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## **Celebrations of the millennium of Poland's baptism as the manifestation of the 'Church's politics of memory'**

**M**arcin Kula (2008, p. 247–248) writes that “there are institutions exceptionally sensitive to history.” I quote this observation beginning the considerations on the participation of the Church in shaping the collective memory of Poles, since the Church can clearly be included among such institutions. In many ways, the Church lives in the past which is treated as a reality that influences the activities of individuals and societies in present times. The issue of time in itself is an essential element of the self-awareness of Christianity, which was the first religion to assign a deeper meaning to it. In the Christian perspective, history assumes a linear character in which time does not erase events, but events give the meaning and direction to time (Pattaro, 1987, p. 291–328). The deeds and figures of the past never belong to a realm that passed by and is concluded, but they influence the present and the future of both individuals and societies.

The Catholic Church in contemporary Poland is one of the most important actors in a certain ‘struggle for memory’ taking place in public life. This can be recently observed on the example of the actual political dispute over the genealogy of modern Poland (the ‘Third Polish Republic’) or the conflict over vetting. These disputes take the form of this above-mentioned ‘struggle for memory’ which constitutes an attempt to form the collective memory of society by means of taking the dominant position in the public discourse about the past. For some time now, a new quality can be observed in this respect, expressed by the term ‘historical policy’, which emerged in public debate after the Institute of National Remembrance and the Warsaw Rising Museum came to being (Cichocki, 2005).<sup>1</sup> Gaining the upper hand in

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<sup>1</sup> The issue of how to define and assess ‘historical policy’ triggered a lively debate, in particular following the electoral victory of the Law and Justice (PiS) political party and L. Kaczyński as Polish President in 2005.

the struggle over the shape of the collective memory of Polish society has become the ambition of different institutions and circles, as well as an expression of the realistic belief that their current position and significance depend on the past, or rather on the assessment and interpretation of the past.

The Catholic Church plays an important role in this dispute over the past. As an institution it has considerable opportunities for forming the beliefs and opinions of society. The Church clearly played a significant role in the post-war period, and has been an equally important actor in public life after 1989. The past, its revival, and the continuous references to it were and remain one of the more frequent and important elements of Church teaching. This can be observed when analysing Church documents, as well as public statements by its hierarchs. Remembering the past, and its incessant cultivation, are presented there as a guarantee of social identity and the mission entrusted by Providence – an earthly as well as supernatural duty. One of the Episcopate's pastoral letters synthetically approaches the importance of the shape of Polish collective memory, saying that "oblivion can be a forerunner of a disaster" (*Listy*, vol. II, 2003, p. 1851). Shaping the image of the past in a desirable manner is also connected with the implementation of numerous other, more short-term goals of the institutional Church, including, for instance, seeking to maintain a significant position in public life and the role of a major participant in public debate. If the Church's influence on how Poles perceive their own history were to diminish it would be damaging to its continued exertion of extensive public influence, which is so valuable to it. Therefore, alongside other participants of public life, the Church has developed its own version of the 'politics of memory' trying to use it to influence the collective memory of Poles. In the opinion of L. Nijakowski, the 'politics of memory' means "every formally legitimised intentional activity of politicians and officials aimed at the reinforcement, removal or redefinition of certain elements of collective memory" (Nijakowski, 2008, p. 44). The author suggests that, in this sense, it is not far from state propaganda. For the purpose of this paper, I would like to make a certain extension of the above definition. If the state and its structures are replaced with the institutional Church, represented by its officials, we could talk about the 'Church's politics of memory'. Politics would have to be understood here in a different way and, instead of the classical sense of the activities aimed at winning or maintaining political power, it would have to account for the realm of symbolic power, implemented not by the repressive measures that are typical of states but rather by means of persuasion.

Albeit not termed as such, a particular form of politics of memory was cultivated by the Church in communist Poland (the Polish People's Republic – PRL). It developed under the conditions of the politics of memory implemented by the communist authorities seeking to transform the Polish image of the past in order to instil the conviction that the PRL was the “crowning achievement of the historical development of Polish statehood” (*Wytyczne*, 2002, p. 28). Therefore only selected “progressive and revolutionary traditions of the nation” were emphasised (*ibidem*). The Church was treated as an ideological opponent, and as such it was to be erased also from the collective memory of society, as its backwards, anti-national and anti-people role in the past was implied. This was to facilitate the achievement of the fundamental objective of the communist authorities, namely to remove the Church from the public sphere and isolate it as symbol of certain mentality. This triggered a kind of ‘struggle for memory’ between the propaganda system and education of the communist state and the Church, where power in the symbolic realm was at stake. This, however, had quite a concrete dimension, with the parties fighting for ‘the souls’ of society.

Over the forty-five years of post-war history, it would be difficult to find an equally tense dispute as that concerning the celebrations of the Millennium of Poland's Baptism, organised by the Church and counterpointed by the competing celebrations of the Millennium of the Polish State. Both sides planned the celebrations as an attempt to present their own, respective visions of the millennium of Polish history and reinforce it in the social awareness. Given the radically different character of both visions, an ideological conflict that translated into ongoing political activities was inevitable. The state faced the well thought-out and meticulously planned concept of the Church, personally developed by the Cardinal Primate of Poland, Stefan Wyszyński. Its beginnings dated back to 1956 and the ‘great novena’ that was initiated then, to prepare Poles for the millennial celebrations in 1966. The state authorities responded to this with a delay and in a clearly reactive manner, coming up with the idea of celebrating the Millennium of the Polish State, which was intended to become “a special campaign to combat the ideological activities of the Catholic Church in Poland and the political concepts of revanchist circles in the FRG” (*ibidem*, p. 29).

Given this context, the activities of both sides of the dispute and the words uttered at that time became more than just a clash of two visions of the past. The ostensibly historical aspect of the 1966 confrontation was the

setting for the above-mentioned, highly contemporary struggle for ‘the souls’ of Polish society. The communist authorities committed to it not only in terms of ideology, but they invoked extensive measures of their repressive apparatus (*Metody*, 2004, p. 398–407). It is my task here to attempt to reconstruct the Church’s vision of the millennium, outline the main motifs that emerged in the millennial documents and statements of the hierarchs, and to try to answer the question whether the Church had a defined program for presenting the past which it was implementing, and if it did – what were its objectives.

Alongside their strictly religious goals, the celebrations as such were to expand knowledge about the history of the Polish Church as an essential element of knowledge about the past of the nation and state. It was assumed that wherever millennial celebrations were taking place (most often in diocese capitals), they were accompanied by an integral element of sessions devoted to the history of a given diocese, participated in by clergy and secular scholars, most often from the Catholic University of Lublin (CUL) or local universities. As a rule, they were located in cathedrals and attended by the Primate and numerous representatives of the Episcopate. The latter requested that the academic circles of the CUL develop a “theology of the history of the Church in Poland” which was to provide parish priests with supporting material for sermons and catechisms. All dioceses, and wherever possible also parishes, were to draw up the history of their local churches. A national Millennium Committee was appointed and presided by Professor Józef Kostrzewski, an outstanding historian, to develop the agenda for the celebrations, including the ‘ideological premises’ featuring the outline of ‘the Church’s politics of memory’ (Raina, 1991, p. 28–39). Let us try to reconstruct its basic premises.

1. It seems an essential feature to perceive historical events from the theological point of view and assume that they were a part of the plan Providence made for Poland and the Poles. Therefore, some events are presented as a kind of reward while others are a punishment for the conduct of national community. The terminology concerning the 966 baptism and the entire millennium that followed evidences this: “the wedding feast of the nation,” “the nation’s *Te Deum*” and “the great communion of the nation” were among the most frequently used. Taking this outlook resulted in giving emphasis to the spiritual and religious, rather than exclusively political character of the events from one thousand years ago (paper by Prof. O. Halecki presented at the inauguration of the millennium celebrations in Rome) (*ibidem*, p. 1–23). This was the interpretation given to the

act of baptism, the obscure document of *Dagome Iudex*, the future Polish-Lithuanian Union and other numerous and significant events over the entire millennium.

Characteristically, any interpretations of history other than the Christian and materialistic one were excluded: "a scholar's attitude depends on his historiosophy which at present can only be selected from among the alternative of historical materialism and Christian interpretation" emphasised the above-mentioned document. Such a dichotomous perception – either a theological or Marxist perspective, *tertium non datur* – weighed on the Church's interpretation of the millennium of Polish history during its celebrations. The Church locked itself up in a kind of besieged fortress of interpretation and delegitimised any uncertainties or doubts, such as the issue of St. Stanislaus, treating them as favouring the Marxist interpretation of history. The theological-historical perspective deepened the emerging gap between the majority of the Episcopate and the Primate on the one hand, and the circles of Catholic intelligentsia on the other, who were apprehensive of this approach, which – in the opinion of its numerous representatives – oversimplified the picture of our past.

2. Another assumption concerned the emphasis of the continuous and lasting symbiosis of Polishness and Catholicism, interpreted in terms of the above-mentioned theological perspective. The draft of the Millennium Committee approached this matter in the following manner: "the Church was included in the life of the nation, engrafted in its existence and history as the Eternal Word in the body [...] The Church and the nation cannot be separated, as some would like; they constitute a sacred, indissoluble unity" (ibidem, p. 30). Taking into account the frequency with which this motif was mentioned in the sermons and millennial documents it can be ascertained that the main task of the millennium programme of 'the Church's politics of memory' was to instil in Polish consciousness the belief in this "sacred, indissoluble unity."

By no means did it mean that the people of other denominations or non-believers belonging to the national community were automatically excluded; the bishops cannot be accused of promoting such a primitive form of nationalism; nevertheless, the millennial teaching of the Church agreed that "Christianity and Polishness merged into a united form of national being" (*Listy*, vol. I, 2003, p. 552). In the opinion of the Church, every person acknowledging to be Polish is culturally, historically and morally characterised as a Catholic. There emerged here a concept that

was dangerously close to that of the pre-war national democrats, perceiving 'the Church as a national institution' where one's personal religiousness or its lack should not be decisive in considering Catholicism as the national denomination of Poles. This resulted in praising the formation of 'non-believing practitioners', quite popular in Poland, meaning people who participated in religious ceremonies to express political attitudes, demonstrate their cultural and national identity. "We received letters from non-believers who felt Polish and took part in religious celebrations as Poles" said the bishops in the pastoral letter written to conclude the millennium celebrations (*ibidem*).

3. The millennial teaching of the Polish Church presented a specific definition of the nation in both historical and contemporary terms. It could be named a historically static definition that failed to account for the element of change in the realm of national awareness. This approach generally conformed to what contemporary studies on nationalism describe as the perennialism paradigm. This states that "even if the nationalistic ideology is a new phenomenon, nations have lasted forever, in every historical period, and many nations have existed since time immemorial" (Smith, 2007, p. 70). This approach was characteristic of the "theology of the nation" proposed by Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, and found numerous expressions in the course of the millennium celebrations. The Primate's concept of the nation was naturally based on theological foundations and stressed the national community as a natural community, seen as one of the basic structures of creation: "the nation is not for today or tomorrow. The nation is there to remain [...] God himself decided so, as He created a national form of existence demanding us to protect it" said the Cardinal in one of his sermons in the 1960s (Iwan, 2002, p. 97). Perceiving the nation as an independent entity that is qualitatively different from the collection of individuals it is made of, and a certain 'mystique of time' ("time – a mystery that binds our existence, being and deeds, that unites us") as preached by the Primate, led to a formula that was exceptionally often recalled in the course of the millennium celebrations, that of a "baptised nation" and "Catholic nation." "Today, the whole nation is baptised," "we are a Catholic nation" said Cardinal Wyszyński at the inaugural ceremony in Gniezno Cathedral (Raina, 1991, p. 43). From this point of view, the Church was becoming, perhaps, the most important component of the nation-forming processes: "through the baptism, the Church magnified the innate national bond, all the spiritual features of our national psyche" the Primate preached (*ibidem*, p. 285).

Understanding the nation in this way resulted in the highly frequent and consistent emphasis given to the continuity and cohesion of Polish history. Reading the millennial documents, one gets the impression that even the remote past is directly coupled with the present, and past generations of Poles are in no significant way different from the modern generation. The Primate uttered very meaningful words in this respect while preaching in Poznań Cathedral, where he talked about a nation bound with the Church, using the evangelical words: “always, even unto the end of the world” (ibidem, p. 99). This continuity assumed a more formal, or even institutional, dimension, when the bishops referred to themselves as “the legitimate heirs of the old generations of shepherds.” Given the repeated discontinuity of Polish statehood, this was a powerful argument to confirm the historical dimension of the institutional Church as a factor in state formation (ibidem, p. 67).

In the millennial speeches of the representatives of the Church, the nation was perceived as an ethnic rather than civic community. In his definition of nation, Cardinal Wyszyński gave equal importance to awareness, language, tradition, blood, and “to the smallest degree” – to territory as formative factors (Iwan, 2002, p. 97). This translated to how different epochs in Polish history were interpreted. Despite the general positive attitude to the ‘Golden Age’, the bishops generally did not express their approval for the multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of the state that characterised Jagiellonian times. Favourable references to the Piast period were more frequent.

4. Another motif of the historical references made in the course of the millennial celebrations involved appraising religious uniformity, both in terms of nation and state, and understanding the state as an institution secondary to the nation. Cardinal Wyszyński’s words leave no doubt that the nation was the primary structure, while the state was subservient to it. He considered it ideal when the state stemmed from the nation and became its organ (Bartnik, 1999, p. 38–39). As he inaugurated the celebration of the millennium, the Primate was very clear about this: “to a great, prevailing extent, Poland is a nation of one faith! This is not inconsiderable! This is a great value, not only religious, but also moral, social and even political and cultural! A nation of one language, one culture, one faith and one morality is a great thing. This is something to boast about and take pride in” (Raina, 1991, p. 257). During the celebrations in Płock, Bishop B. Sikorski spoke in a similar vein when recalling with satisfaction the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when “Poland was swarming with heretics, and yet there was

not a single non-Catholic community. What is the reason for such a unique and exceptionally fortunate situation here?" he asked (*ibidem*, p. 458). It is worth noting that taking pride in the faithfulness of Mazowsze, Bishop Sikorski failed to mention the fact that in Płock originated the only significant Polish heresy – Mariavitism.

Reviewing the millennial celebrations in the ethnically mixed territories (Białystok, Drohiczyń, Lubaczów, Opole) it is difficult to find any references to it. Seen in the light of the above-mentioned opinions, it would be erroneous to interpret it only in terms of the otherwise understandable caution of the Church, which did not want to give additional arguments to the communist authorities, blaming bishops for being anti-national in a period of intense ideological combat with communist propaganda.

5. Particular attention should be given to another issue that was frequently addressed during the millennial celebrations, namely the incorporation of western territories, typically named the 'Regained Territories', by Poland. The high frequency of references made to this issue appears to result from the above-mentioned opinions about nation and state. It was also important, given the Church's need for credibility in this respect as perceived by society. It was not a long time before that – after the publication of the letter by Polish bishops to German bishops – the authorities ran a propaganda campaign that generated considerable disorientation among believers. Having heard the bishops 'asking for forgiveness' many believers came to believe that their priests did not have a clear position on the issue of the western border of Poland. Therefore, the Episcopate clearly sought to emphasise their positive attitude to the Polish *raison d'état*. Millennial references to this issue revolved around two motifs: 'the territories regained after centuries' and 'the act of Divine historical justice'. The decisions made in Potsdam to displace the German population were therefore interpreted also in religious terms.

The justification for the western lands belonging to Poland presented by the Church was almost identical with the vein of state propaganda. The Archbishop of Wrocław, B. Kominek, talked about "the land that had been separated from Poland for centuries, despite its Polish roots and Polish culture cultivated there even before 1000. Then it was severed from the motherland by human violence and remaining outside its motherland it never ceased to be Polish and ours" (*ibidem*, p. 319). Speaking in Międzyrzecz, the Metropolitan of Poznań, A. Baraniak mentioned "the ancient Polish lands, that used to be the territory of old Polans before 1000, where Polishness and Christianity for centuries resisted the pressure of



Germanisation, advancing from the west, and later followed by Protestantism” (ibidem, p. 439). Apart from the above-mentioned perennialist vision of the nation’s history, several other symptomatic tendencies can be found in such statements: Christianity is identified with Catholicism here and opposed to Protestantism. The term ‘Germanisation’ is applied to the Middle Ages, while ignoring the fundamentally different national identities in the Middle Ages and that in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The two, apparently utterly different argumentative strategies of the Catholic bishops and communist propaganda officers paradoxically met here. The tone rooted in the myth of ‘the millennium of Polish-German hostility’ can be heard there, being so different from that of the above-mentioned *Letter of Reconciliation of the Polish Bishops to the German Bishops*.

Both the above-mentioned hierarchs perceived the changes that had occurred after 1945 as an act of Divine intervention: “[t]he post-war events have brought about some miracle of Divine Providence, making those previously Polish lands return to Poland again” (Kominek), “[w]e deem it to be a special proof of Divine protection over our Nation that the Creator chose to direct the fate of Europe during the war and later so that Poland returned to the Oder and Neisse” (Baraniak). The tone here is again very different from the letter of Polish bishops to the German bishops announced nearly a year earlier.

For obvious reasons, the bishops could not mention the Polish heritage of the Eastern territories, although after the celebrations in Lubaczów, the Primate remarked in his private notes *Pro memoria*: “[t]he issue of Lviv remains open. Polish and Ukrainian societies cannot accept the fact of its annexation by the USSR. This has created a new abyss between Poland and Russia that has never ruled over Lviv [...] The Church has suffered a great loss as it retreated at least 200 km westwards. The retreat of the Catholic Church has been accompanied by the retreat of Poland. It is difficult to say when it will be back there” (Wyszyński, 2001, p. 203). The use of the word “when” seems quite symptomatic. Having visited a modest, single room of the Archbishop’s curia in Lubaczów, Wyszyński observed: “[s]orrow fills the soul at the thought of the terrible harm done to Poland” (ibidem).

6. Another motif in the millennial narration of the Church concerned relations with the Germans and the issue of forgiving historical guilt, which was highly topical in the year of the millennium. This needs to be seen in the perspective of the permanent strategy of the communist authorities, trying to legitimise themselves by raising anti-German sentiments in

society on the one hand, and to play them against the Church on the other. Maintaining the conviction of the ongoing threat posed by West German revanchists was a permanent element of communist propaganda. Anti-German motifs were also clearly present in mass culture, which particularly strongly influenced audiences. The fear of, and hostility towards Germans that was natural shortly after the experience of WWII was probably the only sentiment the authorities could effectively use to fight their political and ideological opponents. As early as the 1940s and '50s it was implied that the Holy See at the time of the pontificate of Pius XII manifested pro-German sentiments, and the myth of eternal anti-Polish attitude of the Vatican was created. The fact that the canonical status of the Church administration in the Western territories was not determined was used against the Polish Episcopate, which was consequently accused of a lack of patriotism and respect for the Polish *raison d'état*. The nationalistic strategy aimed at the legitimisation of the communist system reached its peak during the time of Władysław Gomułka (Zaremba, 2005). The entire apparatus of state propaganda, employing the modern media of film and television, was concentrated on maintaining and intensifying anti-German sentiments.

The government's attempts to take advantage of the anti-German phobia of society caused particular tension shortly before the millennial celebrations as a result of the announcement of the above-mentioned letter of the Polish hierarchs to the German bishops with the famous words: "[w]e forgive and ask for forgiveness" (Raina, 1995, p. 356–371). The official campaign took advantage of the fears and disorientation among society, and even among a part of the clergy, and it was nearly successful (*ibidem*, p. 371–376). It was only the excessive brutality of the message and the activities of communist propaganda that allowed the Church to fend off the danger. The authorities tried to continue their "we shall not forgive" campaign during the millennial celebrations that were consequently held in the shadow of a continuing conflict. The analysis of these celebrations and the behaviour and words uttered by the Church leads to the conclusion that the bishops tended to avoid direct references to Polish-German relations. The predominantly negative attitude of Poles towards the letter to the German bishops showed that society was still not ready for such grand gestures, making the Polish Episcopate lean towards presenting a more traditional vision of the past, expressed by Bishop A. Pawłowski speaking about the "aggressive Teutonic Order" (Raina, 1991, p. 412). This, however, was one of the few explicit references to the German issue. The Church tended

rather to make indirect references to it, by means of promoting a conciliatory and evangelical attitude where forgiveness was the leading motif of history and its relation to the present day. A clear signal in this respect was given by Professor O. Halecki, who made an indirect reference to the recent issue of the *Letter...* saying in his speech: “if – unable to forgive what happened in 1939 and later – we will speak about the hereditary and unforgettable hostility towards Germany that has probably lasted for a thousand years, this will mean a non-Christian millennium” (ibidem, p. 21). The call for forgiveness was frequently present in the words of Primate Wyszyński and during the celebrations. For instance, the main millennial celebrations at Jasna Góra were illustrated by a selection of literary texts that emphasised the subject of Christian forgiveness: the trial of Bugaj from *Bolesław Chrobry* by A. Gołubiew and the condonement of Jurand from *Krzyżacy* by H. Sienkiewicz. The call for forgiveness, however, was frequently vague, although its addressee was rather clear, given the context.

Summing up this motif, it is worth noting that while retaining its religious meaning, the issue of forgiveness assumed a certain political dimension in 1965 and 1966. The crowds gathered during the Church's millennial celebrations chanted ‘we forgive’ for reasons other than purely religious ones, demonstrating in this way their support for the Church's struggle with the authorities.

7. Concluding the analysis of the motifs of millennial ‘politics of memory’ of the Church it is also worth noting the subjects that went beyond the predominant discourse of that time. It should be stressed that the message of sermons and documents then was highly cohesive and – at least as concerns historical matters – it was consistent with Primate Wyszyński's vision of history, a vision that was expressed both in the ‘ideological principles’ of the celebrations and in the majority of the assumptions made in the program by Professor Halecki. I have tried to outline the highlights of this vision. This is not to mean, however, that the celebrations did not witness slightly other approaches to the historical issues, giving them a somewhat different emphasis. These are worth noting, although they were expressed only by some participants, namely those who were intellectually formed in an atmosphere different from that of the national-Catholic option predominating in the Episcopate. Two individuals clearly stand out here – the Metropolitans of Kraków and Wrocław, Archbishop K. Wojtyła and Archbishop B. Kominek, respectively. The former frequently referred to the past, avoiding, however, the community tone of the ‘Catholic Poland’, stressing the individual and his spiritual development instead (ibi-

dem, p. 139–145). It is known that the future Pope was initially sceptical of the main millennium plan of Primate Wyszyński – the act of entrusting Poland to the maternal servitude of Mary, and it took him a long time to grow to accept it, as acknowledged by the Primate himself (Wyszyński, 2001, p. 242).

The tone of the millennium texts was even more different in the case of Archbishop Kominek, incidentally the main author of the *Letter of Reconciliation of the Polish Bishops to the German Bishops*, and a Silesian – brought up in the borderland of cultures and nations. His texts are practically free of the ‘theology of the nation’ and dominated by a universal, supranational dimension of Christianity. As he outlined the tasks for the future that resulted from the Polish Catholics’ experience of the millennium, the Archbishop of Wrocław said: “[t]o make our Polish and Christian consciousness permeated with the message that the God is our father and that another man is our brother [...] Can you hear me well? All people are our brothers, whatever their colour and race, and even whatever their religion. Our brother is the one who speaks our language and the one whose language is incomprehensible [...] Our faith in Christ cannot be pushed into a tight nationalistic ghetto, a ghetto with no exit” (Raina, 1991, p. 132–134). It is difficult not to treat these words as a manifestation of a narrative different from the majority of statements uttered by the Episcopate. The Metropolitan of Wrocław also recalled other historical facts in his speeches. During the millennial celebrations in Siedlce, when a lot was said about the tradition of the “martyrdom of Podlasie” (referring in this way to the repressions against the Unitarians of Podlasie, who were forcefully converted to Orthodox Christianity), Archbishop Kominek mentioned the tradition of the Colloquium Charitativum from Toruń as a model of coexistence and dialogue between people of different faiths. In this context, he called for the mutual forgiveness of Catholics and Orthodox Christians, rather than continuing the motif of martyrdom (ibidem, p. 390).

The author of the *Letter...* devoted more room in his speeches to critical considerations on Polish history addressing, for instance, the ideal of ‘Polish freedom’: “it is also about our immortal Polish drive for freedom [...] this unstoppable pursuit of freedom that can so easily turn into individual unruliness and the wretched *liberum veto* [...] to be somehow baptised, tamed, refined and made into a creative and cultural element.” This is how Kominek justified the Primate’s idea of entrusting Poland to the servitude of Mary, taking quite a different attitude to Cardinal Wyszyński himself (ibidem, p. 133).

Some observations of Professor Halecki were not quite in line with the vein imposed by the Primate, who intended to make the millennial celebrations invigorate the national spirit, rather than provide an opportunity for the national examination of conscience. Professor Halecki accused Polish Messianism of “immature conceit” and called for the acknowledgement of historical mistakes, among which the inappropriate Polish attitude to other nations living in the common mother country was emphasised. This accusation concerned both the old Poland and the interwar Poland, where “consensus with fellow citizens of the former common state could not be achieved.” The predominant tone of the Church’s millennial narration was also broken by Halecki with the quote from Adam Czartoryski, who said that “we should not be Catholics for the love for our fatherland, but we should be patriots for our love for God” (ibidem, p. 20–21). This was in stark contrast with the above-quoted words from the bishops’ letter, announced to conclude the millennial celebrations, where the symbiosis of Polishness and Catholicism was separated from individual human religiousness.

The above-presented differences in tones and emphasis in the interpretation of the past seem to corroborate the fact that the Polish Church of that time was facing a conflict (which continues today) between the national-Catholic option represented by the Primate, geared towards promoting the mass Catholicism of the people, and the Catholic-liberal circles that were critical of the nationalistic idea of a ‘Catholic Poland’ and seriously counting on the transformations that were taking place following the Vatican Council. Whereas the latter was discreetly supported by some hierarchs, it is difficult to imagine this tendency could have undermined the unified message formulated by the Primate of the Millennium, the message that conformed to the standpoint of the majority of Polish bishops, formed by the stereotype that a Pole is a Catholic.

The celebrations of the Millennium of Poland’s Baptism and the years that preceded them marked the peak of the ‘struggle for memory’ between the communist state and Catholic Church. As mentioned before, this was a fight in the symbolic realm, a ‘struggle for souls’, as well as for actual instruments allowing the authorities to legitimise their rule, and allowing the Church to oppose its opponent’s policy of secularisation. The essential goal of ‘the Church’s politics of memory’ at the time of the millennial celebrations was defensive in nature. The Polish Church had lost a lot in terms of its material assets, which encompassed not only its property but also other assets facilitating teaching on a broader scale, and was subjected to

an intentional and planned policy of being removed from public domain, so it was defending its position as an institution influencing Polish identity. The millennial strategy of the Church also aimed at maintaining its actual position by means of reinforcing the traditional, even if somewhat outdated form of Polish religiousness in its popular and mass version based on the idea of the 'Catholic nation'. In this context, the past was instrumentalised by both sides of the conflict. This was achieved by the emphasis given to different past events, and sometimes by interpreting them in a certain way. I would not like to assess these activities as being entirely symmetrical. Owing to its millennium of existence and influence on the shape of Polish national existence, the Church was far more credible with its 'politics of memory' than the representatives of the system that had been imposed on Poland a mere twenty years earlier. The references to national tradition, to its roots in the national and state history were not new in the Church's teaching, making the words of the hierarchs during the millennial celebrations natural, unlike those of the representatives of the authorities that had only just implemented the new methods of legitimisation, named nationalistic legitimisation by M. Zaremba (Zaremba, 2005). The attempts to legitimise the new authorities by referring to the past, reviving historical mythology and claims that the PRL was the essence of the millennium of the history of nation and state, must have offended the audience by their artificiality. Victory in this struggle was clearly won by the Church.

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### **Uroczystości Milenium Chrztu Polski jako przejaw „kościelnej polityki pamięci”**

#### **Streszczenie**

Kościół katolicki jest w dzisiejszej Polsce jednym z ważniejszych podmiotów polityki pamięci. Jest ona definiowana jako działania na rzecz ukształtowania pamięci zbiorowej społeczeństwa poprzez ustanowienie dominującego tonu w publicznym dyskursie o przeszłości. Zdobycie uprzywilejowanej pozycji w walce o kształt tej pamięci stało się przejawem nie tylko ambicji rozmaitych instytucji i środowisk, ale również wyrazem realistycznego przeświadczenia, które każe w przeszłości, a raczej w jej ocenie i interpretacji, szukać drogi do legitymizacji swej aktualnej roli publicznej. Kształtowanie pożądanego obrazu przeszłości związane jest z realizacją wielu celów instytucjonalnego Kościoła. Są wśród nich: dążenie do zachowania istotnego miejsca w życiu publicznym i pozostanie liczącym się uczestnikiem publicznej debaty. Dlatego obok pozostałych uczestników życia publicznego wypracował on własną wersję „polityki pamięci” i stara się poprzez nią wpłynąć na kształt pamięci zbiorowej Pola-

ków. Była ona uprawiana przez Kościół już w okresie PRL a momentem, w którym można było obserwować szczególnie zbieg jej wątków były obchody Milenium chrztu Polski w 1966 r.

Artykuł jest próbą odtworzenia kościelnej wizji tysiąclecia, zarysowania głównych wątków, które pojawiają się w milenijnych dokumentach i wystąpieniach hierarchów oraz rekonstrukcji ówczesnego kościelnego programu prezentowania przeszłości, i celów, jakie miały być za jego pośrednictwem realizowane.

Autor podkreśla, iż główny cel "kościelnej polityki pamięci" okresu milenijnego miał raczej charakter defensywny i był reakcją na świadomą oraz zaplanowaną politykę wypierania Kościoła ze sfery publicznej, bronił on w ten sposób swej roli, jako instytucji kształtującej tożsamość narodową i system wartości Polaków. Milenijna strategia Kościoła była też próbą utrzymania realnej pozycji Kościoła dzięki wzmocnieniu tradycyjnej formy polskiej religijności: ludowej, masowej, odwołującej się do utożsamienia polskości i katolicyzmu. Wobec takich celów przeszłość stała się przedmiotem instrumentalizacji przez obie strony ówczesnego ideowo-politycznego sporu, kościelną i państwową. Czyniono tak poprzez odpowiednią ekspozycję różnych wydarzeń z przeszłości, niekiedy zaś przez nadawanie im odmiennych interpretacji. Kościół był w tym sporze stroną dysponującą większą wiarygodnością, aniżeli władze komunistyczne, które dopiero w latach sześćdziesiątych uczyniły pozytywne odwołania do tysiącletniej tradycji polskiej państwowości częścią swej strategii legitymizacyjnej.