

The Polish Church under Martial Law

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The period of martial law in Poland, which lasted from 13 December 1981 to 22 July 1983, was one of the most challenging in the Polish church's history. In the course of those twenty months, its moral leadership and political sagacity were tested to the full. But the challenge, in essence, was relatively simple. Confronted by the expectations of society on the one hand, and by the demands of the state on the other, the church had somehow to defend the achievements and gains of the beleaguered Solidarity movement, whose values and ideals, declared in August 1980, it had fully supported. But it had also to distinguish between real possibilities of change and unchangeable realities, and to encourage state and society to do likewise.

Solidarity and the church had remained conscious of their separate identities at an institutional level. Solidarity's heterogeneous membership, however, had looked to the church for a ringing moral endorsement of its claims, and had generally found what it sought. But the sudden emergence of a major new social movement, which showed an unprecedented degree of unity and boasted a coherent programme of demands, had profoundly altered the existing basis of relations between the church and the state, challenging the assumptions and preoccupations of the past and bringing in its train both opportunities and dangers. The rise of Solidarity had enabled the church, for the moment at least, to move away from the adversarial role to which it had been driven by the economic and social crises of the previous decade. It had also highlighted its vital capacity as a mediator in practical disputes.

From the outset, the church had consistently counselled patience and restraint, and a clear sense of priorities. But throughout the 16 months of Solidarity's open existence, the age-old dilemma of choosing between consolidating limited gains and seeking further advances was never far below the surface of events. Pressure from Solidarity had resulted in the church's gaining substantial institutional

benefits; but the church considered it essential that a firm distinction be made between the challengeable and unchallengeable aspects of Poland's existing political order — and that the precarious balance of interests upon which Solidarity's survival and the preservation of peace depended be fully understood. As Catholic tradition postulated, the church was not in principle opposed to any political, economic or social system which permitted it to conduct its own religious mission in freedom, which preserved basic ethical values, and which enabled the individual to retain his inherent dignity and inalienable rights. While this remained attainable, it was ready to talk and negotiate with all sides, examining and evaluating their concerns, and supporting any initiatives intended for the common good. It believed that Solidarity should hold fast to its legitimate demands; but it also believed that the Polish state should be given the chance to realise its promises of reform and renewal.

This mediating role gained in practical importance as the dynamic conflict between state and society gathered momentum during the course of 1981, and as the creeping paralysis of the state and ruling party became increasingly evident. It survived the death of the Polish Primate, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, at the height of the crisis, after three decades of strong central leadership.

In the end, the proposal made by the church in late 1981 for a power-sharing coalition government, which would recognise the party's leading role but also incorporate a cabinet of independents and a consultative council representing authentic social forces, was the closest it ever came to enunciating a political programme of its own. But the coherence of its voice was often lost in the clamour of competing interests and viewpoints, and its appeals for moderation and compromise were marked by controversy. Once drastic action had been taken to bring Poland's short-lived democratic experiment to an end, the story of subsequent developments would be, first and foremost, a story of the steady erosion of the church's hopes and expectations, and of the gradual revelation of its limited influence as a force for compromise and dialogue.

Martial Law — Weighing the Priorities

With the imposition of martial law on 13 December 1981, all sections of Polish society faced a choice, in theory at least, between open resistance to the power of the new military regime and temporary accommodation to the new situation. For Solidarity, it was clear that failure to respond would merely enable the regime to consolidate its control. But the situation was highly confused, and during this initial

period, when it was impossible to ascertain the likely course of events, opinion was divided as to the best options. One proposal favoured the immediate formation of a widespread resistance movement which would force a decisive showdown after a short period — thus driving the regime to seek a new agreement. Another envisaged the creation of a decentralised underground network of social, educational and economic entities which would avoid direct confrontation but prove equally devastating to the aims of the regime in the longer term. Yet another preferred an evolutionary approach, on the assumption that direct opposition would merely strengthen the power of the new regime, whereas if it were merely left with the hollow shell of inoperative state institutions it would gradually collapse of its own accord.¹

For the church, it was essential that its own sense of common purpose with society be maintained, and that any lapse into hopelessness and despair be stemmed. It was also important that useless resistance in the face of what appeared to be insuperable odds be avoided and that the immediate priorities be clearly and realistically determined. But in practical terms, while information was scarce — particularly about the extent of Soviet pressure on the new regime, the level of its control, the loyalty of the armed forces and the likely Western reaction — the church had little alternative but to play the situation by ear. It had to assess correctly the aims of the Military Council — notably, whether it had acted merely to restore order before resuming the reform process, or whether it was intent on destroying all organised opposition to the state's monopoly. The Polish ruler, General Jaruzelski, had denied any such design. The military authorities, he declared in his 23-minute broadcast on the morning of 13 December, had no goal other than the good of the nation. Their sole concern was to protect public order and restore discipline, and in doing so they would not act "outside the normal mechanisms of socialist democracy". Past treaties and agreements would be respected, as would the pluralism of world-views and the basic requirements of national agreement. When the internal situation was stable, Jaruzelski promised, the restrictions on freedom would be eased or lifted. But for the moment, while the country found itself "on the brink of an abyss", a continuation of the current situation would inevitably have led "to catastrophe, to complete chaos, to poverty and to famine". Failure to act would be a crime

¹The three options were articulated, respectively, by Jacek Kuron, Zbigniew Bujak and Wiktor Kulerski, in open articles published by the *Solidarność* Information Bulletin in Paris during March and April 1982. See "Theses on Solving an Insoluble Problem", "Positional Warfare" and "The Third Possibility", in *Survey*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Summer 1982), pp. 150-59.

against the nation.²

For the time being at least, the church seemed prepared to give the General the benefit of the doubt. In practical terms, what alternative was there? Against all predictions, the regime had achieved its *fait accompli*. But the situation remained tense. Until a clearer picture emerged, the church considered that the immediate priority must be the avoidance of bloodshed. In a hastily prepared sermon at Warsaw's Jesuit church, which was broadcast repeatedly on state radio during the first two days of martial law, the Polish Primate, Archbishop Józef Glemp, quoted from St Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. Only the God of peace, he charged, could know what now lay in store for Poland. Martial law had confronted the country with a new reality. The authorities were no longer open to dialogue and were equipped with the means of summary coercion.

The authorities consider that the exceptional nature of martial law is dictated by higher necessity, that it is the choice of a lesser rather than a greater evil. Assuming the correctness of such reasoning, the man in the street will subordinate himself to the new situation. But many people will also be restricted in their aspirations and strivings, pushed away with a hurtful sense of injury and then, not taking into account the balance of forces, will oppose the existing situation, the existing evil . . . The church will be unyielding when it comes to defending human life. It does not matter if someone accuses the church of cowardice. The church wants to defend each human life; and therefore, in this state of martial law, it will call for peace wherever possible; it will call for an end to violence and for the prevention of fratricidal struggle. There is nothing of greater value than human life. That is why I myself will call for reason, even if it means that I become the target of insults. I shall plead, even if I have to plead on my knees: do not start a fight of Pole against Pole . . . Every head, every pair of hands, will be essential to the reconstruction of Poland, which will come, which *must* come, after the end of the state of martial law.³

The Primate's message was addressed to both sides. There were grounds for supposing that he had accepted the explanation given to him by the authorities early in the morning of 13 December and clarified shortly after in the official proclamation of the new Military Council — namely, that with Solidarity calling for a day of national

²Warsaw Radio, 13 December 1981: quoted in Kevin Ruane, *The Polish Challenge* (BBC: London, 1982), pp. 275-76.

³All substantial quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken, *verbatim*, from the translations provided in the BBC's Summary of World Broadcasts or the US Foreign Broadcast Information Service.

protest on 17 December, and rumours of the imminent seizure of power by hard-line elements of the party, the immediate task had been "to forestall a *coup d'état*" and "to ensure and carry out, within the framework of the law, the efficient functioning of the administrative and economic units". But the draconian measures now in force — the suspension of basic civil rights, the internment of those deemed to pose a threat to state security, the suspension of trade unions and the right to strike, and the prohibition of all information "likely to cause anxiety" — had clearly demanded a forthright response. The Primate, many people believed, had failed to provide an unequivocal moral lead. In particular, his sermon contained no reference to Solidarity, nor any firm condemnation of Jaruzelski's action. Many judged his show of apparent even-handedness to be inapposite in view of what had occurred.

With no Papal nuncio in Warsaw to monitor the situation, and the virtual blackout on all internal and external communications, the Primate was being forced to articulate the church's position by himself. But his reticence appeared to be shared by others, and it was perhaps in recognition of the difficulty that the Pope's own reaction, when it came, was relatively mild. According to reports, he had been notified in advance of Jaruzelski's decision by the Polish Embassy in Rome, and he clearly shared the Primate's fear of a major conflict. The Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, was in Washington for talks with senior White House and State Department officials, and both he and the Pope seemed to share the view of the Schmidt government in West Germany that a decision on sanctions and other measures by the West should be postponed. In the meantime, it was felt that Western pressure could best be exerted by the continuation, rather than the suspension, of aid. To emphasise its position, the Vatican took the unusual step of calling a press conference at which it denied allegations that the Pope had approved the Reagan administration's decision to impose economic sanctions.⁴

In his message of 16 December, a day on which clashes between riot police and striking miners at the Wujek colliery in Katowice left seven dead and over eighty injured, the Pope recalled the Primate's words, appealing for the avoidance of bloodshed. "There must be a return," he declared, "to the path of renewal created by dialogue and respect for the rights of every man and citizen, and especially for the rights of

⁴Early in the New Year, a day of prayer was offered on behalf of those who, in the Pope's words, had made "efforts aimed at providing Poland with concrete help, especially in the areas of humanitarian and food aid": PAP, 21 January 1982. For details of the prior notification given to the Primate and the Pope, see the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18 January 1982; *The Tablet*, 30 January 1982; *The Sunday Times*, 7 February 1982; and Ruane, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

the working man. That path was not an easy one for understandable reasons; but it is not impossible. The strength and dignity of the authorities is expressed through dialogue, not through the use of force.”⁵

Why had the church's reaction been so restrained? Within its upper ranks, there was a firm belief that the process of reform was now too far advanced to be turned back, and that, if the country was ever to recover its political, economic and social stability, a return to dialogue and some form of broad national agreement would sooner or later be inevitable. Furthermore, because Jaruzelski's Council relied exclusively on military force, it was perceived as being relatively weak. Should it fail in its bid to re-establish order and discipline, it seemed certain that the existing Marxist-Leninist regime, built up by Gomulka and Gierek, would be placed in jeopardy; and a hard-line reaction might well destroy the relative freedom and autonomy which church and society had up to now enjoyed. For the moment, it seemed prudent to find some way of salvaging and consolidating what had been achieved by the exercise of patience and restraint, rather than to risk everything in open confrontation. It had to be acknowledged that, even if society chose to remain calm, there could be no *guarantee* of a favourable outcome. But there were at least grounds for hoping that, in time, the current impasse would be resolved satisfactorily. Should society attempt to use force against the regime, direct Soviet military intervention would be all but inevitable, and the resulting catastrophe would certainly sweep away everything and destroy all remaining hopes for the future.

The effects of martial law on the church itself were not inconsiderable. It was now subject to numerous restrictions. Many prominent lay Catholics and several priests had been interned. The publication of Catholic journals and newspapers, the activities of the Catholic Intelligentsia Clubs, studies at the Catholic University of Lublin and the weekly broadcasts of the Mass had all been suspended. But at a time when all other public gatherings had been banned, the churches at least remained open. No effort had been made to jam the broadcasts of Vatican Radio, and at least one member of the Episcopate had already attended a meeting with the military authorities in his own area to request the easing of restrictions.

Issuing a further message, read in all churches on 20 December, the Primate was in no doubt that the choice must be for the lesser of two evils. “We entreat you in the name of God not to raise hands filled with hatred against one another,” he proclaimed. “Keep calm! Do not drive our country to still greater disaster. Only self-control and the maintenance of calm can save the country and the church which fulfils

⁵Vatican Radio, 16 December 1981.

her mission in it.”⁶

By now, the Episcopate’s Main Council had also issued a statement, echoing Glomp’s “ardent appeal” for peace, but condemning in stronger language the curtailment of rights. Martial law, it roundly affirmed, was “a blow struck against society’s expectations and hopes, at a moment when there were thoughts of settling outstanding matters by way of national accord”. It demanded the release of all internees and the continuation of Solidarity’s legal activities. Immediate action was “indispensable” if any sense of balance was to be restored. “Despite everything,” it went on, “even today there is room for embarking on positive actions . . . We are convinced that the nation will not retreat. Nor can it give up the democratic renewal which has been announced in our homeland.”⁷

The church’s credibility was being tested by events. In practical terms, its debt to Solidarity was considerable. It would do everything possible to preserve the advances achieved by Polish society over the preceding months. But its practical dilemmas, as before, remained acute. On the one hand, it was a physical institution, whose essential priorities corresponded to the needs of society but were also in certain cases distinct. On the other, it was a spiritual community, whose active members comprised the vast majority of Polish citizens. Its leaders were firmly convinced that open resistance would be futile. But it had also to recognise the expectations of society, which now looked to it as the only remaining forum for opposition. If the church gave the impression of delaying its response and tempering its demands merely in order to safeguard its own institutional interests, it risked alienating the bulk of its own membership. If it appeared, on the other hand, to reject the regime’s likely concessions and offers of dialogue outright, it would reduce the regime’s incentives for treating it with circumspection and might well jeopardise whatever leverage it still possessed, or might possess in the future.

Somehow, the right balance had to be found. The relatively mild treatment accorded to the church clearly reflected the regime’s need for its co-operation in preserving calm. The regime could not but be aware that its remaining ideological pretensions had been sacrificed with the imposition of martial law. By contrast, for all the criticisms and controversies of the recent past, the moral authority of the church remained largely untarnished, and might, in the right circumstances, be harnessed. Many people still saw the church as occupying the middle ground in the confrontation between Solidarity and the state.

⁶*Ibid.*, 19 December 1981.

⁷*Ibid.*, 18 December, 1981. Vatican Radio was unable to obtain a copy of the statement directly from the Episcopate Secretariat in Warsaw, and later broadcast its contents relying on an Agence France Presse dispatch from Paris.

Yet the church's hierarchical structure and institutional requirements also made it vulnerable. From the regime's point of view, therefore, the church would always be the more desirable partner in dialogue. If it could be tempted to acquiesce in the present state of affairs, it might be possible both to exploit its influence in the short term, and, ultimately, to drive a wedge between the church and society.

Glemp had refused Jaruzelski's offer of a meeting. But the foreign press was already buzzing with rumours of the Primate's uncertainty and indecision, and of the divisions to which this was giving rise. In a message smuggled from his place of internment at Konstancin, Walesa had called for massive strikes in major industries, and other acts of resistance. But, like the Primate, he had also appealed for the avoidance of bloodshed, and had supported a continuation of the church-state dialogue as a possible way out of the impasse. Reports were circulating that the church had already persuaded Walesa to call off his plans for a hunger-strike, and that the military authorities were now offering to release him into the church's "custody" if he could be persuaded to make a televised appeal against further protest actions.⁸

It was plain that, in such a knife-edge situation, the church had to be prepared to talk. But could it still expect to play the role of a mediator? Now that Solidarity was no longer able to exercise its functions openly, the church's practical opportunities for genuine mediation would be very much reduced. "What can be said," the Primate would later ask, "to the families of those who have been harmed, disappointed, imprisoned and slandered without good reason?"⁹ As he had already acknowledged, the authorities were equipped with full powers of coercion, and now that there existed no legitimate means for Polish society to express its grievances, the church would find itself under greater pressure to assume that role itself, just as it had done during the 1970s. Yet it was still prepared to believe — and still had Jaruzelski's explicit assurance — that Solidarity's suspension would be temporary, and that the authentic social forces which it represented must sooner or later be acknowledged appropriately. While the confrontation remained essentially one between these social forces and the state, then, the

⁸Such reports emanated from church sources, and appeared in Solidarity's Warsaw bulletin; see "Pope Awaits Crucial Report from Envoy", *The Sunday Times*, 27 December 1981; "Vatican Expected to Keep Walesa in Remote Monastery", *The Guardian*, 31 December 1981; and "Secret Negotiations May Free Walesa into Church Hands", *The Times*, 29 January 1982. Walesa's offer to negotiate with the military authorities alongside other members of the Solidarity Co-ordinating Commission was rejected. At the end of January, however, talks were held in the company of Walesa's legal advisers and several church officials.

⁹Glemp's homily at Midnight Mass in Warsaw's Holy Cross church was broadcast on Warsaw Radio, 24 December 1981.

church could still, in theory, perform some kind of mediating function. Such, it seems, was the reasoning. But at the same time, the church's appeals for patience and restraint, and for a clear sense of priorities, appeared to many to carry an implicit suggestion — that if those appeals were respected, the church would be able to secure certain concessions on society's behalf, and perhaps also create conditions for a new compromise with the state. Herein lay the seeds of the frustration and disenchantment which were subsequently expressed.

Consolidation — Hallmarks of a Catastrophe

On 20 December, the Papal envoy, Archbishop Luigi Poggi, arrived in Warsaw on a "fact-finding mission". He brought with him a letter from the Pope, appealing to Jaruzelski for the swift repeal of martial law and a return to dialogue and the process of reform. After extensive discussions with church and state officials, Poggi was confident that hopes of dialogue between "the authorities and the social forces in Poland" would soon be met. His meeting with Jaruzelski on Christmas Eve was said to have taken place "in a spirit of mutual understanding".¹⁰ On 22 December, the Episcopate Secretary, Bishop Bronislaw Dabrowski, was also permitted to travel to Rome, thereby ensuring that contacts with the Vatican remained open.

By now, the church had also been given access to the internment centres, where it was able to provide pastoral care and humanitarian assistance to the 5,000 confined there, in addition to the counselling, information and legal aid which it was providing for their families. Local priests were encouraged to give whatever help was needed, within the framework of their pastoral mission, and the resulting charitable activity was fast assuming the proportions of a massive programme. By the time of his Epiphany sermon on 6 January, Glomp was already expressing his gratitude for the unofficial foreign aid being provided for Poland through the church's channels.

Nothing, however, could disguise the fact that, as each day passed, martial law was acquiring the features of permanence. Evidence was also coming to light that, far from being a spontaneous response to temporary necessities, its imposition had been carefully planned over many months. The Primate was well aware of the rumours that he had miscalculated the regime's intentions and allowed himself to be manipulated. But he still believed, in common with many others, that Solidarity had allowed its practical campaign to extend too far, and

¹⁰AFP, 27 December 1981.

that Jaruzelski's Military Council, however rigid and dictatorial, was infinitely preferable to the hard-line rivals said to be waiting in the wings. Solidarity's original demands were as legitimate now as they had always been. But the regime must be given a chance to demonstrate its good intentions. In a sermon at the end of December he had recalled the teachings of his predecessor, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, and had appealed for a contrite attitude:

We have recalled . . . the ideals embodied in the trade union that had been working with such enthusiasm. Like a tempest, it swept through those August days, gathering so much esteem. All of a sudden, a pessimistic note was struck, as if it were all going to come to an end. However, it will not be possible to destroy the ideals with which the nation invests certain institutions at certain times. No handcuffs, no regulations, no repressions, no exiles can destroy them — for they are in the nation, in its existential soul: they are indestructible . . . The late Primate always repeated that Rome was not built in a day, that it was necessary for us to build our future gradually, realistically and calmly, having assessed the realities and conditions correctly. The late Primate was not always thought to be right . . . Today it transpires just how right he was. People of ideals allowed themselves to be drawn into haste to a great extent . . . In order to be a realist, one must always go back to the cradle. One must see God and Man, and have confidence in the great powers invested in Man by God. It is in this spirit that we wish to act.¹¹

As the rapid consolidation of martial law proceeded, however, the Primate must have wondered whether his original prognosis had been correct. Clumsily-worded oaths of loyalty were being demanded of all state employees, with the threat of dismissal facing those who refused to renounce their support for Solidarity. This clearly went beyond the simple restoration of order and discipline which the authorities had promised. In an open letter to Jaruzelski, Glemp condemned the oaths as an infringement of constitutional rights and a violation of the letter and spirit of the 13 December martial law decree. He objected to the implication that the loyalty of Solidarity's supporters to the Polish state was automatically questionable. By early February, over 200,000 had been dismissed for refusing to take the oath.¹²

In an Epiphany sermon, the Primate also condemned the continuing arrests and detentions. The state of martial law, the practice of internment and the work dismissals were "three

¹¹ Vatican Radio, 9 February 1982.

¹² This figure was cited by church sources; see "Vatican Summit Puts Spotlight on Pope's Dilemma over Poland", *The Sunday Times*, 7 February 1982.

afflictions", which together were deepening the divisions and intensifying the hatred which many felt. But despite it all he still advised patience, recalling again Cardinal Wyszyński's words: "One can, in a heroic gesture, give one's life on the field of battle; but this is of short duration. It is sometimes a greater heroism to live, to endure, to hold on for years on end — and to work."¹³

On 9 January, the Primate attended his first round of talks with Jaruzelski since the imposition of martial law. The short meeting coincided with the partial easing of restrictions on domestic travel and on the universities. By the middle of the month, theatres and cinemas had also reopened, and 1,000 internees had been released. On 12 January, Jaruzelski dispatched a long-overdue reply to the Pope's letter, guaranteeing that martial law would be of brief duration, and that Solidarity would soon be permitted to resume its "legitimate" non-political functions. By now, the Pope had indicated that he would press for his second visit to Poland — in celebration of the 600th anniversary of the arrival of the Black Madonna icon at Jasna Góra — to go ahead as planned the following August, whatever the situation in the country. He had formally accepted the invitation the previous November.

As the immediate threat of violence receded, the church appeared to speak more forcefully. Glemp was ready to press the authorities to relax their restrictions. But he still believed that nothing should be done to undermine what he regarded as Jaruzelski's already tenuous position. He still took the view that Jaruzelski's apparent openness to some form of dialogue, whether or not it led to immediate practical concessions, marked him out as a relative moderate. He was certain that, unless society possessed representative institutions, no authentic dialogue would be possible and the church would be unable to exercise its mediating functions effectively. But at the same time, these institutions must be aware of their own limitations, and must know how to distinguish between the changeable and unchangeable aspects of the system. They must avoid actions and challenges likely to be construed as a threat to the vital interests of the Polish state and its eagle-eyed foreign protectors. A careful balance was needed if the volatility endemic to Polish life was to be contained. "The consequences of standing up for the truth are enormous," he declared, in a message broadcast over the state radio:

Firstly, one must not, in the fervour of conflict and struggle, slander either the rulers or the ruled, utter falsehoods about them, exaggerate flaws, pass over merits, make them look

¹³Epiphany sermon in St John's Cathedral, Warsaw, 6 January: Vatican Radio, 18 January 1982.

ridiculous. Secondly, one must demand honest information from the mass media, both domestic and foreign. Thirdly, there must be demands that people deprived of freedom or dismissed from their place of work should know why they are being given such a punishment.

The revived Joint Commission of senior church and state officials reaffirmed, in the middle of January, that close church-state co-operation would be an "important factor" in the early lifting of martial law.¹⁴

The Episcopate, in a pastoral letter read out in all churches on 31 January — a day which had been set aside in the West as a "Day of Solidarity" with Poland — also appealed for dialogue, but made stern demands as well. It echoed the Primate's warnings about the dangers of continuing civil protests; but it also demanded that rights and freedoms be promptly restored.

We call upon those on whom the respect for freedom, especially freedom of conscience and belief, depends, to meet halfway the love of freedom which is so dear to our nation. Respect for this freedom should result in the restoration of the state's normal functions, the quick release of all detainees, the cessation of all duress on ideological grounds and dismissals from work for political views or trade union membership . . . Dialogue may be difficult, but it is not impossible. Everyone expects this dialogue, and we as bishops appeal for it. We must eliminate this wave of growing hatred, vengeance and revenge. These activities infringe human dignity, curb civic rights and thus inhibit national accord.¹⁵

The quest for dialogue and agreement in social conflicts was a natural position for the church. However, once the confrontation became more complex, and no longer admitted a relatively easy centrist position, it would become progressively more difficult for the church to remain aloof. In particular, the Primate's even-handed approach appeared to be sending confusing signals to those who expected a more strident defence of legitimate rights, and with it a more forthright condemnation of the military regime. In particular, the view which he seemed to hold — that both Solidarity and the state must share the blame for what had happened — was widely felt to be too close to that of the authorities. Preaching on 7 February at the

¹⁴*Le Monde*, 19 January 1982; Warsaw Radio, 18 January and 24 January 1982. By April 1982, the Joint Commission had established six working groups to discuss issues of common interest.

¹⁵Pastoral letter from the Episcopate, quoted in *The Times*, 22 January 1982, and *Le Monde*, 23 January 1982.

Polish church of St Stanislaw in Rome, where he had travelled, with Cardinal Franciszek Macharski of Kraków and Archbishop Henryk Gulbinowicz of Wrocław, to confer with the Pope, Glemp again expressed his optimism about the future:

In Poland, a country which will be healed of the sickness of anger, the Lord's order and peace, based on the Gospel, must rule. In our homeland, room will be found for the church, room will be found for Solidarity, room will be found for self-governing trade unions — because all of this depends on us, on our Christian attitude, on an attitude which retains its dignity, a dignity introduced not by force or stealth but in truth.

Back in Warsaw on 11 February, he denied that he brought any particular message from the Pope.¹⁶

The tone of the Pope's own statements, however, seemed more assertive. "The hopes which have been temporarily denied," he told a visiting group of Solidarity representatives,

the difficulties and the obstacles which have been created, the hard restrictions imposed not only on the members of the union, but on the entire population, cannot make us forget that this trade union acquired and still possesses the character of an authentic representative of the workers, recognised and confirmed by the organs of power. It is and remains an autonomous and independent trade union, faithful to its initial inspiration, which rejects violence and even today, in the difficult situation which it is experiencing, is concerned with being a constructive force, acting for the nation. Together with you, I share the conviction that the restoration of genuine and complete respect for the rights of the working people — especially their right to have a union that is already set up and legalised — is the only way of emerging from this difficult situation.¹⁷

Eventually, on 25 February, after its 183rd plenary conference, the Polish Episcopate issued a communiqué which contained a fully authoritative formal statement of the church's position. The statement carried the clear endorsement of the Pope, who would continue to refer to it during the year. The bishops were firmly convinced that the situation was worsening by the day. It was already bearing "all the hallmarks of a real social, moral and economic catastrophe". But a dual approach was indeed necessary. The regime,

¹⁶Vatican Radio, 9 February 1982. Returning to Warsaw, Glemp stated that the Pope "prays for Poland; but he is not sending any special message, because he believes that we should overcome our problems ourselves": UPI, 12 February 1982.

¹⁷Vatican Radio, 9 February 1982.

for its part, must recognise that Solidarity would not allow itself to be crushed, and that no genuine dialogue and authentic agreement would be possible without it. But society must also be realistic, especially now that martial law, far from easing its grip, was being consolidated.

From the authorities, a comprehensive series of measures was urgently required: a swift end to martial law, the release of internees, a general amnesty for martial law offenders, an end to dismissals from work, a promise of safe conduct for those willing to come out of hiding, the reactivation of the Catholic Intelligentsia Clubs and Catholic publications, and new provisions for cultural pluralism. "Social accord," the bishops noted,

should contain guarantees for the justified needs and aspirations of society, for the participation of citizens in public life and the exercise of social control. The two sides to a social accord are the ruling powers and the credible representatives of organised social groups. In this, the representatives of the temporarily suspended trade unions, and among them the independent, self-governing union Solidarity, which has broad social approval, cannot be absent.

But for Polish society, the message was equally clear:

Social accord makes demands not only on the authorities, but also on the whole of society. It is the duty of society to adhere to a sense of realism in assessing the geopolitical situation of our country. This does not mean either conformism to, or abandonment of, the supreme national values. A sense of realism and prudence requires that we do not accept the principle of "all or nothing". Just the opposite — we ought to strive systematically, persistently and gradually towards the implementation of our aims. This requires us to think out thoroughly for ourselves the problems of working for the common good, and to avoid imprudent collective reactions. It also requires us to define wisely our individual and social demands, taking a long-term view of our national future.¹⁸

By the time the Episcopate Secretary, Bishop Bronislaw Dabrowski, had arrived back in Rome for a lengthy stay the following month, accompanied by the Bishops of Łódź and Poznań, it was being suggested that the Papal visit, planned for August, would now have to be postponed. Fears were also mounting that a campaign against the church itself was now imminent, despite its cautious and conciliatory

¹⁸Communiqué issued by the Episcopate, quoted on Vatican Radio, 28 February 1982.

approach. The bishops had already spoken out against an apparent increase in what they termed the "programmed atheisation" of young people. It was widely expected that moves would soon be made to curb the church's social activities — and in particular the activities of its more outspoken local priests, many of whom, at the prompting of their parishioners, were allowing their churches to be used as gathering places for independent cultural and educational groups. A number of them had already suffered harassment, and several had been detained for short periods before being released, usually thanks to the intervention of their bishops. Early in March, however, Fr Sylwester Zych, a priest from Otwock, was arrested and charged with complicity in the murder of a militia officer, Sgt Zdzislaw Karos, on a Warsaw tram on 18 February. The charges were substantiated in court, and Zych was later jailed for four years.

Although much was made of Zych's case, the head of the state's Office of Religious Affairs, Jerzy Kuberski, dismissed all rumours of a wider anti-church campaign as "absurd lies". He reiterated the regime's view that there was "no alternative to reconciliation" with all social forces. It was a process in which the church, if it chose, could play an "important role". The church had been virtually untouched by the martial law restrictions, and in at least one instance — a new decree allowing children in hospital to be given a short period of religious instruction each week at the request of their parents — its freedom had actually been extended. Church-state relations still enjoyed a "model character" in Poland, Kuberski insisted.¹⁹

However well founded certain rumours might be, and however vulnerable the church might be to a sudden decision to restrict its rights and freedoms, there was indeed no doubting its unique visible presence. The number of new churches now under construction was higher than at any time since the Second World War. Several Catholic publications had reappeared after decades of suppression, and at least four new Catholic newspapers were due to begin publishing in the summer. Priests were being allowed to travel abroad. The church's aid programme to internees and their families was still in full swing. During a single fortnight in March, the Primate had addressed a crowd of 30,000 at an open-air Mass in Warsaw's Ursus suburb, and 50,000 had attended the baptism in Gdańsk of Walesa's eighth child, Victoria. Thousands of others had joined the public procession in Warsaw marking the arrival of the Black Madonna icon from Czestochowa. Over Easter, as previously over Christmas, the curfew would be lifted to permit church services to continue as normal.

Despite this, the Primate himself added his voice to the chorus of complaints. Whilst the attitude of the military authorities remained

¹⁹PAP, 7 April 1984.

essentially correct, he declared in his Easter message, a growing belligerence *was* being shown towards the church at a local level, particularly by local organisations of the party. Such aberrations must be curbed if a “new climate” was to be achieved in church-state relations. As a concessionary gesture of fair-mindedness, he urged the authorities to use the occasion of Easter to release all women internees.²⁰

Reflection — Reason, Maturity and Wise Resistance

At a press conference on 13 April, the Primate’s Social Council, an “opinion-giving and ancillary body” comprising 28 lay Catholic members, which had been established the previous November under the chairmanship of Professor Stanislaw Stomma, released a report. Its specific proposals and recommendations, which were circulated to all bishops, included the promotion of a “universal national discussion”. It endorsed the view that, for any national agreement to be acceptable to society, adequate representation must be given to the “real social and opinion-creating forces” in the country, including the church. A schedule for the lifting of martial law and the restoration of trade union activities must be arrived at by agreement. But martial law had been dictated, the Social Council argued, “by weakness, and by the threat to the structures of the state and the system”. Adherence to the 1980 agreements must in future presuppose a readiness on all sides to compromise. The Council therefore urged Solidarity to consider critically its own share in the responsibility for the present crisis.²¹

The controversial report did not amount to an authoritative statement, and it was widely criticised within the church’s own ranks. But it broadly reflected, at least by implication, the Primate’s thinking. Although hopes for the early lifting of martial law seemed to have receded, Glomp was still determined to offer the military authorities an additional opportunity to demonstrate their honourable intentions, and thereby vindicate his own conciliatory stance and prevent further public alienation. Much was being done to foster his hopes. Even when, at his meeting with Glomp on 25 April, Jaruzelski

²⁰Easter message at St John’s Cathedral, 11 April: *Daily Telegraph*, 12 April 1982, and Vatican Radio, 15 April 1982.

²¹Vatican Radio, 19 April 1982. During May, the Social Council issued two new documents on the tasks of economic recovery, which were strongly critical of the degree of centralisation and politicisation within the economy, and the lack of public control in the decision-making process. It also called for the restoration of free trade unions, and for a diversion of resources from unproductive collective farms to the private sector.

rejected the Social Council's "unrealistic" report, the regime continued to call for closer church-state co-operation. The church's proposals and recommendations *were* being seriously considered, it was stressed, and the important contribution which it was making to the easing of tensions would in time produce substantive results. Glemp was still prepared to err on the side of optimism and good faith. Sooner or later, it seemed, a genuine dialogue between state and society must be reopened. Without it, no progress would be made. It was only a question of awaiting the right moment.

So the church was still ready to talk, and to urge society to show patience and restraint. But the suggestion that its dialogue with the state would one day be genuine invited scepticism, and many held the view that it would remain little more than a smokescreen. As one official newspaper commented, in response to the Social Council's suggestion that the church should play a part in a future national agreement, "Religious institutions which carry out specific functions cannot be included in the system of people's power . . . As public organisations, they represent the citizens who are their members only on religious questions. They do not, therefore, have the right to speak as organisations on non-religious questions."²² As far as the regime was concerned, then, the church-state dialogue would have its limits. But even if some kind of positive dialogue *were* achieved, would it not merely reduce the pressure for the immediate restoration of Solidarity?

In the event, the violent clashes which occurred in various Polish cities on May Day and 3 May put paid to any immediate hopes of a return to dialogue and co-operation. During the demonstrations, teargas was thrown into several churches by riot police. Thousands were detained. The regime's handling of the disturbances elicited a strong condemnation from the Episcopate. "The state," the bishops recalled at their plenary conference in Czestochowa, "will be able to fulfil its functions only when it enjoys public support — only then will the common building of a jointly drafted programme be able to get under way." However, they warned that the organising of demonstrations was also threatening any prospect of a national agreement.²³

Preaching on the feast of St Stanislaw in Warsaw a few days later, the Primate went considerably further in his criticism of the demonstrations. Much of the responsibility for the disorder he attributed to "manipulators", and he warned young people against becoming involved. According to at least one report, his words, which appeared to endorse the regime's view that the clashes had been

²² *Rzeczpospolita*, 29 April 1982.

²³ Vatican Radio, 5 May 1982.

deliberately engineered by the Solidarity underground, were met with gasps of astonishment from his congregation.²⁴

By now, serious doubts had arisen about the Pope's August visit. There was speculation about a plan to release Walesa and suspend martial law on 22 July, Poland's National Day, as a prelude to the Pope's arrival. But, although the Episcopate renewed its invitation, no mention of the visit was made by the church-state Joint Commission at its meeting on 8 June. The contents of a briefing telegram, dispatched to Rome by the Episcopate's Main Council a week later, were not made public. The much-rumoured campaign against the church's social activities had not materialised. Yet it was evident that the authorities were making the visit dependent on the measure of co-operation shown by the church at all levels. They had already accused the bishops of making "unilateral decisions" about the visit without consulting either the Vatican or the regime in advance. The visit would also coincide with the second anniversary of the Gdańsk Agreements on 31 August; and, if any additional reason were needed, the plans were also encountering stiff opposition from the official media in the Soviet Union and other neighbouring countries. As one Polish commentator put it:

The state authorities believe that the visit of His Holiness should take a thoroughly secure and undisturbed course worthy of its rank, useful for the nation and the stability of the state. . . . The visit should be preceded by thorough organisational arrangements, for which adequate socio-political conditions are indispensable. These conditions depend on the progress of normalisation in Poland.²⁵

On 14 June, the Papal envoy, Archbishop Poggi, returned to Warsaw for a further lengthy round of discussions. A fortnight later, welcoming the recent release of a number of internees as a promising step, the Episcopate confirmed that negotiations were still under way. In the middle of July, however, the Polish Foreign Minister, Józef Czyrek, hurried to Rome to lodge a formal request for the visit's postponement. Glemp announced the news in St Peter's the following day. The church, he said, had fervently desired that the Pope's visit should take place. However, it must take place not at a time of excitement and irritation, but rather "when we are able to take in his every word, as well as our common prayers with him, in a religious spirit, without hesitation and without emotions dictated by external

²⁴ *The Sunday Times*, 9 May 1982.

²⁵ PAP, 13 June 1982. See also *Newsweek*, 13 June 1982; and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15 June 1982. The Soviet TASS newsagency claimed that the purpose of President Reagan's visit to the Vatican in early June had been to solicit the Pope's support for the financing of political opposition groups.

conditions". Speaking to the Polish *Sejm* on the same day, Jaruzelski warned that a visit in 1983, now on the cards, would also depend upon the good behaviour of the parties concerned.²⁶

In a pastoral letter read in all churches on 8 August, the Episcopate's Main Council placed the onus for the postponement squarely on the regime's shoulders. The Pope had agreed to it with great reluctance, it noted, after hearing the regime's reasons — in particular, that August would be too sensitive a time in view of the situation in the country. But the Papal visit must be above all social conflicts, and must be seen from the perspective of the nation as a whole, and of the church's unifying role. With the annual pilgrimages to Jasna Góra now beginning, the Council welcomed the latest limited amnesty for internees (which had been announced at the beginning of the month), and urged those newly released to make a thanksgiving journey to the shrine.²⁷

The 300,000 who converged on Jasna Góra from various parts of Poland for the Feast of the Assumption on 15 August represented by far the largest public gathering since the imposition of martial law. On this occasion, Solidarity's visible presence was limited. But several clashes had occurred in various cities as the pilgrimages got under way, and on 16 August the underground Provisional Co-ordinating Commission (TKK) announced the beginning of a new wave of protest marches and demonstrations, to culminate on 31 August.

The TKK's announcement reawakened the Primate's anxiety. Preaching at Jasna Góra later in the month, he called again for the release of Walesa and the remaining internees, and for the resumption of legitimate trade union activities. But to organise further demonstrations at this stage would, he argued, merely encourage acts of repression. He stressed that those who sought violence and confrontation could expect no help from the church.

Two years ago on the coast a great thing was accomplished, a victory for reason, maturity and wise resistance. It was an exceptional victory. It did not take place in street barricades, but behind a table, in dialogue, and in a moment of concentration in prayer by all workforces. Two years have already passed and we have not been able to use that victory in a wise manner. It gave a chance to the two parties in question . . . Let us learn something from history at last . . . The church was with those who locked themselves in their factories to fight for the rights of the workers which had been infringed. It followed those who were placed in

²⁶From Glemp's press conference at Warsaw airport, and Jaruzelski's speech to the *Sejm*, 22 July: see "Papal Delay Explained by Glemp", *The Times*, 22 July 1982; and Warsaw Radio, 22 July 1982.

²⁷Warsaw Radio, 8 August 1982; Vatican Radio, 9 August 1982.

the internment centres. It goes into the prisons and brings what it can — pastoral consolation and often material assistance . . . But in this work the church must be faithful to its tasks; it must not be an instrument in the hands of certain groups in society, or in the hands of the state.²⁸

By the end of the month, Glemp was still appealing for calm. Of the many solutions being put forward, he contended, some were simply “too radical and not in accordance with the spirit of Christianity”. The Episcopate had also urged both sides to avoid a new confrontation. It wanted to believe, it said, that the authorities would preserve their credibility by following their words with action. But Solidarity’s activists must also prove their credibility by respecting the principles, statutes and commitments of their organisation. Everybody, without exception, should be making efforts to create conditions which would allow the restoration of full civil liberties. This was not a time for further trials of strength and new confrontations.²⁹

Breakdown — the Dilemma of Opposition

Despite the appeals, Solidarity’s second anniversary on 31 August was marked by demonstrations in dozens of Polish towns. The final casualty figure included at least five deaths and over two hundred serious injuries. Over 4,000 were arrested and almost two hundred of these were interned. The church believed that Solidarity’s activists had been at least partly responsible. But it also considered that the authorities had drastically over-reacted.

The Episcopate, meeting in Warsaw in mid-September, responded with a stern warning. The events of 31 August, it observed, had clearly contradicted the regime’s claims that the situation in Poland was under control. “All sorts of crises are shaking Poland,” the bishops asserted.

There are no obvious signs that the situation is improving and one cannot see any convincing prospects. The future fills us with concern. The growing wave of violence may well be leading in a dangerous and tragic direction for our nation, and for our state’s existence.³⁰

The church was well aware that its appeals for restraint on both

²⁸Vatican Radio, 27 August 1982.

²⁹Warsaw Radio, 31 August 1982; Vatican Radio, 28 August 1982.

³⁰Pastoral announcement of the 187th Plenary Conference of the Polish Episcopate, Warsaw, 15-16 September 1982: *The Times*, 18 September 1982; and Warsaw Radio, 19 September 1982.

sides were falling on deaf ears, and that its own putative position as a mediator was in danger of being compromised. The authorities, for their part, showed no intention of giving way to society's demands, and there were no signs of any incipient process of reconciliation. The church was still prepared to talk, and to seek out opportunities for dialogue and agreement. But the Episcopate's statement was the clearest warning yet of the inevitable limits to its co-operative attitude.

Even this, however, did not prevent the statement's being met by a barrage of criticisms from the official media. "Such pronouncements," one newspaper thundered, "raise the question as to whether the church is not about to repeat the mistakes made by Solidarity, underestimating the strength of the state and setting itself up as an opposition political party." The statements being made by certain members of the Catholic clergy, and by certain church dignitaries, it proclaimed, were clearly incompatible with the church's overall position.³¹

On 22 September, a new umbrella organisation, dubbed the "Patriotic Movement for National Rebirth" (PRON) was established under the chairmanship of a Catholic writer, Jan Dobraczyński. The intention was that it should assume certain reformist functions, and it was widely rumoured that its creation, under firm official guidance, had cleared the way for a formal ban on the Solidarity movement. Glemp, well aware of the implications, promptly cancelled his impending meeting with Jaruzelski, and called off two foreign visits — to the United States and the Vatican — scheduled for October. A formal ban, he warned, would be certain to provoke serious conflict.

On 8 October, however, despite a torrent of appeals and warnings, the *Sejm* passed a resolution formally outlawing Solidarity. In Rome the following day, at the canonisation ceremonies for the Auschwitz martyr, Maksymilian Kolbe, the Pope expressed his deep sorrow. It was, he said, a move likely to drive the Polish people to despair: "What is being witnessed is a violation of the basic rights of Man and society . . . The Holy See and the church in Poland have done all they can to prevent this from happening, and they will continue to defend the legitimate rights of working people."³²

The *Sejm's* action was followed by a week of spontaneous strikes

³¹ *Rzeczpospolita*, 8 September 1982. The official press took particular exception to a strident sermon by the Bishop of Przemyśl, Ignacy Tokarczuk, in which he denounced the "blind and brutal force" used in the suppression of the protests. The bishop was subsequently refused a passport to attend the canonisation of Fr Maksymilian Kolbe in Rome during October: Vatican Radio, 7 September 1982; *Le Monde*, 10 September 1982.

³² Vatican Radio, 10 October 1982.

and demonstrations throughout the country. During one of these, in the Kraków industrial suburb of Nowa Huta, a student was killed. There was no doubt that a decisive blow had now been dealt to the church's hopes of compromise and change under the present system. Despite the recent disturbances, the regime had clearly calculated that the country was now sufficiently under control for its gamble to be justified. In casting aside the 1980 Agreements, it had also decisively rejected the church's mediating efforts, and had implicitly forfeited the confidence of anyone who had hitherto believed that a genuine dialogue and authentic national agreement could be set in train once order and discipline prevailed.

The resulting imbalance — between the monopolistic objectives of the state and the dashed expectations of a weakened and despondent society, now bereft of any representative means of expressing its grievances — was certain to place additional burdens on the church's shoulders. It was now the only officially tolerated institution outside the state's control. There were no credible independent alternatives, and it was unlikely that the new PRON, and the officially sponsored trade unions being created to attract Solidarity waverers, would gain any really significant support. Free trade unions would not, after all, be returning to Poland; and with Solidarity's underground leadership no longer able to offer any realisable programme other than further strikes and demonstrations, it was inevitable that the duty of opposition would pass increasingly to the church.

Therein lay the dilemma. At the very least, the church had to remain active in defence of what it had itself acknowledged to be the legitimate rights of society. But it had also to do what it could to preserve peace. If it moved too far in the former direction, it risked becoming the target of official repression. If it moved too far in the latter, it might well be accused of pursuing peace at any price and thereby jeopardise its moral authority. With little room left for practical initiatives, however, its counsels of patience and restraint, its openness to dialogue, and its readiness to allow the regime time to honour its promises would hardly prove convincing. If it was to continue to provide a firm moral lead, to remain close to society, sharing its sorrows and sufferings, and to offer realistic grounds for hope in the future, it would have to find an alternative approach. But what alternative existed?

Solidarity had been officially prohibited. But it still enjoyed the popular mandate bestowed upon it in August 1980; and in that sense at least it still existed as a third force in Polish life. Even without a legally-recognised organisational framework in which to express them, its values and ideals remained as alive as ever, and at a human level, in the unprecedented social unity, and in the sense of community

and the awareness of common values and common purposes which it had engendered, there was much that could be preserved and strengthened.

The church responded with a gradual shift in emphasis. Preaching at Warsaw's All Saints Church on 16 October, the Primate acknowledged that further outbursts of frustration and resentment would be all but inevitable. The majority of Poles, he declared succinctly, sought neither the restoration of capitalism nor Poland's secession from the Warsaw Pact. They desired only the basic conditions which would enable them to live in dignity and honesty with each other. This was, indeed, the great lesson of the three periods through which the country had passed.

The first period is the one after August 1980. It is difficult to know the whole truth about that period today. Too often we know it from one-sided condemnations. It is burdened by a wave of strikes. However, it is impossible to deny that it was a period in which the world of the working class felt that it meant something, that the nation had its own subjectivity, and that its words had to be taken into account.

And the second period, after 13 December 1981. This was a period in which that subjectivity was suspended, a period of suffering and wrestling, but also a period of hopes for reconciliation and social accord.

And finally the third period, after 8 October 1982, when the suspended trade organisations were disposed of and eliminated. The greatest element of social subjectivity, the character of an authentic dialogue, was eliminated too . . .

This zero position brings a great change of attitudes. In some it arouses anger; in others depression; in others indifference and apathy towards social matters of all kinds; in others a hidden desire for revenge. Are we thus in a zero position not only as far as the trade unions are concerned, but in a sense in our general situation too? We Catholics are not allowed to succumb to moments of doubt. A Christian never backs down, never despairs. He always starts again; and every start is not from scratch, but from the whole abundance of those achievements which are authentic, and based on truth and human honesty, on what is most noble in our nation, on that which makes us Poles. We have great human solidarity, solidarity in work and in national self-perception, which does not have to take the form of an organisation . . .

Be full, therefore, of that solidarity for work which expresses itself in the struggle for justice and truth in our social

life . . .

We face a period of trial, of giving a great testimony to the world. Let us not deny Christ through our weakness, our depression, our discouragement and despair.³³

Glemp's reaction to the prohibition, and the prior cancellation of his meeting with Jaruzelski in particular, brought fierce criticism from the authorities — not least from their official spokesman, Jerzy Urban, who claimed that the banning of Solidarity had followed extensive consultations and had been accepted by the majority of Polish citizens.³⁴ But if the move had been intended to demonstrate the futility of further resistance, to persuade a significant proportion of public opinion to cut its losses in favour of a limited programme of purely economic and social reforms, and to create divisions amongst Solidarity's leaders, the strategy had not as yet succeeded. Preparations were already under way for a new day of protest on 10 November to mark the second anniversary of Solidarity's legal registration. The regime, it seemed, would still need the church's co-operation in preserving calm, and in salvaging Poland's tarnished image in the world. To gain it, it was disposed to offer certain inducements — confirmation of a Papal visit in 1983, firm dates for the suspension and lifting of martial law, additional institutional privileges.

The inducements turned out to be largely superfluous. Concerning the TKK's protest call in particular, the Primate had already formed his own opinion. Preaching at Taranto in Italy on 31 October, he confirmed that he was "decisively opposed" to it. The church could not issue directives to a trade union, he admitted; but it believed that further actions of this kind would merely bring worse repression. Despite everything, he said, the church still wished to fulfil a mediating function between state and society, especially now that any pretence of a dialogue between them had been definitively swept aside. It was also opposed to any outside involvement in Poland's affairs, and this included all forms of economic pressure. In this regard, the Primate continued, what the country needed most of all was economic aid to get its economy moving again. It could not rely forever on charitable handouts.³⁵

On his return to Warsaw five days later, Glemp confirmed that the church's dialogue with the state was continuing. There were no reasons, he said, for breaking it.³⁶

The authorities, for their part, were equally anxious to show that

³³ *Ibid.*, 17 October 1982.

³⁴ Press conference, Warsaw: *The Times*, 20 October 1982.

³⁵ PAP/UPI, 1 November 1982.

³⁶ PAP, 4 November 1982.

dialogue with the church was still in progress. But they were concerned that the Primate's statements might not be accepted as an authoritative representation of the church's position. They had praised his demand for an end to Western economic sanctions, accusing the Western media of having distorted his position by placing too much emphasis on his critical statements. But the Episcopate would almost certainly prove less accommodating. It had already lodged a formal petition with the *Sejm* against plans for a new bill setting out measures to be taken against those refusing to work. Some additional pressure would be needed, therefore, and there was no shortage of opportunities to exert it. The use of local churches as rallying points for protesters, the practice of organising collections to cover the fines imposed on demonstrators, and the allegedly "anti-state" pronouncements of certain lower members of the clergy were all instances in which the church was vulnerable. As the head of the party's ideology department put it: "A considerable proportion of bishops and priests show prudence and understanding for Poland's reason of state, and patriotism . . . But aggressive actions and instigatory sermons will not be passed over in silence".³⁷

Glemp, for his part, was ready to resist any move towards a more overtly confrontational stance. Speaking at the Catholic University of Lublin on 7 November, he acknowledged that "a nation which has been humiliated has the right to protest". But the church could not be expected to lead these protests: it too had its "enemies", and it would certainly suffer if it attempted to confront them by political means. He still believed that the nation would achieve more on the road of peace than it would through "desperate acts".³⁸

The next day, the Primate's meeting with Jaruzelski finally took place. Its principal outcome was a confirmation that the second Papal visit to Poland would take place in June 1983. For the first time, in the ensuing communiqué, the phrase "common concern" was used to describe the desire of both church and state for "calm, social harmony, and active work". The encounter was welcomed by the official media as a step forward in their mutual co-operation.³⁹

But the fact that nothing had changed significantly for the better since the earlier cancellation of his meeting with Jaruzelski in October raised questions about Glemp's purpose. In particular, if his co-operative attitude was primarily intended as a means of obtaining the regime's consent to the Papal visit, was he, some observers wondered, perhaps exaggerating its importance and trading away too much in return? More dangerously, were there perhaps hints in this

³⁷PAP, 5 November 1982.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 8 November 1982.

³⁹Warsaw Radio, 8 November 1982.

that the church was looking after its own interests at society's expense? There was no evidence that any implicit agreement had been articulated along these lines. But rumours that some kind of tacit understanding was now in operation were fuelled by subsequent events. The mixed response to the TKK's strike call on 10 November was itself attributed, at least in part, to the Primate's attitude, and it was hailed by the authorities as a decisive victory over the opposition and a vindication of the growing closeness of church-state relations. When Walesa was finally released from internment two days later, his first acts included a thanksgiving pilgrimage to Jasna Góra and a round of talks with the Primate, indicating his close relationship with the church.

Meanwhile, the Primate was wondering whether the time had not come for Catholics to participate more actively in public life. Later in the month he appealed to Poland's actors and artists, whose boycott of theatres and other state institutions was widely regarded as the most effective continuing protest, to call off their action. If he had believed that something might be gained in return for doing so, however, he was to be disappointed; on the day after his appeal the Actors' Union, which had functioned independently since 1981, was formally disbanded by the authorities.⁴⁰

On 2 December, a day which saw the release of a further 327 detainees, the Episcopate re-endorsed the right of society to free trade unions of its choice; but it also called upon the population to provide the "necessary order" for the Papal visit.⁴¹

By now, however, the Primate's position was coming under fierce attack within the church itself. At a three-hour meeting with over two hundred priests at the Warsaw Curia offices on 7 December, Glemp defended his position. A realistic self-awareness was more important now, he contended, than open resistance and defiance. The church, far from taking an accommodatory line, had frequently protested against the regime's actions. But it should not allow itself to be identified with any particular party or interest-group, and it would not seek to change any political, social or economic system which permitted it to conduct its mission in confidence and freedom. For the moment, the opposition appeared to have no clear-cut programme, and protest actions like the actors' boycott were serving no purpose. Not all the state institutions were evil; in some at least there was room for Catholics to exert a principled influence. Too many priests, Glemp added, had acquired the habit of behaving like "journalists and politicians".

Despite Glemp's explanation of his position, the meeting ended in

⁴⁰AFP, 22 November 1982.

⁴¹Vatican Radio, 3 December 1982.

uproar, with the Primate having accusations levelled at him of "acting against the nation", of "making a deal" with the state authorities, and of failing to provide a clear moral lead.⁴²

Waiting — Some Open Questions

The Primate's stormy encounter with the priests perhaps contributed to the tougher line which was now characterising the pronouncements of other church leaders. Jaruzelski's speech on the first anniversary of martial law was described by Vatican Radio as lacking any positive ideas. It was full of "hazy promises", the commentator noted, but in reality it merely "displayed the impotence of the present authorities".⁴³ The adoption by the *Sejm* on 18 December of two bills which set out the new measures intended to accompany the suspension of martial law, elicited a similar response. The measures included the imposition of heavier penal sanctions against the organisers of demonstrations. Factory managers and university officials would have the power to dismiss workers and students who were guilty, in their opinion, of "sowing social unrest". Workers would also need the consent of their managers to leave their jobs.

The new measures were obviously designed to extend the state's powers under the cloak of legislative procedure. The arbitrary element in them, in particular, prompted a sharp statement from the Episcopate, spelt out in a letter from the Primate and Episcopate Secretary to the speaker of the *Sejm*. "The stability of the state cannot be guaranteed solely by repressive measures infringing fundamental rights," they declared. "If the suspension of martial law is to make any sense at all, then certain regulations should be lifted altogether, or replaced by less stringent measures."⁴⁴ The authorities made no reply, and on the last day of December martial law was officially suspended and the measures brought into force.

When Glemp was elevated to the cardinalate a week later at a special consistory in Rome, the official media proclaimed the event a decisive confirmation of his authority, and a clear endorsement of his general stance. But with the Solidarity underground calling once again for renewed protest action, including a boycott of the new trade unions and further preparations for a general strike, there was little doubt that the Primate's overall position was still being questioned. During January, at least two demonstrations were broken up by the

⁴² AP/UPI, 9 December 1982. For a full account of the meeting, the only one of its kind to have taken place, see *The Church in Poland under Martial Law* (Special Booklet No. 1, Solidarity Information Office: London, June 1983), pp. 27-29.

⁴³ Vatican Radio, 13 December 1982.

⁴⁴ Open letter to the Speaker of the *Sejm*, made public on 18 December 1982: *Le Monde*, 21 December 1982.

police after church services in Warsaw, including one outside St John's Cathedral. Similar incidents were reported in Gdańsk and Wrocław — prompting the regime to renew its warning against the use of churches as rallying points for militant opposition. In a new pastoral letter at the end of the month, the Episcopate again urged a general amnesty for the remaining detainees, and new initiatives to promote social justice and national unity. As a corrective to the "drama of internal lacerations", however, it also appealed for conversion and renewal in preparation for the Papal visit.⁴⁵ A day of prayer for the visit on 2 February drew a big response.

Preaching in Rome a few days later, in the presence of ten other Polish bishops, the Primate reiterated his determination that the church should preserve its independence and remain above political divisions:

Various people advise us to do various things. Different plans are proposed for the church — to me, to individual bishops, and to the Conference of the Episcopate. Numerous, and sometimes contradictory, proposals are put forward: the church should do this, the church should act thus. Others propose that the church should do something else again. There are so many proposals as to how the church is supposed to act, and when the church does not they are offended. For they are fishermen who have their own techniques for catching fish, and have their own ways of governing souls; and they wish the church to be in their service.⁴⁶

On 9 March, following a final agreement on the Pope's itinerary by the church-state Joint Commission, Glemp and Jaruzelski met to confirm the dates. According to the brief communiqué, both sides expressed the hope that the visit would "contribute to the normalisation of life in the country". Glemp himself pointed out that the Pope would be coming for the benefit of *all* Poles, not only of those belonging to special categories. But he denied that any preconditions had been set.⁴⁷ The Episcopate, for its part, stressed that the visit would be an ideal occasion for a final, comprehensive amnesty, and for the restoration of "full social justice" for all citizens. It also hoped that, in the spirit of the current anniversary of Poland's Year of

⁴⁵Vatican Radio, 30 January 1983.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 6 February 1983.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 23 March, "... As we invite the Holy Father to Poland once more, we realise how great a trial the faithful of Christ's Church are undergoing in their testimony of hope and love. Many of our brothers do not see their place in the present reality. We all need the ability to apply Christian principles in the realities of life today, so that they should bear fruit in social justice and peace."

Redemption, the visit would be an occasion for forgiveness. But it again stressed the need for all social groups to be permitted "such unions as suit them, and which defend their real interests, taking into consideration the good of the state".⁴⁸

The authorities were still issuing grave warnings against the use of local churches for allegedly political purposes. The various incidents which were regularly being reported, it was implied, were adding to the pressure being exerted by official hardliners against the Papal visit. Unless the church took decisive steps to distance itself from the opposition's activities, this pressure might prove irresistible. The visit, it was constantly stressed, must be exclusively religious in nature. Its purpose must be to promote solutions to Poland's problems and to build upon the advancing pattern of church-state co-operation. Its success lay in the interests of church and state alike.⁴⁹

The main emphasis in the church's pronouncements appeared to have continued to shift progressively away from the need to preserve Solidarity's organisational structures, and towards the safeguarding of its values and ideals. The church could claim that its past counsels of patience and restraint, its willingness to talk, and its readiness to give the regime further opportunities to honour its commitments had perhaps played some part in the release of Walesa and other internees, in the suspension of martial law, and in the finalisation of plans for the Pope's visit. But the fact remained that the regime had shown little or no indication of heeding its more specific appeals. There had been no progress on the main issues. Only the release of all remaining prisoners, the complete lifting of martial law, a return to authentic dialogue and the full restoration of civil liberties would stand any real chance of securing a genuine national agreement and of ending the country's international isolation. Meanwhile, although the Papal visit would be welcomed by everyone, there was room for uncertainty as to who stood to gain most from it in real terms, and whose bargaining power, as a result, was the greater. For Polish society, the Pope's presence would undoubtedly provide a massive sense of psychological release; it would offer spiritual consolation for those whose hopes and expectations had been dashed, and it would instil a sense of dignity where it was most needed. But the Pope could hardly look to the future with the same visionary optimism, the same sense of

⁴⁸Communiqué of the 190th Plenary Conference of the Polish Episcopate, Warsaw, 23-24 February 1983; Vatican Radio, 25 February 1983.

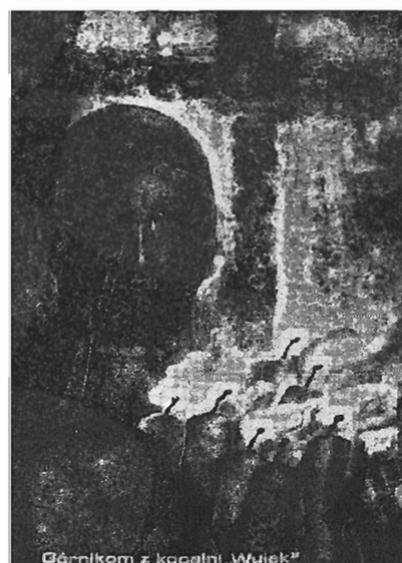
⁴⁹*Le Monde*, 1 March 1983. In his formal letter of invitation, the Chairman of the Council of State, Professor Henryk Jablonski, expressed his conviction that the course and outcome of the visit would "prove beneficial for the good of the homeland, the socialist Polish state, the national agreement begun in Poland, and the further normalisation of relations between the state and the church": Warsaw Radio, 21 March 1983.



Uklękaj przed Nim mieszkańcy pustyni



N = Niebezpieczeństwo



Górnikom z kopalni „Wujek”



Niech dojdzie do Ciebie jęknienie...

Psalm 79:11

Kwidzyn 82

Four Solidarity art posters. The inscriptions read, from left to right and top to bottom: “And the people of the desert shall kneel before Him . . .”, “D for Danger”, “To miners from the ‘Wujek’ colliery” (where seven miners were shot by police on 16 December 1981), and “Let the groans of the prisoners come before Thee”. Two of the posters feature the Black Madonna of Czestochowa. See articles by Jonathan Luxmoore and Irena Korba on pp. 124-66 and pp. 167-81. (Photos courtesy Keston College)



This Moscow church was used in the past as a public convenience, but is now an art restoration centre. Official suggestions as to the best use for non-functioning church buildings are reviewed in the *Chronicle* item on pp. 206-209.

(Photo courtesy Keston College)



“Kraków awaits the arrival of the Holy Father” proclaims this Solidarity poster. The Pope’s third visit to Poland took place from 8 to 14 June 1987.

euphoria, and the same joy and expectancy as during his historic first visit in 1979, and his calls for reconciliation, human solidarity and moral integrity might well fail to carry the same conviction amongst those desperate for concrete actions, who looked to the visit as the last chance to salvage something of the practical achievements of 1980. Everyone knew that the Pope wholeheartedly supported the values and ideals of Solidarity. He would do everything possible to preserve them, especially now that Solidarity no longer officially existed as an organisation in its own right. But he would also be speaking from the institutional standpoint of the church, and whilst he would clearly express his sympathies as a shepherd to his people, how he would manifest this support and how forceful his message would be in the changed circumstances of 1983 remained an open question. Clearly, he could not be expected to lead a resurgent opposition towards new acts of protest and resistance. For many people, the visit might well turn out to be a dangerous anti-climax.

At the same time, the authorities would be doing everything possible to bolster their own flagging legitimacy. The Pope would be coming with their consent, after much careful joint planning, and his journeys and meetings would be largely subject to their terms. Indeed, the Minister of Religious Affairs, Adam Lopatka, had openly stated that the itinerary as a whole had been decided on the basis of the visit's "ideological contents".⁵⁰ Clearly, the regime stood to gain a good deal from a successful visit — not least in edging the church towards a more overtly neutral position. Should the church have demanded certain concessions in recognition of these imponderables? It was an open question.

Although both the Episcopate and the Pope continued to call for measures to establish a favourable climate, the church as a whole appeared increasingly reconciled to the view that no major concessions could be expected. As the Party Central Committee's newspaper, *Trybuna Ludu*, commented: "The fact that the Polish authorities respect the church's right to present its approach to all humanitarian and moral issues does not mean, of course, that these postulates can be imposed on the state. Although the church plays a special role in Poland, it does not have an extraordinary status."⁵¹

However, several initiatives in the more specific field of church-state relations were already under discussion, and for these the visit might provide some impetus. They included long-standing

⁵⁰ *Prawo i Życie*, 1 April 1983.

⁵¹ *Trybuna Ludu*, 21 May 1983. On 14 June, the authorities put the figure for "political prisoners" (not a recognised classification) at 202, with a further 405 on "pre-trial arrest".

proposals for legislation to settle the church's formal status as an institution, and for the establishment of official diplomatic relations between Poland and the Holy See. In addition, there was a wealth of other practical problems to be dealt with, ranging from the legal status of the new Papal Academy of Theology in Kraków to the quantity of copies of the Polish edition of the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, allowed into the country, and its distribution outlets. There was a reasonable chance that the visit might produce progress in these areas as well. But it was more likely that the regime's overwhelming priority would be to use the occasion to overcome the sense of paralysis currently afflicting Polish society, and to establish a clear break with the past, rather than to set in train anything more substantial. "In the metaphor of steam straining the boiler, there is a lot of truth," declared one senior state official in an interview. "But two things can be done: one can clamp down the lid so hard, and increase the steam pressure so much, that the lid blows off; but one can also lift the lid a little, thereby reducing the risk of explosion."⁵²

If the church's ability to temper the ardour of the Solidarity opposition was to be a condition of progress in the areas of practical concern under discussion, it was unlikely, in any case, that that condition could be met. Walesa, now the object of a determined official smear campaign, had maintained a low profile after his release the previous November. He still readily acknowledged the indebtedness of the workers to the church's moral guidance in the past; and after a further meeting with the Primate on 20 March, he promised, for the record, that he would "always accept whatever Primate Glemp and the Episcopate do".⁵³ The series of measures now being taken against Solidarity's open leadership, however, were driving him back to a more strident public stance, and this was also visibly distancing him from the church hierarchy. Glemp reported that the church was "at great pains" to ensure that Walesa would be given access to the Pope; but no meetings with "private individuals" had as yet been included in the Pope's schedule.⁵⁴

The underlying strategy of the opposition, however, had moved away from open confrontation in favour of a more cautious long-term approach, involving the creation of an "underground society" of independent publishing networks, cultural and educational groups,

⁵²Hungarian television "Panorama" interview with Major Wieslaw Gornicki, personal adviser to the Polish Premier: *Summary of World Broadcasts* (EE/7339/B/9), BBC: Caversham, 1983.

⁵³DPA, 23 March 1983. In mid-May, a group of shipyard workers sent a petition to the *Sejm*, appealing for an end to the official media's "propaganda campaign" against Walesa and his parish priest, Fr Henryk Jankowski.

⁵⁴Vatican Radio, 20 May 1983.

and efforts to infiltrate official institutions like the new trade unions — a strategy which had been advocated by some since the first days of martial law.⁵⁵ The TKK had agreed with Walesa that no protest demonstrations should be staged which might jeopardise the Pope's visit in advance or endanger its peaceful atmosphere. But, for this occasion, it was determined to establish Solidarity's presence and to highlight the undiminished strength of its support. In a letter allegedly sent to the Pope, the TKK recalled Solidarity's role as a "spiritual revolution", which had imparted new values and ideals to Polish society at large. "We will not," it vowed, "be pushed aside from this road by the persecution which we are experiencing."⁵⁶

The regime hoped to isolate the most likely troublemakers well in advance. During March, the Interior Minister, General Czeslaw Kiszczak, submitted a report to the *Sejm* which dismissed the Solidarity underground as a body "without significance, without any chance of success, and completely unrealistic".⁵⁷ It was, in fact, a view with which the Primate seemed at least partially to concur. "I try to maintain a realistic attitude," he confessed to an Italian newspaper.

At the moment, demonstrations and protests would be harmful to the atmosphere of anticipation. They would not amount to anything other than artificial initiatives and would not have popular approval . . . An underground movement which professes a programme for combating the established power head-on does not seem to me to be realistic.⁵⁸

Glomp's remarks were quoted approvingly by the official media.

Although the police quickly broke up the unofficial ceremonies called to mark the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising on 17 April, the authorities persisted in their claim that such incidents were merely the work of "petty political schemers", attempting to undermine the Pope's visit by provoking confrontation. With the TKK calling for further protests during May, the Primate used the occasion of another meeting with Walesa on the same day to warn again of the dangers of street demonstrations. But he also rejected an official request that church services arranged for the annual May Day holiday be cancelled so as to prevent disturbances.⁵⁹

In the event, the demonstrations which occurred on 1 May in at least twenty Polish towns were as much a spontaneous manifestation of discontent as a direct response to the TKK's appeals. In defiance of

⁵⁵ See Note 1.

⁵⁶ Vatican Radio, 17 April 1983.

⁵⁷ *Le Monde*, 24 March 1983.

⁵⁸ *Il Sabato*, 23 March 1983.

⁵⁹ *The Guardian*, 18 April 1983. Also *Rzeczpospolita*, 19 April 1983.

the TKK's advice, furthermore, they continued on 3 May, Poland's unofficial Constitution Day. In several instances, they were brutally suppressed, with teargas and water cannon being widely used by the riot police. At least one death was reported — once again in Nowa Huta — and a wave of arrests followed. The disturbances were, nevertheless, a clear indication of the strength of support which still existed for Solidarity, and of the widespread rejection of the regime's policies and actions.

On the evening of 3 May, police raided the headquarters of the Primate's Aid Committee in a convent building adjacent to St Martin's Church in Warsaw's Old Town, injuring at least six charity workers and abducting four, who were later dumped in a forest outside the city. Eleven days later, the teenage son of one of the aid workers, Grzegorz Przymyk, died in police custody. Fifteen thousand people attended his funeral on 19 May. The raid and its aftermath elicited an enraged protest from the Episcopate Secretariat. The Primate himself adamantly denied official claims that local clergy and church workers had played any part in the unrest. He also rejected any suggestion that the church should be selective in deciding whom to allow onto its premises. The churches, he affirmed, were open to all. The church expected its holy places to be respected, and it had no desire to hear political slogans resounding inside them; but nor did it wish teargas grenades to be thrown through their windows.⁶⁰

The events of May had placed the church under new pressure. They had underlined both the limits of its own practical influence over Solidarity's active supporters, and the fact that even a compliant attitude on its part was unlikely to prove sufficient to soften the regime's approach to expressions of public frustration of this kind, or to gain any substantial concessions. With the Papal visit now imminent, however, it was determined to ride out the storm as best it could. Glemp himself, visiting the Vatican in mid-May, rejected any suggestion that the visit be called off. Should this happen, public expectations would be cruelly disappointed, and a major opportunity lost to reaffirm the church's unity and to strengthen its visible presence in Polish life — and in Eastern Europe as a whole. No major concessions could be expected. But the church still hoped that some progress could be made on certain practical issues — most notably, the two plans already on the drawing board: for the recognition of the church's legal status and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Holy See.

On the former point in particular, the authorities had raised the church's hopes considerably, recalling Cardinal Wyszyński's *modus vivendi* with the new communist government in April 1950 as an

⁶⁰Vatican Radio, 10 May 1983.

indication of the benefits likely to follow from a lasting settlement based upon effective co-operation. It would signify, as the head of the state's Council for Religious Affairs, Adam Lopatka, put it, "the church's sincere and irreversible finding of itself in socialism". But it would also presuppose the mutual acceptance of "two realities" — the durability of society's religious needs on the part of the state, and the immutability of the socialist order on the part of the church. The authorities were in favour of the church's "positive religious involvement" in the social life of Poland, Lopatka declared. This positive involvement was to be distinguished from the upsurge of "reactionary clericalism" which had led to the encroachment of clerical influences into factories, schools and state institutions after August 1980. This the authorities firmly opposed. If the trend could be halted and reversed, however, they were quite ready to take a relaxed view of the principle of church-state separation which was written into Poland's socialist constitution. The time had come for the church to recognise that, far from being a transitory phase in Polish history, the socialist system was now a permanent fixture. Only when it did so, Lopatka argued, could peaceful coexistence, and co-operation in the cause of peace and progress, as envisaged by Pope John XXIII and confirmed by the Second Vatican Council, assume a tangible and permanent form. He was confident that the Papal visit would highlight the important steps already taken along this path.

If someone tried to imagine socialism in Poland without the church, it would testify to his ignorance of Polish realities. One should imagine socialism *with* the Catholic Church. Understanding of the necessity of durable collaboration between the state and the church is becoming ever more evident . . . We do not cling obstinately to the view, which used to be propounded, that the church should stay away from political life. Today, such a stance would suggest a lack of realism. The participation of the church in the political life of the nation can mean the shaping of its political wisdom and its comprehension of the historical reasons of state. This participation does not have to be linked with the beginning of a political struggle against the state.⁶¹

⁶¹ *Trybuna Robotnicza*, 13 June 1983. Also *Trybuna Ludu*, 8 June 1983; and *Zycie Warszawy*, 28 May 1983.

Redemption — Vigil for a Moral Victory

“Together with my compatriots,” Pope John Paul II declared at St John’s Cathedral on the evening of his arrival in Warsaw on 16 June,

and in particular with those who perceive best the bitter taste of deception, humiliation and suffering, of freedom denied and human dignity trampled upon, I stand at Christ’s cross . . . We implore the King of Ages that nothing should perish from the deep foundation which it was possible to implant in the souls of the people of God throughout the Polish lands.⁶²

To the thousands thronging the streets of the city outside, it was a simple enough message.

The next day, the Pope stressed the special place of Poland among the nations of Europe. The preservation of peace necessitated a clear recognition of Poland’s right to exist and prosper, secure within its territories. But Poland stood in need of renewal, through an authentic dialogue and genuine agreement between the state and the nation which would be based upon a recognition of legitimate interests, the protection of rights and freedoms, and the creation of structures capable of ensuring the participation of all. When dialogue and agreement broke down, there arose a “state of war” which spelt grave dangers for the future.

Preaching at Warsaw Stadium, he urged the Poles to strive for the moral victory which came from “living in truth, uprightness of conscience, love of neighbour, ability to forgive, and the spiritual development of our humanity”. It was this which gave hope to even the most fractured societies, and it enabled human dignity, solidarity and authentic patriotism to triumph over hatred and self-interest, material division and spiritual despondency.

It is this kind of victory which constitutes the essence of the frequently proclaimed renewal. It is a question of the mature ordering of national and state life, in which basic human rights will be respected. Only a moral victory can guide society out of its state of division and enable it to recover its unity. This ordering can be, at one and the same time, a victory for those who are governed and for those who govern. It can be reached along the path of mutual dialogue and accord — the only path which enables the nation to live to the full extent of its civic rights and possess social structures which correspond to its just demands.

This will release the support which the state needs to perform its

⁶²Vatican Radio, 16 June 1983.

tasks, and through which the nation will truly express its sovereignty.⁶³

But dialogue and agreement could be achieved only by the joint efforts of both sides — the nation, as a community bound together by a unity of culture, language and history; and the state, whose task it was to govern in a way which truly served the common good. The sovereignty of the state could never exist in a vacuum: its moral authority was linked to its ability to promote and preserve the nation's freedom, its independence and self-determination, and its hopes for the future — all of which must be reflected in the social order. If Poland was to preserve its freedom, and to recover its sense of community, the key requirement must be the recovery of mutual trust, based upon respect for truth and justice.

With the Pope's arrival, the official propaganda campaign to demonstrate the normal conditions now prevailing in the country and the closeness of church-state relations had reached a climax. The presence of the Pope, the media proclaimed, was irrefutable proof of the special status which the Polish church now enjoyed, expressed in its recognition of political realities, its unique dialogue with the state, and the participation of its members in the process of renewal and consolidation now under way. Here was clear proof, too, of the state's commitment to the reform process begun in 1980, and to the search for economic and social progress under a national agreement. Only Solidarity's rejection of Poland's constitutional order had prevented this agreement from taking shape.

At their meeting in Warsaw's Belweder Palace on 17 June, Jaruzelski recalled the Pope's teachings. There was nothing in the high values of Christian humanism, he declared, which was incompatible with the values and precepts of Poland's socialist order. "We are not looking for easy answers," Jaruzelski told the Pope. "We are judging our own mistakes with a sincerity that is unique. But the authorities were not the only ones to blame — they did not push the country to the brink of catastrophe."⁶⁴

During the days which followed, the Pope developed the themes of his pilgrimage. The young, especially, he urged to "keep vigil in the name of truth". The images of Poland's Year of Redemption, and of the Christian martyrs whom he beatified during his visit, were powerful reminders of the ability of the will to triumph over human frailty. The very "truths, principles, values and attitudes" for which the Poles had striven most persistently were those of greatest value. No-one should desire a Poland which had been achieved at no cost.

⁶³ Warsaw Radio, 16 June 1983.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Courage and clear-sightedness were needed, and a determination to resist the wave of demoralisation, indifference and spiritual weakness which so often threatened to engulf the nation.

Addressing the Episcopate at Czestochowa on 19 June, the Pope acknowledged the great dignity and responsibility entrusted to the Primate. He recalled the importance of collegial unity within the Episcopate's own ranks, and commended its past pronouncements on the need for truth, justice, dialogue and national agreement. In addition, he thanked those in the West who had provided aid and support for the Poles during the period of martial law.⁶⁵

On several occasions, the Pope also returned to the principles of Catholic social teaching, brought up to date by his influential encyclical, *Laborem Exercens*, of 1981. The rights of Man were God-given and inalienable, and it was the task of the state not to bestow them, but to guarantee and protect them. Human labour remained at the centre of social life in any milieu, and the subjective primacy of Man in the production process was an essential requirement of social justice and the objective moral order. The right to free trade union activities was to be understood in the same context.

But he also took pains to emphasise the conciliatory nature of his visit; and at Jasna Góra he offered a prayer in token of "the difficult tasks of those who wield power on Polish soil". A nation could be strong only when full participation in its affairs was open to all and its decisions were supported. Nothing "real or just" should be lost from the achievements of August 1980; but he also made a "strident appeal" for "a full understanding of the historical path that the nation has traversed, and of its modern experiences".⁶⁶

There was, on the face of it, little in the Pope's speeches and homilies from which the Polish authorities could rightfully claim to have derived much benefit as far as their own credibility and legitimacy were concerned. But the Pope's meetings with state and party officials, with representatives of the Patriotic Movement for National Rebirth, and with members of nominally Catholic pro-regime organisations like *Pax* and the Christian Social Union were nevertheless highlighted by the official media as evidence of a convergence of interests and priorities. A similar endorsement greeted the Pope's references to the patriotic themes of Poland's independence and territorial integrity.

In his departure speech at Kraków's Balice airport on 23 June, the Pope again spoke of the "close interconnection" of rights and duties, on the basis of which human dignity must be respected and mutual

⁶⁵PAP, 19 June 1983.

⁶⁶Vatican Radio, 19 June 1983.

co-operation ensured. Above all, however, when all else seemed to have failed, the nation must "live and develop on the basis of its own resources". The stability and prosperity of Poland still remained a genuine "common good" for all sections of the Polish state and Polish society, whatever their political loyalties and ideological convictions.⁶⁷

The Papal pilgrimage was hastily proclaimed a success on all sides. For the Polish authorities, it had "decisively refuted" all past claims about a confrontation between the Catholic and socialist world-views. It had demonstrated unequivocally the extent of religious freedom which existed in the country, and had vindicated the co-operative stance of the church's leaders during the crisis. Both church and state were now united as never before around the common objectives of order and unity. On the "higher matters" of peace, national prosperity and the agreement of all patriotic forces, Jaruzelski would affirm, a "platform of understanding" was now being created.

All of this had come as a grave disappointment to the "hostile political elements" who had hoped to stage protests and demonstrations "in the shadow of religious emblems". As the official spokesman, Jerzy Urban, put it:

The Polish government perceived a great many favourable elements from the point of view of our policy in the Pope's speeches. It also acknowledges the existence of very significant controversies between our point of view and that of the Pope; but it does not consider this to be particularly shocking.

There would, Urban declared, be no change in the state's overall attitude to Solidarity — that the movement was now no more than an episode in Poland's history, and that no dialogue with its erstwhile members was possible unless they spoke as individuals only, and in a general context. But the Papal visit would, nonetheless, "speed up" the favourable series of developments which the regime's policies had set in train.⁶⁸ The report of the Joint Commission, expressing the mutual satisfaction of church and state with the course and outcome of the visit, was accepted by the Politburo on 1 July.

The Solidarity opposition, likewise, had found in the Pope's pronouncements a ringing new endorsement of its struggle for legitimate rights and freedoms, and of the moral principles upon which they rested. Its own presence had been conspicuous throughout. The Pope had conferred with representatives of all shades of opinion, including several of Solidarity's most prominent activists and intellectual advisers; and the themes of his pilgrimage had highlighted

⁶⁷Warsaw Radio, 23 June 1983.

⁶⁸PAP, 23 June and 29 June 1983.

once again the immense contrast between the established structures of political power and the moral values and collective aspirations of society. The popular enthusiasm which had greeted him had merely underlined the irrelevance of the state and party leaderships in the eyes of his compatriots.

For the church too, the visit had created a new sense of confidence, revealing once again the strength of the religious bonds existing amongst the Polish population, and the close link between church and society, which, despite the tensions and dilemmas of the recent past, had been consolidated by their shared experiences. No real practical concessions had been forthcoming, and rumours that a new trade union organisation was to be established under the church's auspices turned out to be hollow. But one proposal, that the church establish an independent Agricultural Foundation to aid Poland's private farmers, had been approved in principle by the authorities, and that at least was something. In the meantime, the visit had also highlighted the unavoidable truth that no real progress could be achieved without the co-operation of church and society at large. The Pope's even-handed treatment of both the conciliatory and the confrontational tendencies which existed within the church's ranks had strengthened its unity and refuted the past rumours of division and discord. As the Primate roundly declared early in July:

The world of newspaper politics, inquiries and speculation, on this occasion proved as ridiculous as it is false. And although the mass media were all abuzz with politics, the nation began to live its own joy, in the experience of the church in the nation. It was demonstrated that if enough parties refrain from mischievous interference, it is capable of standing on its own feet through the Samaritan ministrations of the church, and of walking the road towards the fulfilment of its historical tasks . . . We were also able to realise that, in the final analysis, it is not structures that shape the spirit but the spirit of the nation that endows the structures with their contents . . . We rejoice in that week in which God showed His compassion towards His people. The balm of joy that is so necessary flowed over millions of people. We experienced how much we can do when unified; and we were able to realise that things were not so bad for us.⁶⁹

⁶⁹Vatican Radio, 10 July 1983.

Aftermath

It was clear that the event had provided some basis for satisfaction on all sides. Certain aspects of the visit, however, especially in its closing stages, had given rise to controversy. In particular, considerable confusion surrounded the unscheduled second meeting between the Pope and Jaruzelski which had taken place at Kraków's Wawel Castle on the penultimate day of the visit. The official spokesman, Jerzy Urban, claimed that the meeting had been called at the church's own initiative, and was merely a welcome continuation of their original talks on 17 June.⁷⁰ But it contrasted sharply with the Pope's short meeting with Walesa in the Tatra Mountains shortly before his departure the following day — a meeting which appeared to have all the features of a concessionary afterthought on the regime's part. Was the contrast perhaps a sign of a growing divergence of interests and priorities?

Such questions were encouraged by the publication of an article in the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, by its deputy editor, Mgr Virgilio Levi. In it, Levi claimed that the brief encounter had been arranged to enable the Pope to persuade Walesa that his personal role as Solidarity's leader should be "temporarily finished", in the interests of an overall settlement on the regime's terms. The seriousness of the allegation, and its provenance, which appeared to give it the official stamp of Papal approval, made it front-page news; and its implication — that a deal had been struck between church and state on the basis of political expediency — was regarded as sufficiently damaging for the Vatican to take the highly unusual step of publicly disowning the article and demanding its author's resignation. The resulting impression of disarray merely fuelled further speculation, leading some observers to suspect that the unfortunate Levi might, in reality, have been close to the truth.⁷¹ On the face of it, however, no tangible evidence had been found to support Levi's assertions, and no precedent existed for any such attitude on the part of the church.

The general thrust of Levi's claims was, furthermore, flatly contradicted by recent experiences. Throughout the period of martial law, the church had attempted to enunciate a clear moral framework within which the dilemmas of action and reaction might be understood and resolved. It had confronted its critics openly, often

⁷⁰PAP, 23 June 1983.

⁷¹For example, William Safire, in *The Times*, 28 June 1983: "For one glorious week, the world thought that the Polish communists had made a terrible mistake in permitting the Polish people to turn out to greet the Pope. The Vatican will have to do more than sack an editor to dispel the impression that, in the end, it was the Pope who made the mistake."

judging their objections to reflect political standpoints which lay outside its own sphere of competence. Whilst the church could appraise the moral validity of such standpoints, it could not initiate political programmes of its own. Nor could it involve itself directly in the exercise of political power or oppose in principle any system of government which met certain basic ethical criteria. There had, no doubt, been occasions on which its practical efforts to mediate between conflicting sides had sent confusing signals when absolute clarity was essential; and on which it had also overestimated its own practical influence and exaggerated its ability to secure reforms and concessions on society's behalf in return for social peace. But it had never sought to safeguard its own institutional interests at the cost of those of society, and its relations with the state had always broadly reflected the state's own relations with the Polish community at large. It was unlikely that the church had ever accepted the view that Solidarity's demise as an organisation was a necessary precondition for the reopening of an authentic dialogue and the securing of a genuine national agreement. If the relative weakness of Jaruzelski's regime did indeed offer a better prospect for social advances than would a hard-line alternative, it was precisely Solidarity's presence as an organised social force which had created that weakness in the first place. No other institution — neither the church itself, nor the regime's own officially-sponsored bodies — could expect to act as a guardian of the social interests which Solidarity had championed.

The church understood this as clearly as anyone. But there was, nevertheless, a widely-held view that the church had proved too susceptible to the regime's offers and promises; and that the strategy of the state, for all its gestures, had always conformed to classic Leninist precepts. In December 1981, October 1982 and other moments of tension and crisis, the state had given the impression that the church's co-operative attitude would secure results. But in reality its absolute priority had always been the recovery of its own power — and it had determined from the outset to ensure that Solidarity would never return, by destroying all remaining vestiges of social unity and common interest. Many believed that it had merely exploited the church's good offices, encouraging its acquiescence by all manner of tactical means, on the assumption that the church's persistent counsels of patience and restraint, its willingness to talk despite setbacks, and its readiness to look for good on all sides would in fact create divisions and antagonisms and foster an air of resignation. Ultimately, the church would be weakened and discredited in the eyes of society.

But if this had indeed been the state's assumption, it had been

proved wrong. In some senses at least, the church's dilemmas had scarcely been felt below its upper ranks. At a local level, the church's championship of society's hopes and aspirations had never been in doubt, as local priests spoke and acted in conformity with the needs and moods of their communities, and organisations like the Light-Life Movement gave the concept of spiritual liberation a tangible, hope-sustaining meaning in the political context of the times. Even within the hierarchy itself, the decentralisation of authority after the death of Cardinal Wyszyński had fostered a process of diversification, which enabled the Primate, the Episcopate, and individual bishops to complement and support each other, compensating for each other's weaknesses and shortcomings while also speaking and responding in a distinct manner appropriate to their own particular circumstances. It was a model of church government well suited to the prevailing conflict between the recognised moral order and the structure of absolute power, since it enabled the church to meet diverse demands — it could preserve its own institutional requirements while also honouring and protecting the spiritual community of which it was composed. Despite all the controversies and uncertainties of the period of martial law, the church's standing in national life had apparently continued to grow — and the events of subsequent years were to bear witness to this.

The initiation, shortly after the Papal visit, of a new campaign against the church's institutional freedoms, and in particular against its influence in the field of education, suggested that the authorities no longer considered its moderating influence so necessary. The lifting of martial law on 22 July in fact made little difference to the lives of ordinary Polish citizens. As expected, it was accompanied by a wide range of new legislative measures, which extended the penal code, the censorship regulations, restrictions on demonstrations and protests, and strengthened the administrative powers of the state in response to perceived threats to national security. The Patriotic Movement for National Rebirth was given constitutional status, and several economic reforms were introduced in tandem. But intellectual life and trade union activity were now firmly constrained, and the accompanying amnesty bill excluded political dissidents and senior Solidarity members. The overall effect was to give legal permanence to the measures which had been enforced by decree during the period of martial law.

The authorities argued that the views of the Primate and Episcopate had been taken into account in the drafting of the new laws. Although the church's objections to the new administrative powers had been overruled, they claimed that two additional measures, extending the terms of conscription and penalising work-shirkers, had been dropped

altogether in response to church pressure, and that others, dealing with censorship, the dissemination of "false information" and the expulsion of undesirable students, had been partially relaxed for the same reasons.

But the lifting of martial law was dismissed as a cosmetic gesture by the Solidarity underground, which vowed that the struggle for legitimate rights and freedoms would continue. There was little room for doubt that much of the church's work had been undone, and that its expectations — and the expectations of society — had been gravely disappointed. The state still faced a crisis of confidence and legitimacy; frustration and exasperation were still running at a dangerously high level; and the gap between the state and the nation remained as wide as ever. There remained, as there would always remain, Christian hope — a quality well known to the Poles. But the sullen calm which now prevailed in Poland did not bode well for the future.

FOR YOUR DIARY

Keston College Open Day

The 1987 Open Day will be on Saturday 17 October. As in previous years it will be held in the Keston Village Hall next to the College and will start at 10 a.m.

Our guest speaker this year will be the author, journalist and former controller of Radio Free Europe
Dr George Urban.

Details of booking arrangements will be included in the next issue of *The Right to Believe*.