and the abolishment of private property, and it does so not secretly but openly, with the use of even the most violent means [...]. This is further

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<sup>8</sup> Giovanni Codevilla, *Stato socialista nell’Unione Sovietica* (Milano 1972).

attested by the enormous conflagration that marked the enormous spaces of Eastern Europe and Asia. To what extent it is a foe and open enemy of the Church and God himself, and say about it, unfortunately very loudly, and these facts are undisputed and commonly known.<sup>9</sup>

Then, in the encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* devoted to the godless communism (19.03.1937).<sup>10</sup> Pope Pius XI performed a thorough analysis of this system as an ideology and a socio-political organization. The pope defined communism as an erroneous ideology that threatened the Christian civilization. The duty of the Church—in his opinion—was to defend against the threat coming from this side. The pope indicated the erroneous bases of communism that were included in dialectical and historical materialism, such as: the abandonment of the idea of God, questioning of spiritual and supernatural realities, declining the human right to dignity and freedom, harnessing individual persons to do collective work against their will, making families devoid of spiritual links and rights of parents to bring up their children, cult of personality, wrongful concept of economic life that says that the task of the human being is to produce material wealth and the main aim thereof is to use them. The pope also added the description of actual situation in the USSR to his analysis of the communist system, stating: “In this way instead of heaven on earth only terror is born, such one as we see in Russia, where former comrades, plotters and fighters murder each other; terror that can’t stop the social decomposition and even less the chaos in the social structure.” By rejecting the errors of the communist doctrine and stigmatizing the methods for its action, the pope warned Catholics and the world of the Western civilization of the threats that were on its side. Still with ever tenser political situation these warnings were of no significant influence on the politicians.

Pope Pius XII did not issue any documents that would specifically criticize the communist regime during the Second World War and afterwards, even though the communist propaganda depicted him as an anti-communist on services of American imperialism. What is characteristic is that in his speeches he called for a “crusade” to renew the society, but this did not concern a “military crusade.” Yet he failed to condemn, *expressis verbis*, both the German Nazism and the communism in order not to worsen the situation of millions of Roman Catholics under German or communist occupation.

Pius XII did not consent for the authority of the Holy See to be engaged on the part of the Axis states to fight with Stalin. From the notes of von Weizsäcker, the German ambassador at the Holy See, we know that in 1945 he was ordered by Ribbentrop, the Reichsminister of Foreign Affairs to check: if the pope can

<sup>9</sup> AAS 23(1931), 285–312.

<sup>10</sup> AAS 29(1937), 145–67; Stefan Wszyński, “Pius XI w walce z komunizmem,” *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 30(1937): 145–67; Piotr Nitecki, “Socjalizm i komunizm w nauczaniu społecznym Kościoła,” *Chrześcijanin w Świecie* 22, no. 1(1992): 56–66.

influence the western powers to make them turn against Stalin for fear from bolshevization of Europe. In reply mons. Tardini informed him that the Holy See: (1) cannot do anything that would be escalating; (2) cannot be a protector of military or political interests; (3) cannot act naively.

## From the End of Second World War up to the Collapse of the Communist Bloc in Europe

Pope Pius XII feared that the methods of fight with Church that the communist authorities used in the USSR will be repeated in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. That is why, in 1944 the Holy See granted special faculties (*facultates speciales*) to all diocese bishops and equivalent offices of particular churches in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

These faculties concerned decision making regarding several branches of church jurisdiction in specific pastoral matters that in normal circumstances would be reserved for the Holy See. These were to be used exclusively “in case of occurrence of highly exceptional circumstances” should the state authorities render their communication with the Holy See difficult.

As long as Poland was concerned these faculties included the organization of pastoral work for the Polish population that was resettled from the eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic to the “Recovered Lands,” that is, the western and northern areas of Poland that prior to 1945 belonged to the German Reich. Before he left for Poland in 1944, Pius XII granted card. August Hlond special rights to establish apostolic administrative regions with the seat in Wrocław, Opole, and Gorzów Wielkopolski, as well as in northern territories for the Warmia diocese in Olsztyn. After the death of primate Hlond these entitlements were also granted by the Holy See to primate Stefan Wyszyński.<sup>11</sup> These faculties—as primate Wyszyński stated—were of two types. The first type was granted in writing (*in scriptis*) by the Roman Curia; the other one in “vivid voice” (*viva voce*) granted personally by the pope, and known only to the pope and the primate. The faculties that the primate received in writing on 26 February 1949 were granted “for the better remedy for the good of souls.” Their use was limited by two conditions: (1) inability to correspond with the Holy See, either in writing or by telegram—both encoded and in open text; (2) the

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<sup>11</sup> Józef Krukowski, “Uprawnienia nadzwyczajne Stefana Wyszyńskiego, Prymasa Polski, wobec zagrożeń ze strony reżimu komunistycznego,” *Studia Prymasowskie* 5(2011): 299–342.

danger of occurrence of large damage through delay. These faculties were then confirmed by the next popes: John XXIII (1958), Paul VI (1974), John Paul I (1978), and John Paul II (1978).

The Holy See did not break diplomatic relations with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that existed in the interwar period and during the Second World War (in Prague, Budapest, Bucharest, and Sofia) nor did it terminate any concordats that were concluded in the interwar period.<sup>12</sup>

Specific case existed in Poland, as the apostolic nuncio in Warsaw left Poland together with the president of the Polish Republic and the Polish primate, after Germany invaded it in September 1939. After hostilities ceased, Pius XII did not send a new nuncio to Poland and granted special faculties to the primate A. Hlond who was returning to Poland, concerning the organization of pastoral work of the Church in new territorial boundaries. Card. Hlond returned to Poland on July 20, 1945, and, based on his special faculties—after the Potsdam Agreement was announced—on August 15, issued decrees that nominated Polish apostolic administrators in those territories, granting them the rights of the resident bishops. These decisions came as a reply to the pastoral needs, still they were not liked by the state authorities, as they were temporary only. The Holy See took the position that it is unable to establish a permanent Polish church organization in those territories, as there was no peace agreement in place, which was only to be concluded in future. The Holy See did not recognize the communist Interim Government, which did not apply for such a recognition itself.

On September 12, 1945, the Board of Ministers of the Interim Government adopted a resolution concluding that the Polish concordat of 1925 ceased to be existing, putting forward unsubstantiated claims that the Holy See did break it during German occupation, and that it does not recognize the nomination of apostolic administrators by card. Hlond. Then the Government went on to fill the gap in the law that was created after the concordat was rejected, in form of decisions that interfered in internal Church affairs. On January 26, 1951, the government demanded the dismissal of apostolic administrators in western and northern territories. Then the state officials went on, forcing the election of vicars capitular replacing the apostolic administrators. This resulted in a real threat of schism. It was then that primate Wyszyński, pursuant to his special faculties de-nominated the illegal vicars capitular with vicars general of his own

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<sup>12</sup> Karel Kaplan, *Stat a Cyrkev v Ceskoslovensku* (1948–1952) (Brno 1993); Tadeusz Pieronek, “Polityka konkordatowa Stolicy Apostolskiej ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem krajów Europy środkowo-wschodniej,” *Polileja* (Kraków 2014), 152–57; Szanda Balasz, “Relations between the Holy See and Hungary: The Legal Aspects of the Relations between Church and State,” in *International Bilateral Relations between the Holy See and States: Experiences and Perspectives*. December 12–13, 2001 (Città del Vaticano 2003), 161–62.

choice.<sup>13</sup> This should form the basis for conclusion, that he received the apostolic power *ad nutum Sanctae Sedis*. The hostile decisions of communist authorities towards the Holy See also took place in the remaining states of Central and Eastern Europe: Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Albania, East Germany, and even earlier (after the aggression of the USSR on Poland and the Baltic States, pursuant to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact) in Latvia and Lithuania.<sup>14</sup> Authorities of those states broke off diplomatic relations with the Holy See and the concordats concluded in the interwar period. In his public appearances Pius XII condemned the aggressive actions of communist authorities, but did not list them *expresis verbis*. Still it was on his order that on July 1, 1949, the Congregation of the Holy Office issued a decree that threatened Catholics with the most strict church sanction, that is, with excommunication *latae sententiae* for membership in communist party or attempting cooperation therewith and for reading and publishing the communist propaganda.<sup>15</sup> It is worth noticing that those bans were not a novelty when compared to the 1917 Canon Law Code. It was just a specification of norms of common law applicable to new factual circumstances. Still, these sanctions led to even more intensive attacks of the communist authorities on the Catholics in the USSR-occupied countries. Still they came as a warning for Catholics living in the democratic states of Western Europe, especially in Italy where the Christian Democrats entered in a coalition with the Italian Communist Party.

In this difficult situation formed after the communist authorities broke the Polish Concordat, primate Wyszyński decided to start institutionalized dialogue with the communist government in form of the so called Mixed Committee, in order to work out some form of *modus vivendi*, to “patch up” the legal loophole. On April 14, 1950, an agreement was signed between the Polish Episcopate and the communist government.<sup>16</sup> In order to safeguard the ties of the Church in Poland with the Holy See, the following statement was included in the agreement: “The rule that pope shall be the competent and highest authority of Church shall be applicable to matters of faith, morality and church jurisdiction; in other matters the Episcopate shall guide itself with the Polish national interest” (art. 5).

The introduction of this rule was decisive for the “agreement” not to be rejected by the Holy See. Even though it was concluded by the Episcopate without the prior authorization of the Holy See, it was later granted its silent approval.

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<sup>13</sup> Raina Peter, *Kardynał Wyszyński, Prymas Polski*, vol. I (London 1979), 377–83.

<sup>14</sup> Lozoraitis Kazys, “Relazioni internazionali giuridiche bilaterali: esperienze e prospettive,” in *Relazioni internazionali giuridiche bilaterali tra la Santa Sede e gli Stati*. Latvia, 12–13 Dicembre 2001 (Città del Vaticano 2003), 204–205.

<sup>15</sup> AAS 41(1949), 334.

<sup>16</sup> Józef Krukowski, “Porozumienia pomiędzy przedstawicielami Rządu i Episkopatu Polski z 1950 i 1956 r. Znaczenie i realizacja,” in: *Prawo i polityka wyznaniowa w Polsce Ludowej* (Lublin 2005), 33–70.

What was the subject of controversy was another fragment of this agreement: “Based on the assumption, that the Recovered Lands are inseparable part of the Republic the Episcopate will turn to the Holy See to replace the temporary administrators with the rights of resident bishops into bishop’s ordinariates” (art. 3). When shortly after the end of the Second World War instead of signing peace treaty the relations between the West and the Communist bloc quickly evolved to what was called Cold War, the communist authorities perceived the lack of stabilization of church organization in the Recovered Lands as the basis for questioning the agreement with the Polish Episcopate and worsening of the situation of the Polish church.<sup>17</sup> The stabilization of the Polish church organization on those territories only occurred in the 1970s—after peace agreement was signed between the Polish People’s Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. The apostolic administration was at that time advanced to the rank of dioceses and the administrators were nominated for diocese bishops.

During the pontificate of Pope John XXIII the Holy See initiated a dialogue with the governments of the communist states of Central and Eastern Europe, with the intention to improve the conditions for Church activities in those countries. The sign of this method was the conclusion of the “Protocol” from discussions led by the Holy See with the communist government of Hungary (1964) and the socialist government of Yugoslavia (1966).

In 1974 temporary diplomatic relations were established between the Holy See and the government of the Polish People’s Republic. Diplomatic protocol was signed, concerning the establishment of two Teams for Permanent Working Relations between the Holy See and People’s Poland. Their task was to negotiate the convention that would stabilize the relations between the Holy See and Poland and normalize the legal position of Church in Poland.<sup>18</sup> Still there were substantial differences in understanding of the term normalization. The communist authorities wanted to gain support of the Holy See on international area and confirm, in form of the convention, such limitations of freedom, as were imposed on Church and the society by the communist regime. Card. Wyszyński, in turn, wanted the legal personality of the Polish Church to be recognized, to secure the culture-making role of the Church and guarantee all religious and irreligious citizens equal rights to participate in public life. The communists pushed towards reaching an agreement behind the backs of the Primate of Poland Mons. Casaroli was eager to reach a “compromise” regarding the postulates of the communist government. But Pope Paul VI declared that there

<sup>17</sup> Jan Żaryn, “Stolica Apostolska wobec ‘zimnej wojny’ i w pierwszych latach po II wojnie światowej,” *Studia Najnowsze*, no. 25/2, (1992): 45–51.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Raina, *Cele polityki PRL wladz PRL wobec Watykanu, Tajne Dokumenty 1967–1989* (Warszawa 2001), 46–67; Maciej Mróz, “Polityka wschodnia w Stolicy Apostolskiej w latach 1988–1989/90: Idee i wartości w działaniu,” *Politeja* 29 (2014): 121–45.

shall be no “normalization” without participation of Primate and Episcopate of Poland.<sup>19</sup>

Change in relations between the Holy See and the USSR, also referred to as the “Eastern policy of the Vatican” were initiated during the pontificate of John XXIII. What contributed to that was the intervention of the pope in the dismantling of the dangerous tension between the United States and the USSR that rose around the Cuban conflict. The actions of the Holy See, apart from stigmatizing the communism as a system based on erroneous doctrine also started to include the method of dialogue with the communists, aimed at keeping peace between East and West in face of the nuclear weapons threat.

Pope John XXIII adopted the assumptions that we shall differentiate the errors in doctrine, that the communist system is based upon, from the people, with whom it is always well worth to talk. At the same time, he ordered the Catholics to cooperate with people with different viewpoints—not excluding the communists—as long as the Catholics kept their identity and loyalty towards the Church (the *Pacem in Terris* encyclical).

The Second Vatican Council did not issue a special document devoted to communism. Still, its critical stance towards this system was included in the analysis of the “systemic atheism” that formed one of the elements of political ideologies of contemporary world and indication of the high dignity of the human person as the source of basic truths and freedoms that were due to every person. Although the name communism was not mentioned in connection with this phenomena, its description clearly indicated this was the regime concerned. The Council stated, among others: “The supporters of this doctrine, once they gain power in the country, violently fight religion, spreading atheism with use, especially in education of youth, of pressure that only the public authorities are able to exercise.”<sup>20</sup> On the one hand, the Council indicated that atheism, through elimination of God from human existence contributed to the impoverishment of the human person, but on the other hand, has shown the need for cooperation between the religious ones and the irreligious, for the common good of the human person and building of just social order, stressing the need of respecting the rights of religious freedom in public life (*Dignitatis Humanae*).

Pope Paul VI continued the stance of the Second Vatican Council in the doctrinal and practical planes. In the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (1967) and the apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971) the pope stressed the im-

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<sup>19</sup> Andrzej Grajewski, “Kardynałowie Stefan Wyszyński i Agostino Casaroli, Dwie osobowości i dwie koncepcje wschodniej polityki Watykanu,” *Studia Prymasowskie* 3(2009): 51–79; Raina, *Cele polityki władz PRL wobec Watykanu*; Agostino Casaroli, *Il martirio della pazienza. La Santa Sede e i paesi comunisti (1963–1989)* (Torino 2000); (Polish edition: *Pamiętniki. Męczeństwo cierpliwości. Stolica Apostolska a kraje komunistyczne (1963–1989)* (Warszawa 2001)).

<sup>20</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 20.

possibility of reconciling the Marxist program with the rules of the Catholic social teaching, but did not exclude the possibility of cooperation of Catholics with communist for the common good, asking the Catholics to oppose unjust social structures.

Holy Pope John Paul II, who knew the communist regime from autopsy, efficiently contributed to the fall of communism in Europe. He adopted an uncompromising dispute with the basic assumptions, aims and practices of communism. In the whole teaching of the pope, starting with the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (1979)<sup>21</sup> the main motif is the truth about the dignity of the human person, personal freedom, as well as the need to respect basic rights of the human person in public life. In the light of the objective truth about the human person he judged communism as a system that is degenerating and alienating. What was significant in mobilizing the people living behind the Iron Curtain was his call that he voiced during the Pontifical mass at St. Peter's Square: "Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors for Christ."<sup>22</sup> Of special importance, when it comes to the nations dominated by the Soviet Union were the calls of John Paul II for solidarity and appeals to the authorities to respect the right of every nation to retain its cultural identity and self-determination of their own political fate. The summary of the critical evaluation of the communism by the Holy See is included in his encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (1.05.1991).<sup>23</sup>

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There are some conclusions drawn from the review of relations between the Holy See and communism in Russia and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The Holy See was always critical in its approach to the communist regime, both when we consider the assumption of the Marxist-Leninist ideology and the methods for their implementation, that is, imposing upon the society an erroneous atheist ideology in place of religion, with the use of state enforcement. Within the stance of the Holy See there was differentiation between the errors of the doctrine that should be rejected and the readiness to conduct a dialogue with people, who believe in that doctrine, bearing the dignity of the human person into account. There was a difference of aims encountered in negotiations between the representatives of the Holy See and the representatives of communist authorities there. The Holy See attempted diplomatic actions leading to change of their decisions pertaining specific items concerning protection of basic hu-

<sup>21</sup> AAS 71(1979), 271–72.

<sup>22</sup> John Paul II, *Homily of His Holiness John Paul II for the Inauguration of His Pontificate*, 22 October, 1978, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1978/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_hom\\_19781022\\_inizio-pontificato.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1978/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19781022_inizio-pontificato.html)

<sup>23</sup> AAS 83(1991): 793–867; Stanisław Kowalczyk, "Ocena marksizmu w encyklice *Centesimus Annus*," *Chrześcijańin w Świecie*, vol. 22(1) (1992): 67–76.

man values or negotiation of legal guarantees for the pastoral, educational, and culture-making activities of the Church. The communist regimes, in turn, were aiming at granting themselves support of the Holy See in the international arena in order to attain specific political goals, at the same time demanding the acceptance of the limitations of freedom that they imposed.

What is characteristic for the diplomacy of the Holy See towards the communist regimes after the Second World War is the method of “small steps,” also known as the Vatican’s policy towards the East. Although the short-term efficiency of such actions was less visible, it still contributed to the gradual liberalization of that regime and its peaceful decomposition.

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Józef Krukowski

## L'attitude du Saint-Siège à l'égard du communisme De Benoît XV à Jean-Paul II

### Résumé

L'article présente les relations du Saint-Siège—aussi bien comme pouvoir suprême de l'Église catholique, que comme sujet étant soumis au droit dans le cadre des relations internationales—avec les autorités des États européens communistes. Les réflexions sont divisées en deux parties.

Dans la première partie, on a présenté l'attitude du Saint-Siège à l'égard du régime communiste de l'Union soviétique datant de l'époque dès la révolution d'Octobre jusqu'à la fin de la Se-

conde Guerre mondiale. Le Saint-Siège a commencé l'activité de charité pour aider la population russe souffrant de la faim et les négociations avec les représentants de l'Union soviétique. Dans la première phase, les autorités communistes ont proposé au Saint-Siège de conclure un accord international et de normaliser les relations diplomatiques, mais elles ne voulaient pas cesser de lutter contre la religion et de formuler des accusations contre l'Église. Dans la seconde phase, on a rompu les contacts entre le Saint-Siège et les autorités communistes. C'est à cette époque-là que le pape Pie XI a présenté une évaluation critique des principes idéologiques et des méthodes de la gestion communiste (encyclique *Divini Redemptoris*).

La seconde partie contient une revue des relations du Saint-Siège avec les États d'Europe centrale et orientale auxquels on a imposé le régime communiste après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, et avec l'Union soviétique—à la période datant de la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale jusqu'à la chute du bloc communiste en Europe. Au début, les gouvernements de ces pays ont rompu les relations diplomatiques avec le Saint-Siège ainsi que les accords de concordat qu'ils ont conclus avec lui à l'époque de l'entre-deux-guerres, tout en commençant à limiter les libertés de l'Église et la discrimination des croyants. C'est à cette époque-là que le Saint-Siège a accordé des facultés spéciales (*facultates speciales*) aux évêques de diocèses dans ces pays qui avaient pour objectif d'assurer le fonctionnement de l'Église à un degré qui serait proche de celui que l'on pourrait considérer comme normal. Durant le pontificat de Jean XXIII, on a initié un dialogue avec les gouvernements communistes des États européens pour assurer la liberté de religion. Ce que voulaient ces gouvernements, c'est de gagner un soutien international du Saint-Siège à leur politique, tandis qu'ils ne cessaient de limiter les libertés religieuses. Durant le pontificat de Jean-Paul II, le Saint-Siège mettait un accent fort sur le soutien à la Solidarité et au droit des nations à l'autogestion.

Mots clés : Église et État, relations diplomatiques, accord de concordat, autodétermination, liberté religieuse, réglementations juridiques, régime politique

Józef Krukowski

## Il rapporto della Santa Sede nei confronti del comunismo Da Benedetto XV a Giovanni Paolo II

### Sommario

L'articolo presenta le relazioni della Santa Sede sia come autorità suprema della Chiesa cattolico-romana, sia come soggetto subordinato al diritto in materia di rapporti internazionali, con le autorità europee degli stati comunisti. Le considerazioni sono divise in due parti.

Nella prima parte è stata presentata la posizione della Santa Sede nei confronti del regime comunista dell'Unione Sovietica nel periodo dalla rivoluzione d'ottobre alla fine della II guerra mondiale. La Santa Sede iniziò l'attività caritativa in favore della popolazione russa che pativa la fame e le trattative con i rappresentanti dell'Unione Sovietica. Nella prima fase le autorità comuniste proposero alla Santa Sede la stipulazione di un accordo internazionale e la normalizzazione dei rapporti diplomatici, ma non vollero cessare la lotta contro la religione e la formulazione delle accuse nei confronti della Chiesa. Nella seconda fase furono interrotti i contatti tra la Santa Sede e le autorità comuniste. All'epoca papa Pio XI presentò un giudizio critico delle premesse ideologiche e dei metodi di governo comunista (enciclica *Divini Redemptoris*).

La seconda parte è costituita da una rassegna dei rapporti della Santa Sede con gli stati dell'Europa Centrale ed Orientale a cui furono imposti i governi comunisti dopo la II guerra

mondiale, e con l'Unione Sovietica—nel periodo dalla fine della II guerra mondiale alla caduta del blocco comunista in Europa. All'inizio i governi di questi paesi ruppero i rapporti diplomatici con la Santa Sede ed anche gli accordi concordatari che avevano stipulato con loro nel periodo tra le due guerre, iniziando a limitare le libertà della Chiesa ed a discriminare i fedeli. Fu allora che la Santa Sede riconobbe facoltà speciali (*facultates speciales*) ai vescovi delle diocesi in quei paesi, facoltà che dovevano garantire il funzionamento della Chiesa in una misura vicina a quella normale. Durante il pontificato di Giovanni XXIII fu iniziato il dialogo con i governi comunisti dei paesi europei per garantire la libertà di religione. Ciò che tali governi desideravano era il sostegno internazionale della Santa Sede per la loro politica, mentre loro non cessavano di limitare le libertà religiose. Durante il pontificato di Giovanni Paolo II la Santa Sede pose una forte enfasi sul sostegno di Solidarność e sul diritto all'autogoverno dei popoli.

Parole chiave: Chiesa e stato, rapporti diplomatici, accordo concordatario, autodeterminazione, libertà religiosa, regolamentazioni giuridiche, regime politico