

# Pastoral work by the Catholic Church in Belorussia (1917-1984)\*

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In this report, Belorussia means the territory of the present Belorussian Socialist Republic in the USSR. It was created on 1 January 1919 and comprised then the pre-revolutionary territory of Minsk province (excluding the districts of Novogrudok (Novogrodek), Pinsk and Rechitsa (Rzeczyce)).<sup>1</sup> As a result of the Second World War and the subsequent administrative changes Brest (Brześć), Grodno, Vitebsk (Witebsk), Mogilev (Mohylów) and Gomel' regions were incorporated into Belorussia. In 1983 Belorussia had 9,744,000 inhabitants on a territory of 207,600 km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>2</sup> The majority of inhabitants — 7,568,000 — are Belorussians (77.6 per cent), Russians are in second place — 1,134,000 (11.69 per cent), and Poles third — 403,000 (4.19 per cent). Other nationalities are represented in small numbers. A large group of Belorussians — 1,895,000 — live in other republics of the Soviet Union, especially in the neighbouring Russian republic (1,052,000). Some 406,000 Belorussians live in Ukraine and 181,000, as a result of deportation, in Kazakhstan.

In 1897 the number of Belorussians was estimated at 5,740,872. Of this number 4,662,000 (81.2 per cent) declared themselves Orthodox, and 1,050,000 (18.2 per cent) Catholic. The corresponding figures for 1917 give the number of Belorussians as 9,300,900. If we break down this number into denominations in the same proportions, we have figures of 7,552,000 Orthodox and 1,692,000 Catholics.<sup>3</sup> A minute percentage of Belorussians were Protestants or Old Believers. Taking the proportional statistical data for 1917 as a basis, we may posit that at present out of 7,568,000 Belorussians at least 6,145,000 are people of the first or second Orthodox generation and 1,377,000 are people of Catholic origin. To the

\*This report has been compiled by Tadeusz Poleski, the pseudonym of a Polish historian living in Poland. He has had limited access to recent western and Soviet sources, but has been able to consult a great deal of detailed information about the Catholic Church in Belorussia which is otherwise unavailable. Throughout the report we have given the present-day Soviet form of each place name, followed by the Polish form in parentheses. In some cases this has meant not just a transliteration but a replacement of a former name by its present-day equivalent.

latter figure one must add some 403,000 Poles living in Belorussia. In total then, we may estimate that there are 1,780,000 inhabitants of Belorussia of Catholic origin.

This figure is not affected by the fact that many Poles were forced to change their nationality to Belorussian after the Second World War, nor by the repatriation to Poland of some 1,500,000 Polish citizens from the whole territory of the Soviet Union, as Belorussian citizens could not repatriate.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Dioceses*

From the point of view of the church administration, the Belorussian republic comprises five dioceses: Mogilev and Vilnius (Wilno) archdioceses, Minsk, Pinsk and Lomza dioceses.

Mogilev archdiocese was officially founded in 1783 and extended to Sakhalin island in the Pacific Ocean (if we disregard the earlier non-canonical act of Catherine II who "created" the Belorussian diocese). Then in 1921 a new ecclesiastical province was created — the East Siberian apostolic vicariate. Mogilev archdiocese lost its eastern part.

Central eastern Belorussia belongs to Minsk diocese which has existed since 1798, south-western Belorussia to Pinsk diocese, created in 1925, and the north-western area to Vilnius archdiocese, which has existed since the 14th century. It should also be mentioned that seven parishes of Lomza diocese were annexed by the USSR in 1939 (like the above-mentioned parts of Pinsk diocese and Vilnius archdiocese).

For the last six hundred years Belorussia has not only been under the influence of both eastern and western Christianity, but has also been a battleground between Lithuanians, Poles and Russians for political domination. The cultural, religious and political tensions of centuries are not over by any means. They still exist today and it is against this background that we have to analyse the three churches: Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Eastern-rite Catholic, which live alongside each other.

In 1596, as a result of various endeavours the Union of Brest was finalised.\* Two hundred years later some 3,800,000 believers had accepted this Union within the territory of the Polish Republican Commonwealth.<sup>5</sup> At the same time however some 800,000 Orthodox, also citizens of the Polish Republican Commonwealth, had rejected the

\*The Union of Brest of 1595-96 created the Uniate Church, also known as the Eastern-rite Catholic or Greek Catholic Church. Concluded with the Holy See by the Orthodox Metropolitan of Kiev and a majority of his bishops, it was the culmination of a series of rapprochements with Rome by the Kievan and Galician-Volhynian princes and metropolitans of Orthodox Rus' (including participation at the councils of Lyons in 1245, Constance in 1418, and Florence in 1438). By the terms of the Union, the Ukrainian and Belorussian Orthodox accepted Papal supremacy on condition that they be allowed to retain their traditional customs, rites and privileges.

Union. For the next few centuries the existence of the Catholics of the Eastern Rite and the Orthodox depended largely on the political situation in this part of Europe.

Until the Grand Duchy of Moscow became stronger the Union of Brest won many sympathisers, but the growth of Russian power endangered not only the Union itself but also the existence of the Roman Catholic Church in the area. At the turn of the 19th century there was one Catholic for four Orthodox while as late as the 18th century the situation had been quite the reverse — one Orthodox for five Catholics.

Behind these figures lies the official liquidation of the Union on the territories annexed by Russia in the 18th century, later repeated during the Second World War. These figures represent persecution, deportation, and anti-Catholic laws.<sup>6</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church suffered similar persecutions. Between 1804 and 1914 the number of Catholics in Minsk diocese increased from 112,274 to 288,980, while the number of parishes decreased from 94 to fifty, and the number of priests from 143 to 86.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Mogilev Archdiocese*

In 1917 the north-eastern part of Belorussia (the archdiocese of Mogilev) had some 118,612 Roman Catholics,<sup>8</sup> and also some Eastern-rite Catholics, but the exact number of the latter is difficult to specify. Despite persecution, pastoral work was carried out in 46 parishes, 11 non-parochial churches (churches without a resident parish priest) and 145 chapels. For years bishops were not allowed to visit the parishes within their dioceses and it was only a few years before the revolution, in 1909, that Denisowicz, the apostolic administrator of Mogilev diocese who resided in St Petersburg, was allowed to spend a few weeks visiting his diocese. Between 5 September and 7 October he visited 15 parishes and confirmed 11,723 believers: 1,629 in Vitebsk; 1,350 in Smolensk and Roslavl' (Rosław); 1,636 in Mogilev; 707 in Svetlovichi (swieciłowicze); 400 in Shklov (Szkłów); 1,239 in Fashchyovka (Faszczówka); 1,132 in Orsha (Orsza); 494 in Staro Syoly (Starosiele); 1,346 in Tolchin (Tołczyn); 483 in Obol'tsy (Obolce); 352 in Smolany; 135 in Dubrovno (Dubrowna) and 760 in Babinovichi (Babinowicze). The description of these visits, which has survived to this day, demonstrates the strong adherence of the local population to the Catholic Church. The authorities however granted permission for such episcopal visits very reluctantly and Denisowicz's visits could not be completed. Then came the 1917 revolution. For a short time pastoral work on a parish level was tolerated but bishops were not allowed to perform their episcopal duties. From the memoirs of Fr Józef Borodziula we know that pastoral work was carried out within the diocese as late as 1932.<sup>10</sup> Fr Borodziula himself worked officially in the parishes of Vitebsk, Beshenkovichi (Bieszenkowicze),

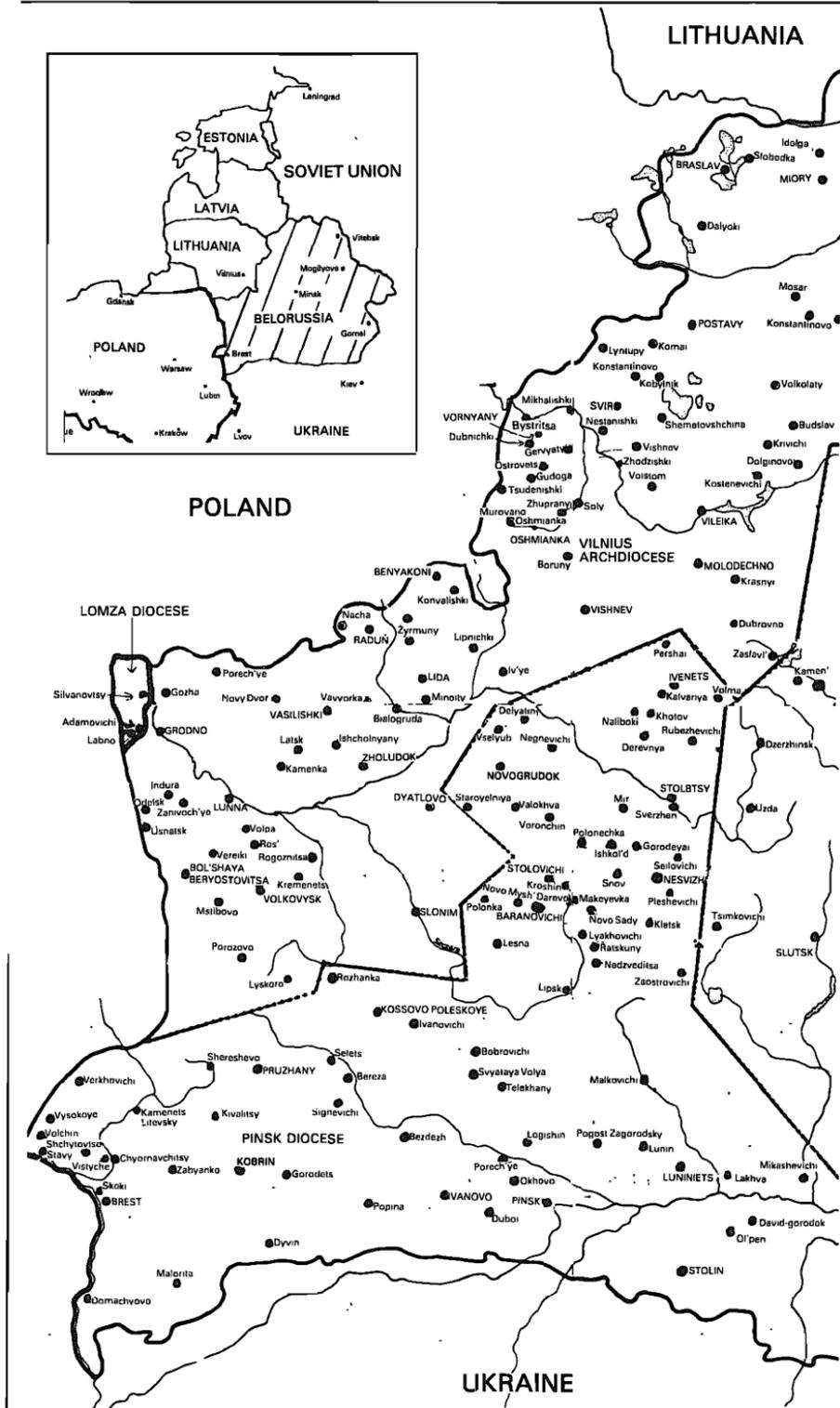
Kamenna (Kamienna) and Gubin (Hubin). Later diocesan priests were arrested, the churches were handed over to the lay authorities and used for non-religious purposes, and some were slowly demolished. One of the churches in Vitebsk was converted into a museum, another in Polotsk (Połock) was closed until 1941.<sup>11</sup> In Mogilev, soon after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, Catholics regained possession of the cathedral, which functioned for some time. Similarly the parish churches in Shklov near Mogilev and Bykhov (Bychów) were restored as well as many other churches. The return of the Red Army in 1944 put an end to the hopes of Catholics for the reconstruction of normal pastoral structure. Today there is not a single priest or functioning Catholic church in this part of Belorussia. Believers have to travel to Vilnius, in neighbouring Lithuania.

### *Minsk Diocese*

In contrast to Mogilev diocese (of which only part lies within Belorussian borders) the whole of Minsk diocese lies within the republic. Until 1925 this diocese was slightly larger than now, but after the pact of Riga when Pinsk diocese (which lay entirely within Poland's borders) was formed, Minsk diocese became smaller by a few parishes. The diocese consisted finally of some 38 parishes, 18 non-parochial churches and monastic churches, plus eighty chapels. According to 1917 data, those parishes catered for some 203,941 believers. In addition, 88,916 believers lived in the parishes incorporated into Pinsk diocese.<sup>12</sup> At the same time there were some surviving Catholics of the Eastern Rite.

Minsk diocese had already suffered particular persecution from the Tsarist authorities in the 19th century. Almost half of all Roman Catholic and Eastern-rite Catholic parishes were then liquidated. Communication between the diocese and its bishop, who resided in the capital, was made very difficult. The bishop's first pastoral visit for some fifty years took place in 1904. Some descriptions of the bishop's visit to the parishes belonging to Borisov (Borysów) deanery, Cherven' (Ihumien), Mozyr'-Rechitsa (Mozyr-Rzeczyca) and Pinsk (then still a part of Minsk diocese) in 1912 and 1913 have survived to the present day. They are not only moving but also most revealing.<sup>13</sup> Wherever he went Bishop Wincent Kluczynski was welcomed enthusiastically. People thanked God that their long wait had been rewarded. More than one generation had never seen the bishop. During his two visits Kluczynski confirmed 29,182 believers in Borisov deanery, 20,896 in Cherven', 14,640 in Mozyr'-Rechitsa and 8,838 in Pinsk: a total of 73,556 believers.

However, the other parts of the diocese — especially in the region of Minsk — were never fortunate enough to enjoy a visit from the bishop. The first visit to the Minsk region was made in 1910 by the then auxiliary





bishop of Mogilev, Jan Cieplak. On 15 June he came to Dzerzhinsk (Kojdanów) (near Minsk), where within the next few days he confirmed 3,158 people. Then he visited 23 parishes and many chapels, and he consecrated churches in Lyakhovichy (Lackowicze) and Lipsk. Even though this was the first visit by a bishop to the region for seventy years, he was not allowed to visit all the parishes he had planned, as the authorities accused him of pursuing political activities. As a reprisal for the religious revival in the region of Minsk, Bishop Cieplak lost his pension as a professor and many priests from the area were persecuted in various ways.

After the 1917 revolution, parish life still existed until the beginning of the 1930s despite the arrests of many priests and the closing of the churches. A certain religious revival was noticeable during the German occupation.

In 1941 work began on restoring the cathedral, which had been turned into a garage in 1936. In 1943 it was reconsecrated. Also in 1943, the beautiful and spacious church of Sts Simon and Helena, which had been turned into a theatre, was returned to the Catholics. The Złota Gorka church was designated for use as an archive storehouse; after a fire broke out there local Catholics made an attempt to reclaim it, but were unsuccessful. The small church in Kalvariya which was closed until the war was converted after the war into a stone-mason's workshop; but since 1980 a priest has been coming regularly to this church (it is the only open church in the whole of Minsk diocese at present).

The church in Logoisk (Lohojsk) was turned into a shop in the 1930s, then during the German occupation was returned to the Catholics. During five days in 1944 a single priest heard there the confessions of some 1,200 people, and baptised some 150 people, both children and adults.

The above-mentioned church in Dzerzhinsk, which was closed until the Second World War, was also given back to the Catholics. At that time other churches were also opened, including those in Timkovichi (Czimkowicze), Uzda, Borisov, Zaslavl' (Zasław) and Bobruisk, as well as many others of which we know little. It is interesting that Fr Weliszyński, the parish priest of Bobruisk, was still there in 1930; after a few years of exile in Kazakhstan he returned to the parish but found the church closed. He did not receive permission to carry on pastoral work in the parish and worked as a janitor. Later he was sent to a labour camp on the River Pechora (Peczora). On his return he worked as a cleaner, looking after the town's main square. Only in 1941, when he was already old and ill, was he allowed to return to his duties as a parish priest.

There is much evidence of religious revival during the last world war. According to a priest who visited Belorussia during the war (there were a few such priests, among them Fr Hlebowicz, Fr Chlakowski, Fr D.



*Above left: Czech Catholic writer and former Charter 77 spokesman Václav Benda, whose essay on social equality appears on pp. 338-40 of this issue. Centre and right: Eva Kantůrková, writer, and Fr Josef Zvěřina, Catholic theologian; extracts from their correspondence, "Deep Calleth unto Deep", appear on pp. 340-45.*



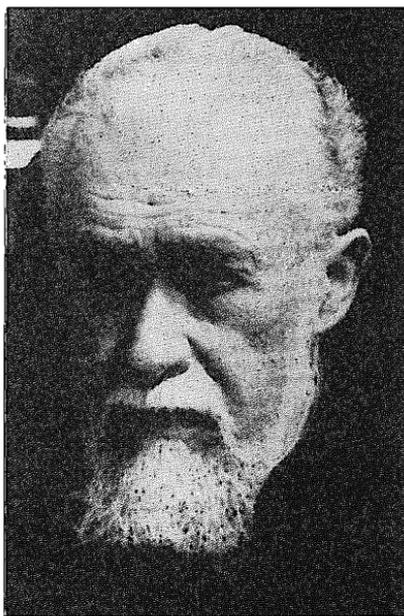
Henryk Gulbinowicz (Poland).



Jozef Tomko (Slovakia).



Andrzej Deskur (Poland).



Myroslav Lubachiv'sky (Ukraine).

Four new Cardinals for Eastern Europe. See Chronicle item on pp. 336-37.  
*All photos © Internationales Katholisches Jugendwerk für Ost- und Mitteleuropa.*

Malec, Fr Mirski-Światopełk), some 4,000 people, aged between seven and thirty, received their first communion between 1941 and 1944 in Minsk alone. The first communion was preceded by 15-20 days of religious instruction. During this period of time the same priest baptised 3,000 people in Minsk and other places. Many religious feasts were openly celebrated then. On the feast of Sts Simon and Helena some two hundred boys and girls, dressed in white, participated in the procession.

It is difficult to establish now with total accuracy how soon the Soviet authorities began to clamp down on religious life in Minsk diocese. It is however a fact that as late as 1957 Fr Małynicz was still working in the parish of Slutsk (Sluck) and Fr Szutowicz in Borisov. At present in the whole territory of the diocese there is not a single priest apart from an old parish priest in Krasnyi-na-Usha.

### *Pinsk, Vilnius and Lomza Dioceses*

In comparison to Minsk and Mogilev archdioceses, which have been undergoing a process of atheisation and russification since 1917, the larger parts of Pinsk diocese, Vilnius archdiocese and a small part of Lomza diocese became a part of the Soviet Union only in 1939. This is why the process of atheisation and russification in these territories has had a different history.

As a result of the shift of Poland's eastern borders in 1945, almost the entire territory of Pinsk diocese found itself within the borders of the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. At that time religious life was concentrated in 126 parishes, 35 non-parochial and monastic churches and around 119 chapels. In 1939 there were 242,706 Roman Catholics and 11,000 Eastern-rite Catholics living there.

Pinsk diocese suffered a great deal during the war. Some 56 priests were killed by the Germans between 1941 and 1944; and 25 priests died of natural causes or as a result of the war. Between 1939 and 1941 the Soviets arrested 16 priests; four priests died in unknown circumstances. Between 22 August 1948 and 20 January 1950 the Soviets arrested another nine priests, so that in the end there were very few priests left. From 1954 onwards priests were slowly returning to their parishes: in Derevnya (Derewna), Pinsk (the cathedral), Rubezhevichi (Rubiżewicze), Brest (parish of the Mother of God, Queen of Poland), Kobrin, Pelishche (Peliszcze), Polonechka (Połoneczka), Logishin (Lahyszyn), Darevo, Rozhanka (Rożana), and Nówogradok. Since 1975 there have been just 12 priests serving 17 parishes (five parishes have a visiting priest). In comparison, in 1939 there were 204 lay and monastic priests working there. Today it is quite difficult to establish definitely how many priests returned to Poland between 1945 and 1947, and how many died in the Soviet Union. The sources<sup>15</sup> allow one to establish the exact fate of 126 parish churches and the fate of 14 out of 35 non-parochial and monastic

churches. Only 17 churches are open today; 15 were turned into Orthodox churches, ten were destroyed between 1939 and 1945; 33 were destroyed by the authorities between 1946 and 1972; 46 were turned into secular buildings. Most frequently the churches were converted into *kolkhoz* warehouses, less often into various clubs or museums. Nineteen were simply left to deteriorate. (See Table II.)

Within the borders of the Belorussian republic there is also a large part of Vilnius diocese (it was divided and incorporated into the Lithuanian Socialist Republic, Poland, and the Belorussian Socialist Republic). In the absence of any detailed information about the Belorussian part of the diocese, it can be stated only that in 1939 there were 890,000 Catholics living there; there was a total of 238 parishes, 53 non-parochial and monastic churches and 136 chapels. Today only 37 parishes have a resident priest; priests also regularly visit another 28 parishes. In nine parishes the churches are open for believers but no priests come there to take services, so that the Mass cannot be performed in full.<sup>16</sup>

Within the borders of the present BSSR there are also seven parishes belonging to Lomza diocese. Only two of them have a resident priest; three have only a visiting priest.<sup>17</sup> Two churches are closed.

The state of the pastoral network in Belorussia is summarised in the table below:

<i>Diocese</i>	<i>Parish with a resident priest</i>	<i>Parish visited by a priest</i>	<i>Active parish but without a priest</i>
Mogilev	0	0	0
Minsk	0	1	0
Pinsk	12	5	0
Vilnius	37	28	9
Lomza	2	3	0
Total	51	37	9

### *Pastoral Work*

We should add that in 1984 some 55 priests worked in the present Belorussia, out of whom eight were under 45 years old, one under 55, three under 65, 16 under 75; 18 were over 75 (there were nine whose age is unknown). This small group of elderly priests, with their parish structure disrupted, can satisfy only minimally the religious needs of local Catholics.

It is difficult to give an exact figure for Catholics living in the present Belorussian republic. On one hand information received would allow us to estimate the number of people with a Catholic background at 1,780,000 (as noted above); on the other hand it is known that on the former Polish territories, annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939 and merged with Belorussia, Ukraine and Lithuania, there lived about 11,898,000 Polish citizens (4,010,700 of them were Roman Catholics and

2,980,100 Eastern-rite Catholics).<sup>18</sup> According to Norman Davies [see Note 4 — *Ed.*] only 1,500,000 Polish citizens were repatriated to Poland after the Second World War. Even if all of them were Catholics (which of course cannot be true), there would still be some 2,500,000 Roman Catholics living within the borders of the Soviet Union. Only a few live in western Ukraine as this was a region where much more intensive repatriation took place than in western Belorussia. The above-mentioned data do not provide full information but allow us to speculate that the number of Catholics or more precisely, people with a Catholic background, is in the region of 1,780,000.

Religious life in Belorussia still awaits a full analysis; all existing data give only a fragmentary picture. Soviet publications mention the problems only superficially since they would otherwise have to admit that they follow a policy carried out systematically since the days of Catherine II.

According to R. P. Platonov, in the whole of Belorussia there are some eight hundred officially permitted religious cult centres of different denominations;<sup>19</sup> 97 of these are Catholic. Religious life is a source of constant concern to the Soviet authorities. Therefore special sociological surveys are carried out as well as an intensive atheisation programme. The results are stored in the party archives in Minsk.<sup>20</sup> Published data indicates a most intense religious life among both Catholics and Orthodox. Here are some examples:

In 1963 in the Orthodox village of Ol'shany, situated in western Belorussia in the region of Stolin, ninety percent of people baptise their children, sixty percent of young couples have a church wedding.<sup>21</sup>

In the village of Plastok near Gomel' only five households do not have an icon hanging in a prominent place in their homes.<sup>22</sup>

In Grodno 46 percent of people questioned stated that they were believers (the denomination was not asked); in the village of Berezovka 38.8 percent; in Minsk (Drazhnyia district) 16 percent; in Gomel' 33 percent; in Vitebsk 12.8 percent; in the village of Surmino 59 percent; Oltush 47.2 percent, and in the Catholic villages of Chyornavchitsy 68 percent, Vereiki 48.4 percent, Volpa 78.9 percent.<sup>23</sup>

According to an official Soviet source 16 percent of the urban adult population openly declare themselves to be believers (without specifying the denomination); in the rural areas this percentage increases to 39.6 percent. At the same time the peasant population in eastern Belorussia (subjected to an atheisation programme since 1917) are 25.8 percent believers, and in the western part (annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939) 60.6 percent.<sup>24</sup>

According to a Catholic source, after Stalin's death, when priests were being released from prison, there was a general religious revival. Despite the absence of a bishop but with permission from the church, believers were confirmed in Pinsk region.<sup>25</sup> Between 1956 and 1957 Catholics in Nesvizh (Nieswież), Polonechka, Ishkol'd' (Iszkoldz), Stolovich (Stołowicze), Pelishche, Rubezhevichi, Logishin and Kobrin were confirmed. In 1956 and 1962 people were confirmed in Nedzveditsa. These religious practices were greatly disliked by the Soviet authorities. As early as 1958 Fr Piatkowski was summoned to the office for religious affairs in Minsk where he was told that confirmation was now strictly forbidden except in the case of very ill Catholics who were still unconfirmed.<sup>26</sup> In 1957 priests were still able to make traditional visits to all parishioners during Christmas time (the so-called *Kolyada*) though it had to be done quietly. However, in 1958 the Soviet authorities forbade this quite innocent practice which was very important for contact between the believers and the priest, and helped him better to carry out his pastoral work. Pastoral work was being limited in different ways:

The authorities are very hostile to private visits by a priest "to any of his parishioners without stating the reason".

It is forbidden to hear confession outside the church in private homes (with the exception of the very ill). Other sacraments as well as all services can be performed only in the churches.

Pilgrimages to the neighbouring churches with or without a priest are forbidden.

The parish priest is the only person who can carry out pastoral functions in the church and in his parish. He cannot ask or accept help from any other priest; neither in preaching a sermon nor in celebrating mass, hearing confession, giving communion or holding a retreat . . . He cannot stand in for a neighbouring priest when the latter is ill or abroad or is away.

It is forbidden to ring the church bells to call people to the service; for several years it was even forbidden to toll the bell during a funeral. Now this is allowed but the period of ringing the bell is to be kept to a minimum.

The priest cannot lead a funeral procession to the cemetery. He is allowed to pray in the church and at the cemetery.

In a funeral procession only one crucifix is allowed as well as unlimited number of wreaths and the use of a band. However the use of any church banners or flags is forbidden.

For some time the priest could not baptise or perform a wedding without a document from the registry office. Before a baptism the parents have to submit a signed application to the parish council. Later the authorities put forward a different

procedure for the baptism. Both parents have to come to the church together with the child and the godparents and sign a parish registry book. A person under 18 cannot participate in any service or become a godparent.

Increased atheist propaganda is carried out by means of the radio, press, cinema and TV. There are atheist lectures during compulsory meetings of parents in the schools and meetings in the clubs; to increase the number of people present atheist films are free of charge. There are atheist slogans in blocks of flats, on fences and on the road signs leading to the churches.

Slanders concerning priests are a common occurrence. Often they are accused of crimes which they did not commit.

The area around the churches is constantly shrinking — taken up for new parks, playing fields . . .

Church buildings, the area adjacent to the church, priests and official church orderlies are heavily taxed. The church is charged more for electricity: for example, a *kolkhoz* is charged one kopek per unit of electricity, the ordinary Soviet citizen four kopeks, but the church 25 kopeks.

A priest cannot hear confession in a hospital. Therefore people have to go to confession before they go into hospital or after returning from it, if they manage to do so before their death.

Harassment of priests has been carried out according to a certain master plan. At first slanders about priests were disseminated. This method did not work with the believers and was stopped. Then the method of taking away a priest's licence for the smallest offence or even without any reason was adopted. Priests could not celebrate mass in the church or dispense any sacraments for a period of two months; later, for six months and more. This method allowed the authorities to harm not only the priest but also his parishioners. After a short while, the authorities, afraid of an open revolt by the local population and the possible publicity this method could arouse, abandoned it. Now fines are the preferred method of punishing priests; the amount is determined by a special committee (usually it is fifty roubles).<sup>27</sup>

Despite the fact that pastoral work has been hampered, religious life is not withering away. A set of data giving the exact number of people receiving communion in one parish in the Pinsk region, which survived somehow, shows this very clearly. In this parish, which in 1939 had 6,000 Catholics, the annual number of communicants was as follows:

1960	6,120 people	1962	7,503 people
1961	6,584 "	1963	8,850 "

1964	10,315 people	1970	16,802 people
1965	11,245 "	1971	18,860 "
1966	12,992 "	1972	19,801 "
1967	13,664 "	1973	20,015 "
1968	15,808 "	1974	20,510 "
1969	17,572 "	1975	20,852 "

### *Atheist Propaganda*

These figures indicate how active Catholicism is in Belorussia but they of course do not allow us to form a comprehensive picture. Belorussian Catholicism is intellectually poor — in the whole of Belorussia there is not a single seminary or bishop. Catholicism here thrives only on the Catholic heritage and it is this heritage which is the subject of constant atheist propaganda which aims at uprooting it. However, many citizens openly admit their religious belief. In Belorussia not a single religious book or even an article has been published during the whole Soviet period. Yet, according to R. P. Platonov, between 1961 and 1977 alone some 160 books and pamphlets on scientific atheism were published. During the same period some two hundred papers on atheistic education and criticism of religion appeared in various academic and other journals. They contain information and practical instructions which are intended to help propagation of scientific atheism in general, and to help atheists to work out a method of struggle against the religious outlook and impose the materialistic world-view on the thinking of the population.<sup>28</sup>

In Belorussia the Communist Party has concentrated on atheist propaganda. Special courses, lectures and atheistic seminars are organised and atheist propagandists are educated there. In one region of Minsk alone in 1976-77, 358 atheistic seminars were organised, with a total of 7,400 participants. In the whole republic in the 1974-75 academic year 19,100 students studied methods of atheistic propaganda at university level.

This limited and selected information proves the determination of the party to destroy any form of religion, especially the Catholic form. Roman Catholicism, which here lacks the proper organisational structure — a diocese, a bishop, an adequate number of parishes, especially in such developing towns as Minsk, Bobruisk, Mogilev, Vitebsk, Borisov and Gomel' — and which does not have its own seminary or its own intellectuals, will survive for some time yet in the rural areas. However, aggressive atheisation and urbanisation of Belorussia constitute a real danger to the faith. Unless there are drastic changes Catholicism in Belorussia may be liquidated within decades.

*Translated from Polish by Grażyna Sikorska*

<sup>1</sup>Shibayev, V. P., *Etichesky sostav naseleniya yevropeiskoi chasti soyuza SSR*. Leningrad: 1930, p.220.

<sup>2</sup>*Naseleniye SSSR*. Moscow: 1983, p. 181.

<sup>3</sup>Karsky, Ye. *Etograficheskaya karta belorusskogo plemeni*. Petrograd: 1917, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup>Davies, N., *God's Playground. A history of Poland*. New York: 1984, Vol. 2, p. 566.

<sup>5</sup>Giertych, J., *L'Eglise en Pologne orientale*. London: 1963, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup>Lokowski, E., *Dzieje Kościoła Unickiego na Litwie i Rusi*. Poznań: 1906.

<sup>7</sup>Kumor, B., *Ustrój i organizacja Kościoła Polskiego w okresie Niewoli Narodowej (1772-1918)*. Kraków: 1980, p. 675.

<sup>8</sup>*Directorium pro Archidiecezi Mohiloviensi nec pro Diocesi Minscensi*. Petrograd: 1917.

<sup>9</sup>*Wiadomości Archidiecezjalne*, 1909, No. 11, pp. 24-27.

<sup>10</sup>See Zyciorys ks. J. Borodziuli, (manuscript), Library of the Catholic University of Lublin.

<sup>11</sup>Oral report XX. [Confidential report to author — Ed.]

<sup>12</sup>See *Directorium*; see also *Wiadomości Archidiecezjalne*, 1910, No. 7, pp. 196-97; see also Baczkowski D., Zyksar F., *Nasze Kościoły*, Warsaw/St Petersburg: 1913, pp. 124-29.

<sup>13</sup>*Wiadomości Kościelne*, from 1912, Nos. 20-21, to 1914, No. 15.

<sup>14</sup>*Schematyzm diecezji pińskiej*, 1939.

<sup>15</sup>*50 lat diecezji pińskiej*, manuscript, 1975, epilogue, 1-10.

<sup>16</sup>Oral report XX.

<sup>17</sup>Landau, L., *Kronika lat okupacji*, Warsaw: 1962, p. 52.

<sup>18</sup>Platonov, R. P., *Propaganda nauchnogo ateizma*, Minsk: 1982, p. 62.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>20</sup>Mandrygin, L. V., Makarov, N. I., "O kharaktere i prichinakh sokhraneniya religioznykh verovaniy u krestyan zapadnykh oblastei Belorussii", *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma* Vol. 1, 1966, pp. 223-39.

<sup>21</sup>Zalesky, A. I. (ed.) *Prichiny sushchestvovaniya i puti preodeleniya religioznykh perezhitkov*. Minsk: 1965, p. 172.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>23</sup>*50 lat diecezji pińskiej*, manuscript, 1975, p. 105.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

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

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>27</sup>Platonov, R. P. *op. cit.*, p. 127.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 180.

TABLE I  
*Belorussian Catholic Parishes 1984*

Diocese	Parish with a residing priest	Parish visited by a priest	Open church but without a priest
Archdiocese of Mogilev			
Minsk		Kalvariya	
Pinsk	Church of the Elevation of the Cross, Baranpivichi	Kosovo Poleskoye	Bystritsa
	Church of the Queen of Poland, Brest	Novo Mysh'	Idolga
	Chyornavchitsy	Church of the Transfiguration, Novogrudok	Lunna
	Derevnya	Pelishche	Rogoznitsa
	Ishkol'd'	Stolovichi	Staroye Vasilevsky
	Logishin		Tsudenishki
	Nedzveditsa		Vavyorka
	Corpus Christi Church, Nesvizh		Zhirmuny
			Zhodzishki

Diocese	Parish with a residing priest	Parish visited by a priest	Open church but without a priest
Pinsk ( <i>Cont.</i> )	Pinsk Cathedral Polonechka Rozhanka Rubezhevichi		
Archdiocese of Vilnius	Boruny Braslav Dolginovo Gervyaty Glubokoye Church of the Queen of the Apostles, Grodno Grodno Gozha Indura Kamenka Kamelishki Konvalishki Krasnyi Kremenets Krivichi Lida Lipnishki Lyntupy Minoity Miory Mstibovo Odelsk Ossova Ostrovets Radun Ros Slobodka Soly Vasilishki Vishnev (near Svira) Vishnyov (near Lida) Volkovysk Zadorozhe Zanevichi Zholudek Zhuprany	Bialogruda Budslav Dalyoki Dubnichki Grodno (parish church) Gudogai Ishcholnyany Iv'ye Kobylnik Komai Konstantinovo Kosteneviche Latsk Lida-Slobodka Mikhalishki Murovano Oshmianka Nacha Nestanishki Novy Dvor Porozovo Porech'ye Slonim Traby Usnatsk Vel'ke Eismonty Volkolaty Voistom	
Lomza	Adamovichi Labno	Golyinka Silvanovtsy Teolin	

TABLE II

*Pastoral network in the eastern part of Pinsk diocese*

Deanery	Open church	Converted into an Orthodox church	Destroyed 1939-1945	Destroyed after 1945	Used for secular purposes	Deserted and in ruins
Pinsk	2	2	1	7	3	1
Baranovichi	2	0	1	6	0	2
Brest	3	3	2	4	6	2
Ivenets	0	0	1	1	2	3
Ivanovo	0	1	0	2	2	2
Kobrin	0	1	0	2	4	0
Kosovo	2	2	0	0	3	0
Lyakhovichi	1	0	0	1	2	0
Luninets	0	3	0	2	4	0
Nesvizh	1	0	2	2	6	2
Novogrudok	1	2	1	5	3	1
Pruzhany	0	0	1	0	5	2
Stolin	0	1	1	0	1	2
Stolovichi	3	0	1	0	3	1
Stolbtsy	1	0	0	1	1	1