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The nomination of Rev. Kazimierz Rolewski as bishop of Katowice and the reasons for the refusal

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Abstract

The nomination of Rev. Kazimierz Rolewski as bishop of Katowice and the reasons for the refusal

Rev. Kazimierz Rolewski (1887–1936)—parish priest in the Archdiocese of Poznań, rector of the theological seminary, and radio preacher—remains an inspiring figure to this day, as evidenced by the ongoing beatification process. Many people remember him as a priest who refused to accept the episcopal nobleness. This article refers to this common opinion in light of the Vatican archives. It is an attempt to highlight the important character traits of the discussed figure, especially his humility and sincerity. Based on the source analysis method, the article presents facts about Rev. Rolewski before and after the proposal to take over the bishopric of Katowice. This article presents the genesis of the interest in the parish priest from Ostrów Wielkopolski as a candidate for the diocesan bishop in 1925–1926. It describes the circumstances of the negative decision made at the apostolic nunciature in Warsaw. The above piece, which attempts to highlight the character traits important for the discussed character—his humility and honesty—fills the current biographical gap of Rev. Rolewski.

Keywords: Kazimierz Rolewski, August Hlond, Lorenzo Lauri, Katowice diocese

Abstrakt

Nominacja ks. Kazimierza Rolewskiego na biskupa katowickiego i przyczyny odmowy

Ksiądz Kazimierz Rolewski (1887–1936)—proboszcz w archidiecezji poznańskiej, rektor seminarium duchownego, kaznodzieja radiowy—pozostaje do dziś postacią inspirującą, o czym świadczy trwający proces beatyfikacyjny. W pamięci wielu osób zapisał się jako ksiądz, który odmówił przyjęcia godności biskupiej. Niniejszy artykuł odnosi się do tej obiegowej opinii w świetle archiwaliów watykańskich i jest próbą uwydatnienia istotnych dla omawianej postaci cech charakteru—pokory i szczerości. Autor artykułu w oparciu o metodę analizy źródeł prezentuje faktografię dotyczącą ks. Rolewskiego przed i po propozycji objęcia biskupstwa katowickiego, przedstawia genezę zainteresowania proboszczem z Ostrowa Wielkopolskiego jako kandydatem na biskupa diecezjalnego w latach 1925–1926 i opisuje okoliczności odmownej decyzji podjętej w nuncjaturze apostolskiej w Warszawie. Artykuł, który stanowi próbę uwydatnienia istotnych dla omawianej postaci cech charakteru—pokory i szczerości, wypełnia dotychczasową lukę biograficzną ks. Rolewskiego.

Słowa kluczowe: Kazimierz Rolewski, August Hlond, Lorenzo Lauri, diecezja katowicka

Reverend Kazimierz Rolewski—a priest of the Archdiocese of Poznań, a devoted pastor, a cheerful and pleasant man, a parish priest sensitive to human poverty, a rector and professor of a theological seminary involved in the education of students, a radio preacher—remains an inspiring, remembered and important figure for the contemporary history of the Church. It is evidenced by the ongoing beatification process, the cult surrounding the priest's grave in the parish church in Ostrów Wielkopolski, and numerous statements by witnesses of his life included in biographical studies. A priest born in Poznań in 1887, he died in 1936 in the capital of Greater Poland at the age of only forty-eight.

He is remembered by many people, including priests, as a priest who refused to accept the episcopal dignity. The authors of biographical texts about him note this fact.¹ This article refers to this common opinion in light of the Vatican archives. Yet, it is an attempt to highlight the important character traits of the figure discussed—humility and sincerity.

1. Factography (1887–1926)

Kazimierz Rolewski's biography has been presented in detail in publications about him.² For the purposes of this article, however, it seems necessary to recall the most important facts from his life chronologically.

1 M. Banaszak, *Rolewski Kazimierz Jan Adam*, in: *Słownik polskich teologów katolickich*, vol. 7, ed. L. Grzebień, Warszawa 1983, p. 38; A. Franc, M. Juda-Mieloch, R. Kania-Weiss, A. Kraska, A. Mąka, *Apostoł wielkiej dobroci. Sługa Boży ksiądz Kazimierz Rolewski*, Ostrów Wielkopolski 2014, p. 121, 132; S. Jezierski, *Rolewski Kazimierz Jan Adam*, in: *Hagiografia polska. Słownik bio-bibliograficzny*, vol. 2, Poznań–Warszawa–Lublin 1972, p. 277; F. Lenort, *Rolewski Kazimierz Jan Adam*, in: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 31, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź 1988–1989, p. 556; *Mowa żałobna na pogrzebie śp. x. prałata dr. Kazimierza Rolewskiego*, Potulice 1936.

2 M. Banaszak, *Rolewski*, pp. 38–39; A. Franc i in., *Apostoł wielkiej dobroci*, p. 132; S. Jezierski, *Rolewski*, pp. 271–283; F. Lenort, *Rolewski*, pp. 556–557; *Mowa żałobna na pogrzebie śp. x. prałata dr. Kazimierza Rolewskiego*, pp. 5–16; W. Padacz, *Z polskiej gleby*, Kraków 1973, pp. 331–334; M. Straszewicz, *Rolewski Kazimierz*, in: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. 17, ed. E. Gigilewicz, Lublin 2012, col. 251–252; *Śp. Ks. Kazimierz Rolewski*, „*Miesięcznik Kościelny. Organ Archidiecezyi Gnieźnieńskiej i Poznańskiej*” 51 (1936) no. 6/7, pp. 206–207; A. Wietrzykowski, *Sylwetka duchowa Sługi Bożego ks. Kazimierza Rolewskiego 1887–1936*, „*Miesięcznik Kościelny Archidiecezyi Poznańskiej*” 19 (1968) no. 10, pp. 274–282; no. 11, pp. 295–306.

Jan Kazimierz Adam, son of Stanisław Rolewski and Elżbieta née Kinowska, was born on June 2, 1887, in Poznań and was baptized on June 19, 1887, in the Catholic parish of the Royal Prussian 10th Division – his father was then a sergeant in the Prussian army.³ He was the son of a railway official, so the Rolewskis often changed their residence. Jan Kazimierz Adam had two younger siblings – brother Władysław and sister Zofia. Kazimierz studied at schools in Mąty, Inowrocław, Kostrzyn nad Odrą, Kwidzyn, and Leipzig, where he passed the secondary school graduation exam. Over there, he also wrote an application for admission to the Archbishop’s Theological Seminary in Poznań but clearly stated that he would like to become a priest “in his homelands.”⁴ After four years of formation and studies, on January 22, 1911, he was ordained a priest by Bishop. Edward Likowski.

After being ordained a priest on March 1, 1911, he was sent to pastoral work in the Kingdom of Saxony – in Meissen and Dresden. During the war, he also served in the POW camp in Königsbrück.

On March 1, 1911, immediately after receiving priestly ordination, at the order of the Archbishop Dr. Likowski, I went to the Saxon Kingdom as a pastor for Polish emigrants. I have been working here for five years up to now, amid great difficulties and efforts. I am glad that I can serve thousands of souls longing for salvation and content the Supreme Spiritual Authority, which has honored me with so much trust by placing on my shoulders an office of such responsibility abroad,⁵

he wrote from Dresden to Archbishop Consistory in Poznań in 1915, asking for material support for his ministry.

In March 1916, he asked to be dismissed from his current position as soon as possible and to be given a job in his home diocese. He declared his readiness to take up the benefice in Niechanów, “if I do not receive the

3 Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Konsystorz i Kuria Arcybiskupia, 976, Mar 11, 1907, s.n.f.: copy of baptism certificate.

4 Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Konsystorz i Kuria Arcybiskupia, 976, Mar 15, 1907, s.n.f.: A request from a junior high school graduate, Kazimierz Rolewski, for admission to the theological seminary in Poznań.

5 Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Konsystorz i Kuria Arcybiskupia, 976, Jun 17, 1915, s.n.f.: Rev. Kazimierz Rolewski to the Archbishop’s Consistory in Poznań.

Niechanów benefice, I dare to ask for a vicariate humbly.”⁶ He took up the position of vicar in Głuszyn—a church incorporated into the Poznań parish provostry on May 1, 1916.⁷

He takes care of the parish zealously in the church and social organizations outside the church. He leads an impeccable life and is of pure morals, and in everyday life, he is a polite and cheerful companion. Having worked abroad for a long time, he got to know the local organizations and the hardships of pastoral work there, and with the knowledge he acquired from there, he zealously *mutatis mutandis* and, as far as possible, uses it on the spot with great benefit for pastoral work,⁸

wrote in his opinion to the Consistory, Rev. Wacław Mayer, dean and pastor of Saint Marcin in Poznań.

The pastoral ministry in Głuszyn also included Mała Starołęka, where in April 1920, the clerical authorities appointed Rev. Rolewski administrator.⁹ A former restaurant was adapted for the needs of a temporary chapel, with a tower added—its consecration took place on April 11, 1920. Soon, however, Rev. Rolewski left the archdiocese, and in the autumn of 1920, he went on a mission to Germany “to investigate the state of pastoral work among Polish emigrants.”¹⁰ In December 1920, he returned to Mała Starołęka, but on April 3, 1922, he first became an administrator, and on May 5, 1922, a parish priest (commander) in Ceradz.¹¹

6 Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Konsystorz i Kuria Arcybiskupia, 976, Mar 5, 1916, s.n.f.: Rev. Kazimierz Rolewski to Archbishop Edmund Dalbor.

7 Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Konsystorz i Kuria Arcybiskupia, 976, Apr 9, 1916, s.n.f.: Rev. Kazimierz Rolewski to Archbishop Edmund Dalbor; Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Konsystorz i Kuria Arcybiskupia, 976, Apr 10, 1916, s.n.f.: Decree of the Archbishop’s Consistory in Poznań.

8 Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Konsystorz i Kuria Arcybiskupia, 976, Sep 16, 1917, s.n.f.: Rev. Wacław Mayer to the Archbishop’s Consistory.

9 “We hereby appoint you, the Vicar, as administrator in Mała Starołęka, and we appoint you to take up your intended position since Rev. Kanikowski will come to Głuszyna”: Rev. “Weimann”, Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Parafie, 146/237, Apr 17, 2023, s.n.f.: a copy of the decree of the Archbishop’s Consistory.

10 Śp. Ks. Kazimierz Rolewski, p. 205.

11 Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Konsystorz i Kuria Arcybiskupia, 976, Apr 3, 1922, s.n.f.: decree of the Archbishop’s Consistory in Poznań; Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Konsystorz i Kuria Arcybiskupia, 976, May 5, 1922, s.n.f.: decree of the Archbishop’s Consistory in Poznań.

In the same year, 1922—from October 1—Cardinal Edmund Dalbor entrusted Rev. Rolewski the office of commander and benefice in Ostrów Wielkopolski.¹² In the local parish of Saint Stanisław Bishop, Rev. Rolewski spent nearly six years. In 1926, just after the death of Primate Dalbor from Ostrów Wielkopolski (died February 13, 1926), Pope Pius XI intended to appoint him bishop of Katowice.

2. The candidacy of Rev. Rolewski for bishop

The person of Rev. Rolewski, as a possible candidate for the episcopal dignity, was indicated to the apostolic nunciature in Warsaw by Rev. August Hlond, an apostolic administrator in Katowice. The parish priest in Ostrów Wielkopolski made a great impression on him as the organizer of the Catholic Congress held in this city on June 27–29, 1925. The context of this candidacy was the expected changes in the territorial division of dioceses in Poland, including the creation of new episcopal sees. Shortly after the issuance of the bull *Vixdum Poloniae unitas*¹³, Archbishop Lorenzo Lauri sent an extensive report to the Secretariat of State on candidates for ordinaries of new or vacant dioceses. For the newly established diocese in Częstochowa, the nuncio proposed Cardinal Pietro Gasparri to Rev. Teodor Kubina—a pastor from Katowice, and Rev. Kazimierz Rolewski.

A pious priest, with an exemplary life, loved by his people regardless of class, extremely active, an organizer with initiative and unrelated to politics,¹⁴

characterized Rev. Rolewski, Archbishop Lauri. He was based on the opinion of Rev. Hlond, whose recommendation was attached to the report.

¹² Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Konsystorz i Kuria Arcybiskupia, 976, Oct 1, 1922, s.n.f.: decree of the Archbishop's Consistory in Poznań.

¹³ *Vixdum Poloniae unitas*, *De nova dioecesium latini ritus circumscriptione in ditone Polonica*, Oct 28, 1925, „Acta Apostolicae Sedis” 17 (1925) no. 13, pp. 521–528.

¹⁴ Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Polonia, 1923–1933, Pos. 75, fasc. 104, Oct 29, 1925, k. 51: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal.

He is intelligent and a good speaker. With his initiative, activity, and prudence, he greatly revitalized the religious life of the parish, especially through Catholic organizations. He takes special care of his workers, who love him very much. Having a friendly, cheerful, and agreeable character, he gained the sympathy and respect of people who held him in high esteem,¹⁵

wrote Rev. Hlond. The Katowice administrator reported that—outwardly—after the Catholic Convention in Ostrów, Rev. Rolewski couldn't even go on vacation because he spent all his private funds on organizing the event. "He is of average height, quite charming, with mild manners; he gives the impression of a refined and cultured person,"¹⁶ Hlond noted.

In connection with this proposal, the nuncio asked for the opinion of the auxiliary bishop in Poznań, Stanisław Łukomski, and attached it to the report.

Rev. Kazimierz Rolewski, dean of the parish priest of Ostrów, belongs to the group of priests who stand out for their piety, exemplary life, and pastoral prudence. [...] He has a serious character, rather short than average height. He does not engage in politics, but instead develops vigorous activity among the people and the working class to support their morality,¹⁷

wrote Łukomski. He mentioned that due to excessive activity, he had difficulty speaking and had a slightly muffled voice. Nuncio Lauri consulted this remark with Rev. Hlond.

He assured me that he had heard more than one speech by Rolewski at the Congress in Ostrów and had never noticed that Rolewski had any voice defect. So it seems that Bishop Łukomski saw and talked to Rev. Rolewski shortly after the

15 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Polonia, 1923–1933, Pos. 75, fasc. 104, b.d., k. 58: Rev. August Hlond to Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri.

16 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Polonia, 1923–1933, Pos. 75, fasc. 104, b.d., k. 58: Rev. August Hlond to Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri.

17 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Polonia, 1923–1933, Pos. 75, fasc. 104, Oct 27, 1925, k. 57: Bishop Stanisław Łukomski to Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri.

congress, when, as a result of the great effort he suffered, his voice may have lowered, which was only temporary and did not cause the slightest concern,¹⁸

concluded the nuncio.

The candidacy of Rev. Rolewski returned a few months later due to the need to fill the vacant episcopal sees in Gniezno and Poznań, as well as in Vilnius—after the death of Cardinal Edmund Dalbor and Archbishop Jan Cieplak. Initially, to the Primate See, Cardinal Gasparri considered the Bishop of Płock, Antoni Julian Nowowiejski, and for Vilnius—Rev. Euzebiusz Brzeziewicz, pastor of Saint Aleksander in Warsaw.¹⁹ After hearing the opinion of Archbishop Laurie²⁰, in the first days of March 1926, the choice fell on Rev. Brzeziewicz as the future primate bishop,²¹ Romuald Jałbrzykowski as bishop of Vilnius, and bishop Łukomski as an ordinary in Łomża.²² However, the holy priest from Warsaw asked Pius XI not to entrust him with this dignity, explaining his poor health.²³

18 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Polonia, 1923–1933, Pos. 75, fasc. 104, Oct 29, 1925, k. 57: note by nuncio Lorenzo Lauri.

19 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 76, Feb 26, 1926, k. 72: Cardinal Pietro Gasparri to Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri (cifra).

20 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 76, Feb 26, 1926, k. 74–78: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri.

21 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 76, Mar 10, 1926, k. 80: Cardinal Pietro Gasparri to Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri (cifra).

22 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 76, Mar 10, 1926, k. 81: Cardinal Pietro Gasparri to Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri (cifra).

23 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 76, Mar 15, 1926, k. 94–96: Rev. Euzebiusz Brzeziewicz to Pope Pius XI; Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 76, Mar 16, 1926, k. 92: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri. Consequently, Nuncio Lauri, who had already sent a *sub secreto* letter to Bishop Łukomski about his nomination as Ordinary in Łomża, he asked for his immediate return, Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Archivio Nunziatura Varsavia, b. 224, fasc. 169, Mar 22, 1926, k. 20: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Bishop Stanisław Łukomski.

Therefore, in an extensive report from April 12, 1926, the apostolic nuncio considered further candidacies—for Gniezno and Poznań, bishop Hlond, bishop Łukomski, or the provincial of the Jesuits, Stanisław Sopuch.²⁴ At the end of April, Cardinal Gasparri requested that Nuncio Lauri ask bishop Hlond whether he would see anyone who could continue his mission in Upper Silesia without major difficulties.²⁵ Hlond suggested the bishop Kubina, recently the ordinary in Częstochowa.²⁶

At the beginning of May, the idea of leaving bishop Łukomski in Poznań returned. It was then that the candidacy of Rev. Rolewski, this time as a possible bishop of Łomża. “The Holy Father expects, still *sub secreto*, a final opinion from Your Excellency regarding the following nomination intentions: I. Poznań—Łukomski, II. Vilnius—Jałbrzykowski, III. Łomża—Rolewski”²⁷—wrote the Secretary of State to the nuncio.

Analyzing in a several-page report—in the rather specific circumstances of the 1926 May Coup²⁸—the possible consequences of the proposed decisions, Archbishop Lauri confirmed that “according to the information received about this clergyman and already indicated by me [...] he provides a sufficient guarantee of good management of the

24 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 77, Apr 12, 1926, k. 4–12: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri.

25 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 77, Apr 26, 1926, k. 18: Cardinal Pietro Gasparri to Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri (cifra).

26 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 77, Apr 28, 1926, k. 37: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri.

27 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 77, May 15, 1926, k. 38: Cardinal Pietro Gasparri to Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri.

28 This is how the nuncio in Warsaw described the situation: “Pilsudski’s coup d’état took place with the participation of a large part of the army: after two days of fierce fighting and shelling, as a result of which about two hundred people died, and many were wounded, Belvedere was occupied last evening. It is unknown where the president and ministers are now; they say they are in Poznań. Nunciature in the besieged region made it impossible to telegraph in advance. Today, there is a meeting of the diplomatic corps. Lauri”; Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Archivio Nunziatura Varsavia, b. 219, fasc. 118, May 15, 1926, k. 16: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri (cifra).

diocese, and, therefore, being a good bishop of Łomża.”²⁹ He listed the priest’s advantages: great activity and commitment to workers. These qualities—according to Lauri—would, however, speak for another diocese where

the need for social action and organization of the working class is more urgent, as, for example, in the diocese of Łódź or Częstochowa, and that is why I pointed him to the Holy See as an excellent suffragan of the bishop of Łódź, who repeatedly expressed the urgent need for help, or for the diocese of Częstochowa if Rev. Kubina would not be appointed there.³⁰

The nuncio in Warsaw also noted that few clergy persons devote themselves to social activity and work for workers’ organizations in Poland. Yet, these few are not always suitable to become bishops.

That is why Rev. Rolewski seems to be a valuable candidate for those dioceses where the working-class element predominates. Since the diocese of Łomża is currently the most peaceful of Polish dioceses, without the presence of many workers, without at least a significant socialist or otherwise subversive element, Rev. Rolewski would seem to me a bit wasted for this diocese, which would be easier to fill by finding the right person,³¹

Archbishop Lauri said. In his opinion, for a priest who was only forty years old Rolewski may have a more favorable opportunity to serve the Church so as to make good use of its “extraordinary strengths”.

The opinions sent by the apostolic nuncio influenced Pius XI’s decisions. At the beginning of June 1926, the Secretary of State asked Lauri for his opinion on the following “arrangement”: “Poznań Hlond,

²⁹ Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 77, May 22, 1926, k. 45: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri.

³⁰ Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 77, May 22, 1926, k. 45: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri.

³¹ Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 77, May 22, 1926, k. 45: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri.

Katowice Rolewski, Łomża Łukomski, Wilno Jałbrzykowski,”³² and then asked for a *nulla osta* from the President of the Republic of Poland.³³ The nuncio considered this solution appropriate, also due to the current political situation,³⁴ and notified the cardinal. Gasparri about the lack of opposition from President Ignacy Mościcki.³⁵ In this situation, the Secretariat of State sent a telegraphic inquiry to the bishop. Łukomski attending the Eucharistic Congress in Chicago, about which the nunciature in Warsaw was informed.³⁶ “The candidates for Poznań and Vilnius expressed their consent,”³⁷ reported the nuncio to the Secretary of State. The situation differed with Rev. Rolewski, who refused to accept the episcopal nobleness. “Rolewski, who was interrogated yesterday, categorically refuses, giving serious reasons, which Rev. Sopuch, with whom he consulted, and Bishop Hlond, who is present in Warsaw, consider highly justified,”³⁸ the nuncio wrote to Rome.

In this situation, the Secretariat of State asked the Congregation of the Holy Office for *nulla osta* for Rev. Arkadiusz Lisiecki, nuncio’s candidate for the bishopric in Katowice,³⁹ and then for the approval of the

32 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 77, 2.06.1926, k. 50: Cardinal Pietro Gasparri to Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri (cifra).

33 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 77, Jun 8, 1926, k. 52: Cardinal Pietro Gasparri to Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri.

34 Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Archivio Nunziatura Varsavia, b. 219, fasc. 118, Jun 9, 1926, k. 90: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri.

35 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 77, Jun 11, 1926, k. 53: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri (cifra).

36 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 77, Jun 13, 1926, k. 54: Cardinal Pietro Gasparri to Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri.

37 Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Archivio Nunziatura Varsavia, b. 219, fasc. 118, Jun 13, 1926, k. 99: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri (cifra).

38 Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Archivio Nunziatura Varsavia, b. 219, fasc. 118, Jun 13, 1926, k. 99: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri (cifra).

39 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 77, Jun 14, 1926, k. 56: Congregation for Extraordinary Affairs to the Congregation of the Holy Office; Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione

President of the Republic of Poland.⁴⁰ Just after bishop Łukomski's consent and receiving the long-awaited *nulla osta* of President Mościcki as the new candidate for Katowice⁴¹, on June 24, 1926, Pope Pius XI announced four related nominations in a secret consistory: Bishop August Hlond was appointed archbishop in Gniezno and Poznań, Bishop Romuald Jałbrzykowski—archbishop in Vilnius, Bishop Stanisław Łukomski—ordinary in Łomża, and Rev. Arkadiusz Lisiecki—bishop in Katowice.⁴²

3. Reasons for the negative decision

The correspondence between the nunciature in Warsaw and the Secretariat of State allows us to learn the real reasons for the resignation of Rev. Rolewski from taking over the proposed bishopric of Katowice. In the first days of June 1926, nuncio Lauri invited the parish priest from Ostrów to the apostolic nunciature in Warsaw under the pretext of talking about the pastoral care of youth, to which the Polish bishops would like to devote more attention.

Since Your Eminence asked me, on behalf of the Holy Father, for my opinion on the selection of the priest as mentioned above for such an important and delicate see of Katowice, I wanted to meet this parish priest personally,⁴³

he explained to the Secretary of State.

one per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 77, Jun 16, 1926, k. 57: *nulla osta* of the Congregation of the Holy Office.

40 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 77, Jun 16, 1926, k. 60: Cardinal Pietro Gasparri to Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri (cifra).

41 „Only now, at 15, can I forward the receipt of *nulla osta* and the candidate's consent to Katowice”, Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Archivio Nunziatura Varsavia, b. 219, fasc. 118, Jun 23, 1926, k. 111: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri (cifra).

42 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1926, Polonia, Pos. 66, fasc. 77, Jun 24, 1926, k. 48: Cardinal Pietro Gasparri to Cardinal Gaetano de Lai.

43 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Polonia, 1923–1933, Pos. 75, fasc. 105, Jun 24, 1926, k. 30: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri.

I must say that I had a good impression because Rolewski presented himself to me as a pious, modest, active, and practical man in the field of Christian social organizations, exactly as Bishop Łukomski and Hlond described him to me.⁴⁴

After the papal decision to appoint, Rev. Rolewski was again invited to the nunciature. The meeting took place on Saturday, June 12, 1926. The pope's decision – wrote the nuncio – was received by the parish priest from Ostrów “with deep astonishment.”⁴⁵ Archbishop's report Laurie described in detail the course of the interview with the candidate for the bishopric in Katowice. Rev. Rolewski argued his resistance first with his own unworthiness and smallness in the face of such a great honor and such a serious office. He claimed that with God's help, he could be a good parish priest but probably not a good bishop. The priest's next arguments were more specific. First, he talked about financial problems – due to the crisis of the Polish currency, a loan of fifty thousand zlotys taken out for the construction of a new church had not yet been repaid, and personally, he still had to repay four thousand zlotys for the renovation and enlargement of the parish house; he expressed hope that he would be able to repay them over the next two years, remaining the parish priest in Ostrów.

Then he raised the priest. Rolewski asked about diabetes, which he suffered from, and the lack of a scientific degree. His studies at the Poznań Seminary did not give him an academic degree, which – in his opinion – would put him in a situation of an inferiority complex concerning Katowice clergy who have academic diplomas after studying in Wrocław, where there is a theological faculty with the privilege of awarding them. “I tried to reassure him of his fears, which seemed to me a bit exaggerated and caused by a strong sense of humility,”⁴⁶ wrote the

44 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Polonia, 1923–1933, Pos. 75, fasc. 105, Jun 24, 1926, k. 30: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri.

45 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Polonia, 1923–1933, Pos. 75, fasc. 105, Jun 24, 1926, k. 30: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri.

46 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Polonia, 1923–1933, Pos. 75, fasc. 105, Jun 24, 1926, k. 31: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri.

nuncio, but he was unable to overcome his reservations before taking up the office and knowing that he knew the Jesuits in Warsaw, including some of Rev. Sopucha, he advised him to go and talk to them.

Rev. Rolewski returned to the nunciature in the afternoon of the same day. Bishop Hlond was already there, and further talks were conducted in his presence. Rev. Rolewski asked to speak Polish to be more precise in expressing his feelings, and Bishop Hlond was to translate his statement. The priest noted that he used the time given to him well – he adored the Blessed Sacrament for an hour, then made a general confession to one of the Jesuits, and then talked to Rev. Sopuch about his doubts. The Jesuit convinced him their worries were of little importance, except for one, which he should present to the nuncio for clarity. A long speech by Rev. Rolewski focused on the issue that has troubled him for several years. A clerical court also considered it and was his main obstacle in assuming the episcopal dignity. It was related to defamation against him, which could make it difficult for him to hold this office in the future.

The case concerned the parish in Głuszyn, where in 1920, a young woman, giving birth to a child only four months after marriage, accused the parish priest of paternity to her husband, who was surprised by this fact. The Poznań clerical court initiated an investigation, but it turned out that the slander concerned not the current parish administrator but the priest. Rolewski, who was on a mission in Germany. He immediately declared his innocence and asked for the case to be fully explained by the church court. However, after hearing the witnesses, the clerical court in Poznań saw no grounds to address this issue. Rev. Rolewski's requests, sent to court in 1924 and 1925, remained unanswered. Only a month after the conversation with the nuncio, on July 15, 1926, the priest received confirmation from the Archbishop's Spiritual Court in Poznań that it would no longer deal with this case. "We completely trust Rev. Rolewski, our Dean, and are convinced of his innocence."⁴⁷

47 „In response to the letter of Rev. Dean of April 10, 1924 and January 22, 1925, we repeat our decree of February 17, 1923, that 'his statement satisfies us completely,' which means that we have complete trust in Rev. Dean and belief in his innocence:" Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Konsystorz i Kuria Arcybiskupia, 976, Jul 15, 1926, s.n.f: Rev. Stefan Zwolski to Rev. Kazimierz Rolewski.

Rev. Rolewski confirmed in the nunciature his lack of guilt; “his words and the way he expressed himself reflected the sincerity of his statements,”⁴⁸ the nuncio wrote in the report. He emphasized that although the rumors did not reach Ostrów Wielkopolski, they were known in the Głuszyń parish and could be spread after the episcopal nomination, disturbing and casting a shadow on his good name. Archbishop Lauri thanked Rev. Rolewski for explanations and asked him to return to the nunciature a few hours later, after which he held a conference with Rev. Sopuch and Bishop Hlond. “None of us believed in Rolewski’s guilt: he honestly revealed these facts himself, even though Bishop Łukomski, when providing me with detailed information about Rev. Rolewski, didn’t mention it; This proves the subtlety of this priest’s conscience,”⁴⁹ the nuncio wrote in the report. However, considering all the circumstances, it was decided to accept his resignation for the good of the Holy See and the person concerned. “Reverend Rolewski was very pleased with this decision,”⁵⁰ the nuncio noted in the report.

It is possible that due to the attitude of Rev. Rolewski received accusations against Bishop Stanisław Okoniewski, coadjutor in Pelplin, of taking too “careful” care of the sister of his deceased colleague priest. According to Archbishop Lauri, publicity of alleged moral matters concerning Bishop Okoniewski had a political background. He mentioned Józef Prądkowski, the priest associated with the National Democracy and the “Kurier Poznański.” Among the causes of the unrest, he also saw the dissatisfaction of Bishop Antoni Laubitz (interested in the Chełmno diocese) and the anti-Polish views of Rev. Karol Klinke, a cathedral canon of German nationality, who confirmed under oath at the

48 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Polonia, 1923–1933, Pos. 75, fasc. 105, Jun 24, 1926, k. 32: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri.

49 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Polonia, 1923–1933, Pos. 75, fasc. 105, Jun 24, 1926, k. 32: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri.

50 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Polonia, 1923–1933, Pos. 75, fasc. 105, Jun 24, 1926, k. 32: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri.

nunciature the accusations which Okoniewski also denied under oath.⁵¹ However, the attack on Okoniewski impacted the Poznań clergy and was the background for Rolewski's negative decision. According to the nuncio's report, the scenario of similar moral accusations appearing in the press—this time against the pastor from Ostrów Wielkopolski—was real.⁵²

4. Factography (1926–1936)

Rev. Rolewski returned to the parish, and Bishop Hlond became his ordinary. In 1926, Rolewski began studies at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Warsaw, culminating in obtaining the Doctor of Theology academic degree in 1929. The title of his dissertation, written under the supervision of Rev. Prof. Zygmunt Kozubski, was “Social Obstacles to the Freedom of the Human Will.”⁵³

On September 26, 1928, Cardinal Hlond appointed Rev. Rolewski as a rector of the Archbishop's Theological Seminary in Poznań.⁵⁴ When he left the Ostrów parish, he was farewelled as a priest who enjoyed “extraordinary love and respect,” as a “modes man, without needs,” and with a “generous hand for the poor.”⁵⁵ The Primate also commissioned

51 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Polonia, 1923–1933, Pos. 75, fasc. 105, Feb 20, 1926, k. 7–18: Nuncio Lorenzo Lauri to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri. In January 1926, the National Democrats' press in Poznań published an article about the alleged pro-German sympathies of the nuncio in Warsaw: *Dokoła naszej nuncjatury. Spostrzeżenia i uwagi*, „Kurier Poznański” 21 (1926) no. 38, p. 2.

52 Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, Archivio Storico, Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Polonia, 1923–1933, Pos. 75, fasc. 105, Jun 24, 1926, k. 32: nuncjusz Lorenzo Lauri do kard. Pietro Gasparriego.

53 Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Konsystorz i Kuria Arcybiskupia, 976, Julź2, 1929, s.n.f.: S. T.D. diploma of Jan Kazimierz Rolewski.

54 Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Konsystorz i Kuria Arcybiskupia, 976, Sep 26, 1928, s.n.f.: Decree appointing priest Kazimierz Rolewski to the position of rector of the Archbishop's Theological Seminary in Poznań.

55 Pożegnanie ks. proboszcza, „Orędownik Ostrowski. Pismo na miasto i powiaty Ostrowski i Odolanowski oraz miast Ostrowa, Odolanowa, Sulmierzyc i Raszkowa” 77 (1928) no. 95, p. 1.

him to give lectures on moral theology—casuistry.⁵⁶ Entrusting him with the delicate function of a rector, which requires special qualities, proves that the conversation participants at the nunciature were convinced of Rev. Rolewski's integrity, humility, and sincerity.

In October 1928, Cardinal Hlond asked the Holy See to grant the new rector the dignity of a "domestic prelate."⁵⁷ Pope Pius XI awarded him this title in 1930. The President of the Republic of Poland, Ignacy Mościcki, in 1929 awarded the Golden Cross of Merit to Rev. Rolewski, "the parish priest and dean in Ostrów of the Poznań Voivodship, for his achievements in the field of national and social work, physical education and military training."⁵⁸ In the following years, Rector Rolewski was one of the radio preachers during Holy Masses broadcast from the Poznań cathedral on Sundays by Polish Radio.⁵⁹

The post of the rector, Rev. Rolewski, held the position until September 1935. He resigned due to his progressive illness.

By the example of his pious, sacrificial, and apostolic life, lectures based on many years of rich experience, and especially the endearing kindness of his priestly heart, the late priest Rolewski raise a large group of young pastors who will remember him, love, and be grateful beyond the grave,⁶⁰

wrote Rev. Kazimierz Kowalski in his obituary, successor as rector.

56 Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Konsystorz i Kuria Arcybiskupia, 976, Dec 21, 1929, s.n.f.: Cardinal August Hlond to Rev. Kazimierz Rolewski.

57 Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Archivio Nunziatura Varsavia, b. 249, fasc. 692, Oct 18, 1928: Cardinal August Hlond to Nuncio Francesco Marmaggi.

58 „Monitor Polski. Dziennik Urzędowy Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej” 12 (1929) no. 264, p. 1.

59 Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Kapituła Metropolitalna, 1631, Dec 31, 1929, s.n.f.: Rev. Stanisław Adamski to Rev. Franciszek Ruciński. An interesting contribution to the history of radio preaching is a letter written by a former emigrant from Częstochowa in 1934 after Holy Mass. with a sermon by Rev. Rolewski broadcast from Poznań: "I was happy because I heard the same voice that I heard probably every Sunday in Meissen, in Dresden, at the meeting of the Association of St. Wojciech, the voice of our beloved chaplain, a good guide and a warm guardian. Today, after over twenty years, I heard the same voice of Rev. Prelate, Regens, and educator. Most Reverend Prelate, for your work and care for us, I offer you, Good Priest and patriotic Pole, God bless you heartily"; quote from: A. Franc et al., *Apostoł wielkiej dobroci*, p. 48.

60 Śp. Ks. Kazimierz Rolewski, p. 207.

There is no indication that the Głuszyna slander was spread. However, the rumor that he had been refused the bishopric accompanied Rev. Rolewski. "I will not wish you worldly goods because you have never cared about them. I will not wish you dignity and honors because you have never tried for them. You even refused the dignity of the Bishop of Silesia,"⁶¹ said one of the inhabitants of Ostrów Wielkopolski during the farewell of Rev. Rolewski in 1928. Rev. Kowalski mentioned the refusal of the episcopal dignity during the funeral sermon in the Poznań cathedral: "He became everything to everyone, maintaining an exemplary humility that did not allow him to accept the Silesian bishopric offered to him by the Pope."⁶² He included a similar thought in the obituary written for "Miesięcznik Kościelny," but this sentence was deleted in the Archbishop's Consistory from the text sent for printing.⁶³ Some publications also included information about his repeated refusal to accept the episcopal dignity.⁶⁴

61 Pożegnanie ks. proboszcza, „Orędownik Ostrowski. Pismo na miasto i powiaty Ostrowski i Odolanowski oraz miast Ostrowa, Odolanowa, Sulmierzyc i Raszkowa” 77 (1928) no. 95, p. 1. The speech was delivered by a member of the parish council, attorney Waclaw Jankowski.

62 Mowa żałobna na pogrzebie śp. x. prałata dr. Kazimierza Rolewskiego, pp. 8–9.

63 In the biography provided by Rev. Kazimierz Kowalski to the Archbishop's Consistory, the opinion: "Finally, on September 11, 1935, Monseigneur Rolewski resigned from the position of rector of the Seminary due to a chronic illness", his ending was deleted: "this illness, which, together with his great humility, did not allow him to accept the offered bishopric of Katowice in Ostrów"; Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Poznaniu, Konsystorz i Kuria Arcybiskupia, 976, b.d., s.n.f.: życiorys ks. Kazimierza Rolewskiego do „Miesięcznika Kościelnego”; por. „Miesięcznik Kościelny. Organ Archidiecezji Gnieźnieńskiej i Poznańskiej” 51 (1936) no. 6/7, p. 207.

64 Rev. Stanisław Jezierski, author of an extensive biography of Rev. Rolewski prepared for the beatification process, states: "During her pastoral work in Ostrów, she met Rev. Rolewski was offered the episcopal dignity twice: on June 12, 1926, the nuncio from Warsaw summoned him, informing him, as the Holy Father's wish, of the proposal to take up the bishopric in Katowice. After three days of reflection (which he asked for) and seeking his confessor's advice (Rev. Sopuch TJ), he asked the nuncio for the Pope to withdraw his decision. «That day—he admitted later—was one of the hardest days of my life.» He also refused when, in 1927, Primate Hlond offered him the Poznań suffraganate. Then he was to say: «Your Eminence, one has said it once, so one must be consistent again»" (Cf. S. Jezierski, Rolewski, p. 277). Apart from minor inconsistencies with the nuncio's account (e.g., three days of consideration), the alleged proposal of a suffragan in Poznań by Bishop Łukomski could not be related to the refusal to accept the dignity granted—Rolewski was not taken into account by

Kazimierz Rolewski died on March 13, 1936 in Poznań.⁶⁵ Archbishop of Poznań Antoni Baraniak, in 1966, then secretary of the Cardinal Hlond, initiated the beatification process, which is still ongoing.⁶⁶

Conclusion

With the development of the media, gossip understood as a dynamic communication event, began significantly influencing the lives of public figures, including clergy. This article refers to the common opinion about the priest's refusal to accept Kazimierz Rolewski to the episcopal dignity, presenting previously unpublished source documents from the Vatican archives. They show that the slander spread in a small parish environment became the direct cause of the refusal to accept the bishopric in Katowice, offered to him by Pope Pius XI. The candidate clearly declared his innocence. In the opinion of the nunciature, he was credible. Yet, the possibility of publicizing rumors after his episcopal nomination that cast a shadow on his good name resulted in the acceptance of the resignation from the bishopric offered to him.

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- 65 U schyłku życia ks. prał. Rolewskiego. Na podstawie wiadomości zebranych od sióstr, lekarzy w szpitalach w Środziewie, w Poznaniu oraz od ks. prof. Szymańskiego, Poznań 1936, pp. 11–15.
- 66 A. Baraniak, *Przemówienie podczas I Sesji Trybunału do procesu informacyjnego Księdza Kazimierza Rolewskiego 20 XII 1966*, „Miesięcznik Kościelny Archidiecezji Poznańskiej” 18 (1967) no. 3, pp. 60–62; H. Misztal, *Powojenne inicjatywy episkopatu dotyczące polskich spraw beatyfikacyjnych i kanonizacyjnych (20-lecie Postulatorskiego Ośrodka Studiów w Rzymie)*, „Częstochowskie Studia Teologiczne” 12–13 (1985), p. 425.

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