

Articles

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Communism as a Spiritual Attack on Man

Abstract

Marxist ideology, and later the practice of the communist state, denied the essential goals of education, making it an important tool for indoctrination. Man ceased to be the highest value, and was replaced by other values that were lower than him.

The communist program of raising children and youth in atheism, without God, was an attack on all believers, because it impacted the future of any religion in Russia.

The pontificate of John Paul II, the first Pope from a communist country, was important in determining the threat of Marxism. In the encyclical „*Laborem Exercens*” the Pope stated that “by the use of various kinds of influence, including revolutionary pressure, it aims to win a monopoly of power in each society.” (LE, 11). The fundamental assessment of Marxism was made by John Paul II in response to social issues posed by the so-called theology of liberation. This power reaches deep and is vast, because it affects the whole person, in all dimensions of his existence.

Keywords

Communism, Marxism, Pseudo-religion, freedom, man.

In the ancient cultures of Greece and Rome, the basic imperative of raising children and youth, which was fundamental to personality, was self-development aimed at forming one's character. It was supposed to form a person with a well-balanced approach to spiritual life, family and society, close to the Greek ideal of *kalokagathia* (Greek: "kalos kai aghatos" – "good and beautiful"), or the Roman „vir bonus" (Latin: „good husband"). This ideal was later connected in the history of education with the concept of a man of honor, an heir of the knight's or noble culture. Thus, children and youth were introduced into the world of values such as: integrity, justice, dignity, prudence, wisdom, openness to others¹

1. Education of a „new man"

Marxist ideology, and later the practice of the communist state, denied the essential goals of education, making it an important tool for indoctrination. Man ceased to be the highest value, and was replaced by other values that were lower than him.²

According to Marxists, the cultural life of society belongs to the so-called superstructure. Hence the conclusion about the need to refine the cultural model to the new reality that emerged after the revolution, that is, the new „base". Creating obligatory cultural models was one of the goals of the so-called „Democratization". It was claimed that this process consists „not only in the fact that cultural models of the upper classes permeate the lower classes, but also in the fact that cultural models of the so-called lower classes permeate the so-called higher classes and acquire the obligatory character for the whole society"³

Political supervision was exercised over entire cultural life through the so-called cultural policy administration. In particular, it meant various inspections of all aspects of artistic and cultural life. Censorship, self-censorship, the use of a whole arsenal of bureaucratic regulations, liquidation of groups, institutions and organizational forms that were formed spontaneously, taking away the

¹ After: D. Leszczyński, *Szkola – zakładnik ideologii*, „Polonia Christiana" (2008), no. 4, p. 31.

² M. Bierdajew, *Nowe Średniowiecze. Los człowieka we współczesnym świecie*, trans. H. Paprocki, Fundacja Aletheia, Warszawa 2003, pp. 190–196.

³ W. Sokorski, *O funkcji kulturalno – wychowawczej państwa demokracji ludowej*, „Wiedza i Życie" (1950), p. 5.

matters that the authorities considered the most important and sensitive from professionals, and passing them to individuals who obediently and unscrupulously executed all political directives, became the tools of cultural policy. Objectification, and not subjective treatment of recipients, as well as instrumental and not purposeful, understanding of art and the whole culture were the principles of cultural policy.⁴ Vladimir Lenin precisely defined the morality he advocated: „Moral is only what is useful for the party (...) and any idea of God, all coquetry with it is a wickedness for which there are no words; it's the most dangerous infection in society.”⁵

One of the first strikes of communism was directed against the intelligentsia as people who shape the cultural life. In a letter written on September 15, 1919 to Gorky, responding to his intervention regarding the arrests of the intelligentsia, Lenin wrote: „in fact they are not the brain of the nation but its dung.” On another occasion, he told Gorky: „It is the fault of the intelligentsia, if we break up too many pots.” Thinking about the attempt on his life made by Fanny Kaplan, he said: „I got the bullet from the intelligentsia.”⁶

The practice of the Soviet state was to create a new culture that would suit the state and its plans. It was supposed to be an endless experiment with the human being enveloped in ideological care from birth, whose goal was to create a new man. Vladimir Bukovsky in his book *And the Wind Returns* writes with irony and bitterness: „They say that a certain weird Englishman for 20 years cut off rats' tails waiting for the offspring that would have no tails, and as it did not happen he waved his hand. What do you demand from an Englishman? Oh no, that's not how socialism will be built. He lacked enthusiasm, a healthy faith in a bright future. Here, it's different: for dozens of years people's heads were being cut off – at last headless people of a new type began to be born. The most important thing is not to lose heart, after all it is in the name of universal happiness.”⁷

Soviet „culture” is an obligatory ten-year education, it is a school with a basic task of „forming a scientific-materialistic worldview and communist beliefs

⁴ A. Wallis, *Kilka problemów polityki kulturalnej lat siedemdziesiątych*, „Kultura i Życie” (1981), no. 10, pp. 7–9.

⁵ After: M. Zdziechowski, *W obliczu końca*, Wilno 1937, p. 334.

⁶ A. Sołżenicyn, *Archipelag GULag*, ed. Pomost, Warszawa 1988, vol. 1, pp. 304–305; Cf. P. Toboła-Pertkiewicz, *Kacety i gulag – zbrodnicze bliźnięta. Rozmowa z Edvinsem Snore – łotewskim twórcą filmu „The Soviet Story”*, „Polonia Christiana” (2010), no. 15, pp. 19–21.

⁷ W. Bukowski, *I powraca wiatr*, wyd. CDN, Warszawa 1984, pp. 77–78.

of learners.”⁸ It is also publishing millions of books, among which the first place was occupied by Lenin’s works (in 1980 their number amounted to 15 million copies) and „extraordinary works of L. I. Brezhnev” (17 million copies until 1980). „But the numbers are still growing, these books are printed almost continuously,” official sources reported in 1980.⁹

Culture embraces the entire human being. Thus, it concerns both the spiritual and material sphere of human existence. The spiritual and material culture of Europe was rejected by the communists. By creating their own „culture”, based on the principles of socialism, they came to the degradation and destruction of man. Entire crowds of people were turned into slaves. A lie became the building block of the „new society”, often expanded by criminals who used all possible means to multiply it.¹⁰

Dostoevsky’s literary predictions from *The Possessed* came true: „All members of society watch over each other and have the duty to denounce them (...), they are all slaves equal in slavery. In exceptional cases – slander and murder. But always equality. It starts with a decrease in the level of education, knowledge and talents. Gifted people (...) are expelled and sentenced to death.”¹¹

The basic sections of culture and science were degraded and permanently distorted, and became tools in the hands of ideologues. The basic ideas of communism: collectivism, the managerial role of the educator, intellectualism and „relation to life”, which was one with the politicization of education, became the basic determinants of the model of the new education. A constantly repeated social lie: in the sense of misleading a given community by an individual or a group, but also in the sense of lying to individual people or small communities by a social group (party) became an element of education.¹²

The same curriculum was implemented throughout the country; students used the same textbooks, the reading lists included the same titles, and so on. In school programs, through the carefully selected readings during Polish classes or the way historical events were presented, children were given examples of people worthy of admiration and imitation. It was done in order to influence

⁸ M. Heller, A. Niekricz, *Utopia u władzy*, vol. 2, ed. Wers, bmwyd. and r., p. 298.

⁹ M. Heller, A. Niekricz, *Utopia u władzy*.

¹⁰ Cf. L. Żebrowski, *Czerwonej mitologii żywot po śmierci ustroju*, „Polonia Christiana” (2009), no. 10, pp. 53–56.

¹¹ F. Dostojewski, *Biesy*, in: *Dzieła wybrane*, vol. III, Warszawa 1984, pp. 415–416.

¹² W. Chudy, *Kłamstwo społeczne i jego skutki*, in: *Błąd antropologiczny...*, pp. 201–222.

the required understanding of important concepts such as patriotism, justice, or freedom. Naturally, understanding had to be in agreement with the interest of authorities – the government in power.¹³ School activities were subject to constant inspections carried out by administrative and social units. The Parental Committees, according to the 1949 instructions, were to fight „reactionary influences” and „watch over” the politically correct direction of school operation, etc.

The role of pedagogues was limited to such issues as: class struggle, struggle for peace, collectivization of agriculture, implementation of the 6-year plan, etc. Incorporating the child in these processes meant educating.¹⁴

In his address at the beginning of the new school year 1947/48, the then Polish Minister of Education, S. Skrzyszewski, stated that in some schools the atmosphere was „hostile” so more vigilance was needed and a battle for the „soul of education” should start. He mainly fought against the concept of „non-political character of schools,” forcing a view that the needs of the system should determine the shape of teaching and upbringing. In October 1947, a subject called socio-educational issues of 1 hour a week was added to the school curriculum.¹⁵

Dissemination of culture had a revolutionary meaning; it was part of the „class struggle.” Culture and education is, according to Marxists, „not only a product of its time, but also its active co-creator, it is part of the socialist revolution and socialist construction.”¹⁶

Cultural policy employed such tools as: the censorship and self-censorship system, the use of a whole arsenal of bureaucratic regulations, liquidation of groups, institutions and organizational forms that arose spontaneously, and taking away from professionals those matters that the authorities considered the most important and sensitive, and giving them to individuals who obediently and unscrupulously followed all political directives. The principle of cultural policy involved instrumental treatment of recipients, who were not treated like

¹³ A. Grzegorzewski, *W kręgu nieprawdy. O informacji masowej w Polsce*, „Zeszyty Edukacji Narodowej”, ed. KOS, 1987, p. 4.

¹⁴ A. Radziwiłł, *Ideologia wychowawcza w Polsce w latach 1948–1956*, ed. Nowa, Warszawa 1981, pp. 9–14.

¹⁵ A. Radziwiłł, *Ideologia...*, pp. 27–54.

¹⁶ W. Sokorski, *O funkcji kulturalno – wychowawczej państwa demokracji ludowej*, „Wiedza i Życie” (1950), p. 5; Cf. P. R. Campos, *Kult szpetoty w rewolucyjnym świecie. Rozmowa z ks. Anthonym Branki*, „Polonia Christiana” (2016), no. 50, pp. 82–85.

subjects, and instrumental, instead of purposeful, understanding of art and the whole culture.¹⁷

The official definition of the Soviet information and propaganda system defines it as a system which „in a structured and methodical way is spreading a specific, organized set of model views (...) through premeditated and organized texts.” The state gives meaning to words and decides about their life. The word is defined in the booklet „Language in a developed socialist society” (Moscow, 1982) as the „main material carrier of perfect information.”¹⁸ As in any totalitarian system, language in communism was determined, it was in service of propaganda and education of masses in the spirit of a concrete ideology.¹⁹ Language underwent a specific tooling. It had been holy, but the ideologues „blasphemously desecrated it with hideous satanic babble;” it had been rich, but they „wanted to rob and reduce it to the level of a colloquial, useful, mechanical – teleological speech;” it had been free, but they „castrated and tamed it;” it had been magnificent and gray-winged, but they „eagerly deprived it of its wings.”²⁰

Controlled cultural and educational activity that was steered from the top did not omit labor camps in the USSR. Its goal was „not to leave a prisoner for a moment to his own fate and his own thoughts after his chores in order not to create an opportunity for his old, criminal tendencies.”²¹

Communist authorities deliberately maintained the „hunger” for books to gain, in this way, an additional instrument of influencing literature, writers and literary tastes. According to the UNESCO statistics for 1981, the USSR occupied the last place among industrialized countries in „consumption” of paper for books and newspapers per capita: US – 65.6 kg, Germany – 51.2 kg, France – 37.7 kg, Japan – 31.9 kg, Great Britain – 31.8 kg, while the USSR – 5.1 kg. It should be remembered that in the USSR it was the state authorities who decided what and in what quantities will be published. In the years 1969 – 1970 more than

¹⁷ A. Wallis, *Kilka problemów polityki kulturalnej lat siedemdziesiątych*, „Kultura i Życie” (1981), no. 10, pp. 7–9.

¹⁸ M. Heller, *Maszyna i śrubki*, pp. 227–229.

¹⁹ I. Gołomszok, *Język artystyczny w warunkach totalitarnych*, „Kontynent” (1976), no 7, reprint: ed. Vademecum, bmwyd. and r., p. 31.

²⁰ W. I. Iawnow, *Nasz język*, in: *De profundis. Zbiór rozpraw o rosyjskiej rewolucji*, ed. NOW, Warszawa 1988, p. 125.

²¹ A. Sołżenicyn, *Archipelag GUŁag*, p. 413.

76 million books by and about Lenin were published and in 1979, 17 million books by Brezhnev.²²

Television had a big influence on the camouflage of power, and even on its „sacralization”. Constant repetition of the image of a person on television due to the effect of specific hypnosis, gave this person a superhuman dimension. That was the way to depict communist leaders.²³

At school, the existence, side by side, of the communist worldview and the Christian vision of the world was a dissonance. Some researchers even talk about the „double” nature of school life. In addition to the religious aspect (e.g. catechetical lessons outside school, preparing for the reception of the sacraments – as was the case e.g. in Poland or in a clandestine manner and on a smaller scale, e.g. in the USSR,) a strong ideological aspect appeared – saturation of school programs and textbooks with political content, and introducing a new educational ideal.²⁴

The process of communist education led to the development of specific psychological attitudes and types. Father Józef Pastuszko distinguished the following types of a communist:

1. Utopian type – people who are attracted by the vision of an ideal social system. In the name of a better future they are able to fight against a possible ideological opponent and sacrifice themselves to a „cause”;

2. Amoral type – people who have no moral brakes. They walk freely, without scruples, following the lowest instincts; they have a reversed (in relation to the Christian attitude) hierarchy of values. They are also distinguished by careerist and adventurous stand of revolutionists, devoid of ideals, experiencing action fever;

3. The type of the „grey people” – characterized by lack of political interest. They take but passive attitude towards social life, are flexible enough to adapt their personal life to the existing social and political conditions;

4. Resentment type – people for whom dissatisfaction and envy are a source of life energy.

This typology indicates the immoral impact of communism on the individual. On the other hand, the individual becomes part of the collective,

²² M. Heller, *Maszyna...*, p. 219.

²³ T. Molnar, *Ukryta władza*, Stańczyk, 1988, no. 9, Kraków, p. 66.

²⁴ J. Król, *Ateizacja szkół średnich ogólnokształcących w latach 1945 – 1961*, in: *Oblicze ideologiczne szkoły polskiej 1944 – 195*, ed. E. Walewander, Lublin 2002, p. 110.

as a consequence, with restricted freedom of thinking and acting, and a possibility of breaking with the existing morality which the individual previously accepted and observed. Among the many communist leaders, those with pathological behavior may be found. The ideals of a „communist” include: temporal life, which is perceived as non-religious and non-family-like; freedom, which remains in the sphere of ideas that strongly contrasts with the actual slavery of thoughts and deeds; equality, which is an empty word and the ideal of piece-work, which was a new kind of an ideological lie, because it contrasted strongly with everyday poverty – a proof of low effectiveness of such work.²⁵

2. Anti-religion and pseudo-religion

Commentators of Marxist philosophy see the essence of atheism in various axioms of its thought system. According to Martin Heidegger: „The essence of materialism does not consist of the assertion that everything is merely matter, but rather of a metaphysical determination according to which all beings appear as the material of labor.”²⁶

Marx famously claimed that “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is, therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo.”²⁷ Lenin spoke in a similar vein, claiming that every class of exploiters needs two officials: an executioner, who will punish revolutionaries and a priest who would rule the exploited and hold them back so that they would not seek a revolution – for life is passing away, and one must think about eternity. Each religion is a „spiritual fuse” anesthetizing the exploited.²⁸ Moreover, „all modern religions and churches, all religious

²⁵ J. Pastuszko, *Psychologia komunizmu*, in: *Bolszewizm...*, pp. 216-225, 239-242.

²⁶ M. Heidegger, *Brief uber den „Humanismus”*, in: *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit*, Bern 1954, pp. 87-88.

²⁷ K. Marks, *Przyczynek do krytyki heglowskiej filozofii prawa*, in: K. Marks, F. Engels, *Dzieła*, vol. 1, Warszawa 1962, pp. 457-458.

²⁸ J. M. Bocheński, *Marksizm – leninizm. Nauka czy wiara?*, bmw, 1988, ed. Antyk, p. 70.

organizations are always treated by Marxism as bourgeois reactionary bodies, used to defend exploitation and mislead the working class.”²⁹ It was thought that anti-religious education would be a „replacement of belief in God with faith in science and machinery.”³⁰

Even in the 1960s, in the anti-religious propaganda materials, it was written: „Religion is like a nail; if you hit it, you will only push in deeper (...). Here you need pincers. Religion must be grabbed, squeezed from the bottom: it is not struck but pulled, pulled out with the root. And this can only be achieved through scientific propaganda, moral and cultural education of the masses.”³¹

The Orthodox Church was the religion that was the first to experience totalitarian communist rule. It was the largest of all religions existing in Russia. Great Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians – two-thirds of the country’s population – were followers of the Orthodox Church. Followers of other religions in the USSR, listed by the number of believers, are: Tatars and Turkmen (Islam), Poles and Lithuanians (Catholicism), Jews (Mosaic Judaism), Finns, Estonians, Latvians, Germans (Lutheranism), the Kalmyks and other Mongol tribes (Buddhism), etc.³²

During the reign of Kerensky (after the February revolution in 1917), at the Council of Moscow, the patriarch’s ministry was restored. Tikhon became the first patriarch. In the face of the Bolshevik revolution, he issued on November 27, 1917 a pastoral letter condemning the revolution, calling it a betrayal of the homeland. In January 1918, he anathematized revolutionaries and forbade communication with the Bolsheviks. The decisive moment was „The Decree on Separation of Church from State and School from Church,” issued by the Council of People’s Commissars, on January 28, 1918, in which the separation of Church and State and School from the Church was announced. It referred to all believers – religious groups lost their legal personality.³³

In August 1921, at the time of famine, Patriarch Tikhon, created a diocesan and nationwide Committee to help the hungry and began collecting money.

²⁹ Lenin, *O stosunku partii robotniczej do religii*, in: W. I. Lenin, Marks, Engels, Marksizm, Warszawa 1949, p. 247.

³⁰ R. Pipes, *Rosja bolszewików*, Warszawa 2013, p. 341.

³¹ F. O. Oleszczuk, *Foczemu niezja wierit’ w Boga*, Moskwa 1965, pp. 221–222.

³² K. Zinowiew, *Rosja w przeddzień rewolucji*, Warszawa 1986, ed. Droga, p. 49.

³³ P. Stopniak, *Cerkiew rosyjska wobec bolszewizmu*, in: *Bolszewizm*, Lublin 1938, pp. 30–43; Cf. A. Wiśniewski, *Stosunek państwa do kościoła w ZSRR*, Wilno 1938, pp. 22–24.

The Bolshevik slogan: „We dealt with the earthly tsar, now we will deal with the tsar of heaven” was used during the time of famine, when a decree of January 2, 1922, brought about the confiscation of church treasures. On February 19, 1922 the patriarch sent a message allowing parish committees to sacrifice Orthodox Church paraphernalia that did not have liturgical character. However, the new WCIK Decree of February 26, 1922 ordered all church valuables to be given to the starving. This resulted in more than 1,400 recorded bloody clashes between the faithful and government squads. On February 28, the Patriarch announced a proclamation in which he called the Bolshevik request a sacrilege, he did not approve of such a great requisition. Lenin, having learned about the resistance, ordered to arrest as many as possible „representatives of the reactionary bourgeoisie and reactionary clergy”, put them in public before the court and execute them. In 1922, around 8,100 priests, monks and nuns were executed.³⁴

Among the methods of fighting the clergy in the Soviet Union, one can distinguish among others: psychological harassment (constant maintenance of nervous tension through constant surveillance and frequent interrogations); breaking trust among the faithful (repeating rumors about cooperation with the security police); constant raising of taxes (failure to pay exorbitant fees could lead to the closure of the church); urging priests to quit priesthood (through blackmail and intimidation); suggesting suicide; false self-accusations; arrests, prisons, gulags and exiles.³⁵

At the same time, the bishops of the dioceses that had long existed in the former First Polish Republic, which were part of the Russian Empire, and later belonged to the western republics of Ukraine and Belarus, left their dioceses controlled by the Bolsheviks in 1920. In this way, they evaded severe repressions or indeed a threat to life. They were: bishop Dub-Dubowski (1874 – 1953), Ordinary of the Lutsk and Zhytomyr diocese; Bishop Piotr Mańkowski (1866 – 1933), Ordinary of the Diocese of Kamyanets. Bishop Joseph Aloisius Kessler (1862 – 1933), Ordinary of the Diocese of Tiraspol also left. Further, planned elimination of the Catholic clergy began after the famous show trial of a dozen Catholic priests from St. Petersburg, which took place in Moscow on March 21 – 25, 1923. The successor of Archbishop Ropp, Bishop Jan Cieplak (1857 – 1926), received

³⁴ A. Solżenicyń, *Archipelag GULag 1918-1956*, vol. I – II, ed. Pomost, Warszawa 1988, pp. 317-318.

³⁵ Cf. A. Dzwonkowski, *Represje wobec duchowieństwa katolickiego w ZSRR 1918-1939*, pp. 23–37.

the death penalty, changed – to 10 years in prison – under the pressure of the Western public opinion. A year later, he was deported to Latvia and went to Poland. In this way, the Catholic Church, whose number of faithful was estimated at 1.5 million, was deprived of hierarchy. This condition was to last three years.³⁶

The Catholic Church practically ceased to exist as an institution in 1938. Parishes disappeared and churches were closed, with the exception of the two so-called French churches in Moscow and in Leningrad. They were left open, because the Soviets wanted to maintain a positive image with the West.³⁷

After the end of World War II, within the borders of the Soviet Union there was the Catholic Church from the Baltic countries and several dioceses and about 800 parishes from the territories of the Second Polish Republic. As a result of the immediate destruction of the church's organizational structures only about 100 parishes remained before 1984. There were also several dozen parishes in Ukraine, beyond the pre-war Polish border, opened in this area during the German occupation by the Catholic population of Polish origin and defended by it in the post-war period.³⁸

The Orthodox Church faced disintegration, which was supported by the Soviet authorities. To break up the Orthodox Church the Bolsheviks supported and exploited many new groups, such as the Living Orthodox Church. On May 12, 1922, the delegation of the Living Church demanded that Tikhon called the Second Council and gave up patriarchy. Tikhon handed over power to the metropolitan of Jaroslav, Agafangel, and was later arrested. The media, however, stated that with the consent of the patriarch Tikhon, the authority was taken over by the „Provisional Board of the Church”. On April 23, 1923, the Bolsheviks called a puppet „council” which deprived Tikhon of priestly and religious distinction. Tikhon, as an apostate of the faith and traitor of the Church, was to be an ordinary Vasil Bielavin from that time on. The patriarchy, as an extremely political and counter-revolutionary institution was abolished. Tikhon did not

³⁶ A. Kozyrska, *Arcybiskup Edward Ropp. Życie i działalność (1851–1939)*, Lublin 2004; Cf. A. Brunello, *La Chiesa del Silenzio*, Roma 1953, pp. 3–4 (he gives the number 1633 thousand of all Catholics in Soviet Russia.)

³⁷ J. Pałysa, *Za wschodnią granicą 1917–1993. O Polakach i Kościele w dawnym ZSRR rozmowa z Romanem Dzwonkowskim SAC*, Wydawnictwo „Wspólnota Polska”, Warszawa 1993, pp. 71–72.

³⁸ R. Dzwonkowski, *Kościół katolicki obrządku łacińskiego w ZSRR po 1918 roku. Zarys problematyki*, in: *Odrodzenie Kościoła katolickiego w byłym ZSRR. Studia historyczno-demograficzne*, ed. E. Walewander, Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, Lublin 1993, pp. 81–100.

recognize the „council” as legitimate. The Bolsheviks put him on trial. Later, however, Tikhon, for unknown reasons, chose the path of compromise with the communist authorities. In a letter of June 16, 1923, he admitted the allegations and proclaimed complete loyalty to the communist authorities. He died in the spring of 1925. His successor was metropolitan Sergius, with the title of deputy, because the true metropolitan, Piotr, was sent to Siberia. On July 29, 1927, Sergius announced a declaration in which the positive position of the Church towards the Soviet state was clearly stated. Religious persecution, however, continued, and on February 19, 1930, Sergius was forced to make a statement that there was full religious freedom in Soviet Russia. On the first day of the Soviet-German war, a new patriarch wrote a letter to the clergy and the faithful, in which he blessed their struggle in defense of their Homeland. During World War II, in addition to moral support for those fighting against fascism, the Orthodox Church collected funds that allowed the creation of an air squadron called Alexander Nevsky, and a tanks column called Dmitri Donsky, and funds for organizing help for the wounded and for sending gifts for soldiers.³⁹

Patriarch Sergius died on May 15, 1944. After his death, the metropolitan of Leningrad and Novgorod, Alexius (+April 17, 1970) became patriarch. After Stalin's death in 1953, he uttered the following words: „The great leader of our nation has passed away... We, who unite in prayer for him cannot remain silent that he was always good-willed and sensitive to the needs of our Church. He fulfilled all our requests... He has done a lot of good through our government for our Church with the power of his high, useful and good authority...”⁴⁰

In the sixties there was a new wave of anti-religious activity of the government and the party. Already in 1960, the communists initiated a new anti-religious campaign, sentencing priests and hierarchs. In the years 1960 – 1963, about 10,000 Orthodox churches were closed.⁴¹ On November 25 and 26, 1963, the „Ideological Commission at the Central Committee of the Party” met in Moscow. In the main paper, the ideologue of the party Leonid Ilyichov pointed to the „alarming” facts: „40 million Soviet citizens practice religious worship, almost 60% of children are secretly baptized.” Vladimir Nikodem, a Moscow metropolitan who was at the time in Rome, explained: „Intensification of anti-clerical

³⁹ J. Jarco, *Życie i działalność Rosyjskiego Kościoła Prawosławnego*, Referat patriarchy Moskiewskiego i całej Rusi Pimena, „Życie i Myśl” 28 (1978), no. 294, pp. 109-114.

⁴⁰ J. Mackiewicz, *W cieniu Krzyża*, Londyn 1986, p. 98.

⁴¹ G. J. Pelica, *Prześladowania...*, p. 30.

propaganda does not mean religious persecution, gentlemen, it is a free discussion, it can be said that it is a dialogue on the ideological and cultural plane. Persecution of religion is something completely different. Persecution happens when state authorities are issuing orders directed against believers, and that has never happened in the Soviet Union.”⁴²

Anti-religious and atheist propaganda developed in the USSR regardless of the conciliatory moves of the Orthodox Church. Just on the eve of the revolution, Lenin declared: „In the revolution, I do not care only about Russia, Russia is only an intermediate stage in the march of the world revolution to win the whole world... I prefer a millionaire or capitalist who denies God to a peasant or worker who believes in God... From today on we will have no mercy for anyone and we will destroy everything to build our temple on these ruins.”⁴³

The main purpose of the anti-religious propaganda was to arouse interest in the issue of religion, to remove „old” religious views and to „scientifically” justify the „new” ones. The main path to achieve this task led through: announcing the separation of Church and State (already in October 1917), taking away the right from churches and all religious associations to own property (January 1918), constitutional guaranteeing of freedom of anti-religious propaganda while prohibiting „propaganda of religion” (1925), and carrying on a systematic and consistent fight against manifestations of religiosity in all environments and social groups.⁴⁴ Relevant constitutional provisions regarding the ban on teaching religion to young people, and guaranteeing the freedom of anti-religious activities, found their place in the constitutions of: 1918, 1936 (called „Stalinist”, and associated with the period of Great Terror 1936 – 1937), and 1977. The theme of civil rights and duties, including those relating to the freedom of conscience, is not mentioned only in the constitution of January 31, 1924. The Constitution of October 7, 1977 guaranteed „freedom of conscience, that is, the right to profess any religion or no religion, to perform religious cults or conduct atheistic propaganda” (Article 52). The Constitution forbade the raising antagonisms

⁴² J. Mackiewicz, *Watykan w cieniu czerwonej gwiazdy*, Londyn 1986, pp. 34-35.

⁴³ S. Labo, *Zamach na papieża w świetle Fatimy i w cieniu jednej rewolucji*, Rzym 1983, p. 183.

⁴⁴ *Walka z religią w Rosji*, „Prąd” 20 (1933), vol. 24, p. 42; S. Wyszyński, *Nowe metody walki religijnej w Rosji Sowieckiej*, „Ateneum Kapłańskie” (1933), vol. 31, pp. 159-165; *Co się dzieje w Bolszewii?*, „Prąd” 23 (1936), vol. 30, pp. 38-39; *Męczeństwo kapłanów katolickich w Bolszewii*, pp. 44-45.

and inter-faith disputes and hostility to faith or atheism, stressing the necessity of separation between state and church as well as school and church.⁴⁵

On January 13, 1918, by virtue of a decree, the Churches were deprived of all property and rights. Soon, religious marriages were forbidden and the family was found to be a relic because it prevented the woman from taking up a job, which was useful for the state. Zlata Lilina, who was head of education in Petrograd, demanded that all children be “nationalized” and released from the influence of the family and the Orthodox Church. Beginning with 1923, planned anti-religious activity developed. The „League of the Godless” was created with Emilian Jaroslowski (Gubelman) at the head, which since 1929 was called “The League of the Militant Godless.” Jaroslowski published a magazine **Bezbozhnik** (Godless) (weekly, published 1925 – 1930) and a monthly **Antireligioznik**. The League organized courses, created museums of atheism, and antireligious corners in cultural centers. The next chairman, Lazar Kaganovich, revived the League. Attempts were made to replace religious needs with the cult of matter, industry and technology. In addition to founding “Godless” groups, they also invented a new religious language, showing everything that was connected with faith in a negative light. Faith was defined as superstition, ignorance, backwardness, and reactionary thinking.⁴⁶

Until 1938, the most belligerent and active activists of the **Bezbozhnik** were given several thousand rings with the inscription: „religion is an opium for the people.” It was a kind of remuneration and distinction of the most committed activists.⁴⁷

Already in 1922, the publishing house „Ateist” was founded, which focused on publishing magazines, brochures and anti-religious posters. Fighting religious faith there were publications such as: **Atheist** (1922 – 1930), **Militant Atheism** (1931), and after the war: **Science and Religion** (1959), **Man and the World** (1965). The **Bezbozhnik** magazine was published in different versions for a specific target audience. In Ukraine, for example, **Wojowniczy Bezwirnyk** appeared, in Belarus – **Bezbozhnik of Belarus**, and also **Bezbozhnik**

⁴⁵ Por. N. Werth, *Państwo przeciw społeczeństwu*, in: *Czarna księga komunizmu. Zbrodnie, terror, prześladowania*, ed. S. Courtois i inni, Warszawa 1999, p. 180.

⁴⁶ A. Kozłowski, *Stan religii chrześcijańskiej w Rosji Sowieckiej*, in: *Bolszewizm*, Lublin 1938, pp. 64-67.

⁴⁷ G. J. Pelica, *Prześladowania chrześcijan w Sowietach*, „Nowy Przegląd Wszechpolski” 1 (1994/1995), no. 8–9, p. 28.

u Stanka – intended for workers; for the kolkhozniks, **Dieriewieńskij Bezbozhnik** was issued, and **Junyje Bezbozhnik** was addressed to the youth.

The theater, film and radio were also used to fight the church. In 1928, the theater „Ateist” was active in Leningrad. It started the fight against religion on Good Friday with a performance offending Jesus Christ. For the next two years, the theater staged 305 performances, attended by 143,000 viewers. At the initiative of the League of Godless, anti-religious films were shot, such as „Opium”, „Juda”, „Tiomnoje carstwo”, „Kriest and mauzer”, or „Rozbityje gods”. Radio broadcasted godless programs in fourteen languages.⁴⁸

Atheist and anti-religious propaganda developed throughout the interwar period. This was especially true of the five-year 1932-1937, referred to as the last five-years of religion in the USSR. This propaganda most often used slogans such as: „The Church oppress knowledge, burns inventions”, „Fairy tales told by the Church do not exist”, „Religion is opium for the nation”, „Religion is poison. Protect your children”, „Only Christ stands between us and the world revolution” (Stalin), „Monks are the agents of the tsar”, etc.⁴⁹

The communist program of raising children and youth in atheism, without God, was an attack on all believers, because it impacted the future of any religion in Russia. As it was rightly written, Stalin did not differentiate between religions, when on May 6, 1937, in an appeal to pioneers, he wrote: „You must be careful not to be overwhelmed by foreign influences, especially religious influences. Who is godless, is a true revolutionary and a true communist. If, however, you think about God, you commit treason against the revolution and betray communist dictatorship. I am godless myself and have come to a conclusion that communism and godlessness are stages on the way to true socialism.”⁵⁰

After the Second World War, this propaganda extended to new communist countries. In 1949, a conference of high-ranking communist officers from Eastern European countries was held in Karlovy Vary, devoted to religious propaganda. It was headed by the Soviet Foreign Minister Valerian Zorin.⁵¹

⁴⁸ R. Dzwonkowski, *Kościół katolicki w ZSRR 1917–1939. Zarys historii*, Lublin 1997, pp. 84–99.

⁴⁹ S. Wyszynski, *Nowe metody walki religijnej w Rosji Sowieckiej*, „Ateneum Kapłańskie” (1933), vol. 31, pp. 159-165.

⁵⁰ After: P. Stopniak, *Cerkiew rosyjska wobec komunizmu*, in: *Bolszewizm*, p. 55.

⁵¹ S. Labo, *Zamach na papieża w świetle Fatimy i w cieniu jednej rewolucji*, p. 224.

The effects of such anti-religious activity were different. Many strengthened their faith and gave testimony to the truth. For others, „Catholicism equated with anti-Semitism, fascism, backwardness, fanaticism and all anti-progressive and anti-cultural phenomena.”⁵²

The ideology of the communist Soviet Russia increasingly played the role of „para-religion”, imitating – apart from the idealistic content of the doctrine – also religious practices: services (party meetings), processions (marches), or solemn feasts (festivities and holidays). A well-known Russian thinker, Nikolai Berdyaev, said: „Leninism-Marxism has nothing to do with classical Marxism anymore. Russian communism is a distortion of the Russian messianic idea. The light from the East incarnated in it is to illuminate the darkness of the bourgeois night of the West. (...) Communism is a Russian phenomenon, regardless of Marxist ideology.”⁵³

The persecution of believers and the material destruction of the Church were aimed at the final victory of communist atheism. The communists themselves said that since 1938 about 14,000 temples were closed. According to their statistics, by mid-1936 about 42,800 priests were murdered or deported.⁵⁴

In June 1939, Stalin said that „the neutrality towards religion cannot be maintained. The Communist Party must continue its struggle against the propagators of religious absurdities, against the clergy who poison religious masses” (Pravda, June 21, 1939). Similar persecutions included the new communist countries after the war. In Lithuania, all Catholic publications were liquidated, as well as religious institutions. Priests were not allowed to work in schools and hospitals. In the years 1940 – 1941 and 1945 – 1956, 342 priests (about 30% of the entire Catholic clergy of Lithuania) together with 4 bishops and 200,000 Lithuanians were sent to camps in Siberia and Central Asia. During the rule of Stalin about 125 churches were closed in Lithuania, while during the rule of Khrushchev, another 6. In Vilnius, 15 churches were turned into warehouses. The Church of St. Jacob was turned into a dance hall, an exhibition on „hygiene and household appliances” was organized in the church of St. Michael, the cathedral of St.

⁵² J. Zawieyski, *Droga katechumena*, after: A. Michnik, *Kościół, lewica, dialog*, Paryż 1977, p. 17; Cf. T. Sakiewicz, *Walka komunistów z polskim Kościołem*, „Gazeta Polska”, no. 35 (59), Sept. 1, 1994, pp. 7-10.

⁵³ M. Bierdiajew, *Rosyjska idea*, Warszawa 1999, pp. 260–261; Cf. R. Imos, *Wiara człowieka radzieckiego*, Zakład Wydawniczy „NOMOS”, Kraków 2006, pp. 357–423.

⁵⁴ P. Stopniak, *Cerkiew rosyjska wobec komunizmu*, p. 44; Cf. G. J. Pelica, *Sowiety w walce z Bogiem*, „Gazeta Polska” no. 16 (40), Apr. 21, 1994, pp. 8-9.

Stanislaus was changed into an art museum. In 1962, the church of St. Casimir in Vilnius was turned into a permanent atheist exhibition. In 1962, 40 Orthodox churches and 20 Catholic churches were closed in the Grodno region (BSSR). In the Brest district 108 Orthodox churches were liquidated in 1960-1961.⁵⁵

Of the 22,000 Orthodox churches existing in 1939, only 7,000 remained in 1959 in the Soviet Union. Out of 67 monasteries, 32 were left. In the letters from the USSR, the methods of fighting with religion were described: „They chase us in our own homes. They take children away from the faithful to bring them up in atheism. They lock us up in prisons. They transport us to camps. In gulags, they deprive us of medical care. Prisoners' letters are confiscated if the name of God is mentioned... If the faithful gather in forests, the militia sets dogs on us.”⁵⁶

Religious life went underground. Teaching religion in schools was forbidden as well as home upbringing in a religious spirit. Even the contact of youth under 18 with clergy was considered a criminal act. It was officially announced that a person can consciously choose faith only after they turn 18. However, this did not prevent the authorities from spreading aggressive and primitive anti-religious propaganda among children and youth. At that time even cemeteries were liquidated so that they would not remind people about the past of religion with religious symbols.⁵⁷

3. Church defends man

The pontificate of John XXIII was assessed as a turning point in the modern history of the Church. „For the first time there appeared – at the head – an attempt to change the optics, an attempt to overcome the attitude that all issues of the world and the world above were evaluated only from one point of view: the interest of the Church as an institution which in advance identifies own interest with the interest of humanity.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *Kościół na Litwie*, ed. Głosy, Poznań 1985, p. 8.

⁵⁶ M. Johns, *Siedemdziesiąt lat zła*, in: *Sowietskij Sojuz*, Nowy Jork 1988, pp. 49-50.

⁵⁷ A. Kubajak, *Sybir i Syberia w dziejach narodu polskiego*, Wydawnictwo Kubajak, Krzeszowice 2008, p. 90.

⁵⁸ L. Kołakowski, *Jan XXIII – granice Rzymu i granice chrześcijaństwa*, in: *Pochwała niekonsekwencji*, vol. 3, Warszawa 1989, pp. 63-64.

The Second Vatican Council continued under Pope Paul VI. In October 1965, at the fourth session of the Council, Bishop Carli of Segni, along with 450 other Fathers of the Council, handed the Pope a letter formulating the postulate to condemn communism by the Council. Paul VI, by virtue of his powers, did not allow the letter to be published and handed Carli's text to a commission. The communist *Życie Warszawy* stated: „It was formally argued: this Council does not condemn anyone or anything. Unofficially the participants talked quietly among themselves: such condemnation cannot do anything, only harm can be done.”⁵⁹

During this Council Session, in September 1965, the Primate of Poland gave an interesting speech. He stated, among others: „The rights of an individual are completely subordinated to the aims of the revolution; even considered in this respect, they are not permanent. In fact, these laws depend entirely upon the will of the ruling class, which subordinated the law by force. Diamat undermines and rejects all permanent and continuous norms of law and acts. In a world in which it rules, there is neither social order nor eternal principles, nor unchangeable ideas. The idea of law gives way to the principle that the end justifies the means, including the means of force and violence. When the goal is achieved, the means are abandoned because they have lost their reason. Today they can be used as tools of struggle, tomorrow they will be rejected. The same applies to arrangements, pacts and conventions adopted for tactical or strategic reasons. They do not affect the world of Diamat in any way, while the other side feels morally obligated. The agreement between the Church and a Diamat state obliges the Church, but in no way obliges the state when it has achieved its purpose, that is, it has subdued the Church. For Diamat, the reached agreement is only a practical means of neutralizing the opponent, but has no legal force. The adversary, that is, the Church, is obliged to honor her obligations. In this way, no agreement signed with any Diamat state secures the Church.”⁶⁰

During the pontificate of Paul VI, there was a further development of dialogue with the communists. On June 25, 1966 Archbishop Casaroli signed a pact between the Vatican and Yugoslavia in Belgrade. In this pact, the Holy See for the first time definitively recognized the legal and moral foundations of communist legislation. On January 30, 1967, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Nikolai Podgorny paid a visit to the Pope in Rome. On March 29, 1971, the

⁵⁹ I. Krasicki, *Na IV Sesji Soboru Watykańskiego*, „Życie Warszawy”, Nov. 12 (1965).

⁶⁰ After: A. Besancon, *Pomieszczenie języków*, bmv, 1989, ed. WSP, p. 89.

president of Yugoslavia Tito and his wife Jovanka were guests of the Pope. It was the first official visit of the head of a communist state to the Vatican (Podgorny's visit was not formally official, there were no normal diplomatic relations between Moscow and the Vatican.) At the same time, at a press conference in the Vatican, spokesman for the Holy See, prof. Federico Alessandrini, commenting on the Vatican's accession to the SALT arrangements, said: „The contacts between the Vatican and the Soviets do not mean that the Holy See is changing its attitude to communism or that it favors communism in free countries.”⁶¹.

At Easter 1967, Paul VI proclaimed the Encyclical „*Populorum Progressio*”. He claimed in it among others: „Every form of social action involves some doctrine; and the Christian rejects that which is based on a materialistic and atheistic philosophy, namely one which shows no respect for a religious outlook on life, for freedom or human dignity. So long as these higher values are preserved intact, however, the existence of a variety of professional organizations and trade unions is permissible. Variety may even help to preserve freedom and create friendly rivalry.” (PP, 39). The Pope clearly avoided direct confrontation with communism. In general audience in January 1973 he said: „... in a country with great religious traditions there is a ban on writing God's name with a capital letter. An author who did not want to give in to this ban had to publish his book in Paris. It gives food for thought, such stubbornness in undermining the roots of the Divine Name.”⁶².

At the same time, in his letter on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the encyclical ‘*Rerum Novarum*’, which begins with the words ‘*Octogesima Adveniens*’ of May 14, 1971, Paul VI recalled the Church's teaching about communism: “Therefore the Christian (...) cannot adhere to the Marxist ideology, to its atheistic materialism, to its dialectic of violence and to the way it absorbs individual freedom in the collectivity. (...). While, through the concrete existing form of Marxism, one can distinguish these various aspects and the questions they pose for the reflection and activity of Christians, it would be illusory and dangerous to reach a point of forgetting the intimate link which radically binds them together, to accept the elements of Marxist analysis without recognizing their relationships with ideology, and to enter into the practice of class struggle and its Marxist interpretations, while failing to note the kind of totalitarian and violent society to which this process leads.” (OA, 26, 34).

⁶¹ J. Mackiewicz, *Watykan...*, pp. 77-108.

⁶² J. Mackiewicz, *Watykan...*, pp. 142-143.

On October 16, 1978, the pontificate of John Paul II, the first Pope from a communist country, began. In the encyclical „*Laborem exercens*” of September 14, 1981, he stated that „Marxism (...) professes to act as the spokesman for the working class and the worldwide proletariat (...). In accordance with the principle of „the dictatorship of the proletariat”, the groups that as political parties follow the guidance of Marxist ideology aim by the use of various kinds of influence, including revolutionary pressure, to win a monopoly of power in each society, in order to introduce the collectivist system into it by eliminating private ownership of the means of production.” (LE, 11). The fundamental assessment of Marxism was made by John Paul II in response to social issues posed by the so-called theology of liberation.

Liberation theology gave birth to great hopes in Latin America, but the radicalization of the slogans was too far-reaching, which made it inevitable to put it to evaluation. In a letter dated October 10, 1977, Paul VI convened for the 12th of October, 1978 the Third General Assembly of the Latin American Episcopate, asking for it to take place in Puebla, in the heart of Mexico. The preliminary work ended with a consultative document elaborated along with national episcopal conferences after extensive consultation with priests and faithful. The theme set by the Pope was „Evangelization in Latin America today and in the future.” John Paul II changed the dates of the conference and, on the occasion of his trip to Mexico, opened the session with the inauguration speech. He warned against „a new reading of the Gospel resulting more from theoretical speculation than from genuine reflections on the word of God,” a reading that Jesus perceives as „instigator of revolution” and „revolutionary.” He recalled the words of the catechesis of John Paul I (of September 20, 1978) “... it is wrong to state that political, economic and social liberation coincides with salvation in Jesus Christ, that the *Regnum Dei* is identified with the *Regnum hominis*.” (Puebla, 9, 18).

The General Assembly prepared a final document which was approved by John Paul II in March 1979. The document says that the Church should listen to the „choked cry that comes from millions of people demanding full liberation.” The document is written in a decisive form, accusing ideologies that distort the image of man, condemning the violation of human dignity and demanding commitment to end injustices.

Liberation theology was subjected to a fundamental assessment in two documents of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In 1984, the „Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation” was published. It reminds us that „Liberation is first and foremost liberation from the radical slavery of sin.

(...). The aspiration for justice often finds itself the captive of ideologies which hide or pervert its meaning, and which propose to people struggling for their liberation goals which are contrary to the true purpose of human life. They propose ways of action which imply the systematic recourse to violence (...). "The thought of Marx is such a global vision of reality that all data received from observation and analysis are brought together in a philosophical and ideological structure, which predetermines the significance and importance to be attached to them. The ideological principles come prior to the study of the social reality." (ITW, 2, 18, 62).

In 1986, the "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation" was published. It states that „the quest for freedom and the aspiration to liberation, which are among the principal signs of the times in the modern world, have their first source in the Christian heritage. This remains true even in places where they assume erroneous forms and even oppose the Christian view of man and his destiny." (ICHW, 5).

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