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## **Radio Free Europe’s Polish Broadcasting Service vis-à-vis the Millennium and Church—State Relations (1965–1966)\***

### **Abstract**

This article presents an analysis of selected broadcasts by Radio Free Europe’s Polish Broadcasting Service on the 1966 celebration of the Millennium of the Christianisation of Poland, against the background of the relationship between the Church and state. The source material consists of programmes available online on the Radio Liberty website and articles published in the monthly magazine *Na Antenie/On Air* from 1965 to 1966. The author’s intention is to show the role and meaning of radio broadcasts vis-à-vis the Millennium Poloniae celebrations, which were of a religious and political nature. The radio station, under the direction of Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, defended the authority of Primate Stefan Wyszyński against communist propaganda, while serving as the only source of information for audiences in the country with respect to the Novena initiated in 1956, which culminated in the Millennium. Aside from RFE’s political objectives, the broad-

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casts served to counter the propaganda and the campaign against the Church and to break the media monopoly in the People's Republic of Poland. Having a formative and integrative character, they also contributed to the preservation of the listeners' religious identity.

## Keywords

Millennium of the Christianisation of Poland, Radio Free Europe, church-state 1965–1966

## 1. Introduction

“The Primate implemented the guidelines from the Polish Episcopate masterfully, so that the Millennium of Poland would be fundamentally religious,” wrote Maria Winowska to Jan Nowak-Jeziorański.<sup>1</sup> This approach resulted in attacks on Primate Stefan Wyszyński himself, in fierce propaganda efforts by the communist regime against the celebrations, and in an anti-Church campaign in the press.<sup>2</sup> The Polish celebrations were held in a climate of fierce political confrontation and an “anti-millennium” campaign, conducted by the Communist government.<sup>3</sup>

In principle, the statements uttered on the Polish service of Radio Free Europe regarding the Millennium of Poland's Christianisation and the relationship between the Church and state, were well-balanced<sup>4</sup>, even if the events were

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<sup>1</sup> J. Nowak-Jeziorański, M. Winowska, *Korespondencja 1955–1989*, ZN im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 2016, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> A. Dudek, *Państwo i Kościół w Polsce*, Kraków 1975, pp. 181–211; M. Mazur, *Polityczne kampanie prasowe w okresie rządów Władysława Gomułki*, LTN, Lublin 2004, pp. 38–100; A. Adamski, *Tysiąc kłamstw na tysiąclecie. „Trybuna Ludu” o Kościele w latach 1965–1966*, „Biuletyn Edukacji Medialnej” 1 (2011), pp. 127–145; R. Knyspel-Kopeć, „Nie my prosimy o wybaczenie”. PZPR wobec jubileuszu milenijnego w akcji propagandowej przeciwko „Orędzium” biskupów polskich w świetle „Głosu Koszalińskiego”, in: S. Ligarski, R. Łatka (eds.), *Oficjalna prasa w PRL*, IPN, Szczecin—Warsaw 2020, pp. 323–336.

<sup>3</sup> B. Noszczak, *Antymilenium. Konflikt państwa z Kościołem*, IPN, Warsaw 2020.

<sup>4</sup> RFE's mission in Poland, as elsewhere, was never to spark a revolution, but to “keep hope alive and maintain links with the West [...] Its role [...] would be to publicise, comment on and thus help expand the signs of genuine, newly emerging opposition”. A. Johnson Ross, *Radio Wolna Europa i Radio Swoboda. Lata CIA i późniejsze*, Kolegium Europy Wschodniej im. J. Nowaka-Jeziorańskiego, Wrocław 2014, p. 260; “[...] The goals set by the Broadcasting Service can be divided into immediate and long-term. The former arose from the current

reported with clear support for the activities of the Church under the leadership of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. RFE played a major role in the period when the Polish Episcopate had no voice in the mass media. Nowak-Jeziorański wrote: "The concentrated fury of the anti-church campaign was aimed at the Primate, and by extension at bishops, especially those more rebellious. The cardinal was harassed not only by repeated assaults in the press, on the radio and television; we knew that he was flooded with anonymous letters, libellous, and all sorts of fake news was sent to priests, while the authorities had no scruples about openly slandering him."<sup>5</sup> Jeziorański candidly stated: "He never dreamt of playing a political role and showed no ambition to do so. [...] The Primate's strong personality and his moral authority meant more than the special powers granted to him by the Pope."<sup>6</sup> Jeziorański was well aware that Wyszyński was "a guardian of the Church's unity" and "he had to be defended at all costs."<sup>7</sup>

Besides being perceptibly religious in nature, RFE broadcasts were also political, national and patriotic, following the Radio's agenda. They represented the effort on behalf of "enslaved societies to maintain their spiritual independence and national identity, to stand by their religion". RFE's mission was "to report objectively and fairly on important viewpoints that were not necessarily concordant with the official opinions uttered by the government".<sup>8</sup> RFE corrected errors, debunked whispered criticisms, conspiracies, schemes and reprimands, and rectified erroneous translations and misrepresentations. For instance, there was controversy surrounding the Bishops' *Pastoral Letter* of 1965 published in *Forum*, since the translation that was provided distorted its sense. Drawing attention to this misrepresentation, Stypułkowska referred to "the trick of omissions in the text."<sup>9</sup>

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situation and boiled down to direct and indirect responses to domestic and international events, while the latter were connected to the strategic priorities of the United States, seeking to win the rivalry against the Soviet Union without resorting to military action". R. Habielski, P. Machcewicz, *Rozgłoszenia Polska Radia Wolna Europa w latach 1950–1975*, vol. 1, Wyd. Ossolineum, Wrocław 2018, pp. 12–13.

<sup>5</sup> J. Nowak-Jeziorański, *Wojna w eterze*, Znak, Kraków 2006, pp. 435–436.

<sup>6</sup> J. Nowak-Jeziorański, *Wojna w eterze*, p. 436.

<sup>7</sup> J. Nowak-Jeziorański, *Strategia Prymasa*, „Na Antenie” 1 (1966), p. 1; J. Nowak-Jeziorański, *Wojna w eterze*, Znak, Kraków 2006, p. 437.

<sup>8</sup> R. Habielski, P. Machcewicz, *Rozgłoszenia Polska Radia Wolna Europa w latach 1950–1975*, vol. 1, Wyd. Ossolineum, Wrocław 2018, p. 13, 270.

<sup>9</sup> A. Stypułkowska, *Jeszcze o orędziu biskupów*, „Na Antenie” 36 (1966), p. 6.

The celebrations of the *Sacrum Poloniae Millennium* attracted the attention of the whole political and religious world. Not only did the celebrations take place in Częstochowa, but also in Rome, Paris, London, Chicago, Montreal and other cities. The significance and prominence of the event was highlighted in broadcasts in various languages, and statements by well-known figures from the world of culture and science.<sup>10</sup>

Chaplain of the Radio Free Europe's Polish Broadcasting Service, Rev. Tadeusz Kirschke<sup>11</sup> stated, in a letter: "If there is a matter that frightens us, it is mainly the fact that the West German press reports most extensively on the religious celebrations of the Millennium in Poland, while the rest of the Western press has generally been silent about them, and it is awkward for us to constantly quote the German press."<sup>12</sup> Kirschke added that the Polish section of RFE was interested in "the tiniest details of the harassment carried out by the regime to discredit the millennium celebrations in different diocesan cities [...] We are concerned even with petty, monkey-like mischiefs, which superficially and in isolation have no special significance, but in the summary we will one day make of the entire millennium year, they will constitute a serious issue heavily incriminating the regime."<sup>13</sup> He reported cases when journalists and foreign correspondents were threatened. Summoned to the press office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they were "advised" to remain discreet in their "coverage of religious ceremonies", since "any careless information is harmful to Poland and may have unpleasant consequences for the authors."<sup>14</sup> Therefore, there was hardly any news on the Millennium Poloniae in the general press and Catholic newspapers. "The terrorised", as Winowska referred to them, "kept their mouths shut". At the same time, "folk piety" and the peregrination of Our Lady of Częstochowa were ridiculed in the state-run press.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Examples include the speech by the US President on the millennial celebrations and Prof. Oskar Halecki's opening lecture at the inauguration of the Millennium Year in Rome.

<sup>11</sup> E. Kristanova, *The Religious Broadcasts of Rev. Tadeusz Kirschke for Radio Free Europe's Broadcasting Service*, in: *Politics and the Media in Poland from the 19th to the 21st Centuries. Selected Issues*, eds. by E. Kristanova, R. Habielski, M. Such-Pyrgiel, Brill, Leiden—Boston 2024, pp. 115–128.

<sup>12</sup> J. Nowak-Jeziorański, M. Winowska, *Korespondencja 1955–1989*, ZN im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 2016, p. 158.

<sup>13</sup> J. Nowak-Jeziorański, M. Winowska, *Korespondencja 1955–1989*, p. 159.

<sup>14</sup> J. Nowak-Jeziorański, M. Winowska, *Korespondencja 1955–1989*, p. 159.

<sup>15</sup> J. Nowak-Jeziorański, M. Winowska, *Korespondencja 1955–1989*, pp. 161–162.

Radio Free Europe's Polish Broadcasting Service cared about the reliability of the coverage and verified any information that it received. The Catholic writer Maria Winowska, who collaborated with Jeziorański and Kirschke, "kept a close eye on the press and private echoes."<sup>16</sup> Both Polish and foreign newspapers were scrutinised, with particular focus on Catholic titles (including those published by the PAX Association).

## 2. Methodology

The choice of the research topic for this article is justified by the evident shortage of studies on the coverage of millennial celebrations by Radio Free Europe's Polish Broadcasting Service within the subject literature available.<sup>17</sup> The publications to-date, which present a variety of issues raised on air and representing the authors' varying perspectives, include source editions<sup>18</sup>, studies<sup>19</sup>, memoirs<sup>20</sup> and glossaries.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> J. Nowak-Jeziorański, M. Winowska, *Korespondencja 1955–1989*, p. 188.

<sup>17</sup> A. Borzym, J. Sadowski (eds.), *Radio Wolna Europa w polityce polskiej i zachodniej*, SWS, Warsaw 2009; M. Wielopolska-Szymura, *Rozgłoszenie BBC World Service, Radio France Internationale i Voice of America w kom; unikowaniu międzynarodowym. Od propagandy do dyplomacji publicznej*, Wyd. UŚ, Katowice 2019.

<sup>18</sup> R. Habiński, *Audycje historyczne i kulturalne Rozgłośni Polskiej Radia Wolna Europa w latach 1952–1975*, Wyd. Ossolineum, Wrocław 2019.

<sup>19</sup> L. Gawlikowski, P. Machcewicz, „*Monachijska menażeria*”. *Walka z Radiem Wolna Europa 1950–1989*, IPN, Warszawa 2007; A. Puddington, *Rozgłoszenie wolności. Triumf Radia Wolna Europa i Radia Swoboda w zimnej wojnie*, WN UMK, Toruń 2009; K.W. Tatarowski, *Literatura i pisarze w programie Rozgłośni Polskiej Radia Wolna Europa*, Universitas, Kraków 2005; Wejs-Milewska V., *Radio Wolna Europa na emigracyjnych szlakach pisarzy: Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, Tadeusz Nowakowski, Roman Palester, Czesław Straszewicz, Tymon Terlecki*, Arcana, Kraków 2007; V. Wejs-Milewska, *Wykluczeni—wychodźstwo, kraj. Studia z antropologii emigracji polskiej XX wieku (idee, osobowości, instytucje)*, Wyd. UwB, Białystok 2012; M. Wielopolska-Szymura, *Rozgłoszenie BBC World Service, Radio France Internationale i Voice of America w komunikowaniu międzynarodowym. Od propagandy do dyplomacji publicznej*, Wyd. UŚ, Katowice 2019.

<sup>20</sup> A. Grabowska A. (ed.), *Wspomnienia pracowników Rozgłośni Radia Wolna Europa*, Rytm, Warsaw 2002; Z. Najder, RWE 1982–1987. *Zapiski dyrektora*, „Zeszyty Historyczne” 153 (2005), pp. 200–225; K. Zamorski, *Pod anteną Radia Wolna Europa*, Wers, Poznań 1995.

<sup>19</sup> L. Gawlikowski, *Pracownicy Radia Wolna Europa*, PAN, Warsaw 2015.

There are also smaller publications that focus upon less commonly discussed issues<sup>20</sup>, for instance, an article describing the closure of Mieczysław Grydzewski's monthly supplement to the London-based *Wiadomości/News*, entitled *Na Antenie/On Air*. The supplement was published between 1963 and 1969 and reported on "the most important RFE broadcasts."<sup>21</sup>

The study includes programmes on the millennium celebrations between 1965 and 1966, which can be accessed online through the Radio's service. Unfortunately, the collection is incomplete and represents a selection of broadcasts by Radio Free Europe's Polish Broadcasting Service. The source material was researched by using the two keywords: "Millennium" and "Wyszyński". Selected episodes of the serial broadcasts *Archiwum PRL/Archives of the People's Republic of Poland* and *Kawalkada czasu/Cavalcade of Time* were also included.

Besides news broadcasts, the results also included a variety of other genres, such as commentaries, talks, reports, discussions, interviews, etc. While some were of good quality, others proved extremely difficult to listen to, due to static, extraneous noise and interference. Some were also duplicated under different captions. In addition, the analysis was hampered by numerous errors in the explanatory notes. Only after reviewing all the audio files from 1965–1966 available under the keywords mentioned, was it possible to gain a comprehensive overview of the subject matter.

As a supplement to the audio sources, press materials with respect to the celebrations, printed in the monthly *Na Antenie/On Air* between 1965 and 1966, were also included. The most useful research approach proved to be media content analysis (including press content analysis), and literature analysis and

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<sup>20</sup> E.K. Czaczkowska, *Audycje Rozgłośni Polskiej Radia Wolna Europa o ks. Jerzym Popiełuszcze od porwania do pogrzebu (19 X–3 XI 1984 roku)*, „Kultura, Media, Teologia” 46 (2021), pp. 96–115; K. Kamińska-Chełmniak, *Adam Ciołkosz i Radio Wolna Europa w świetle jego korespondencji z Janem Nowakiem-Jeziorańskim*, „Studia Medioznawcze” (2018), No 3, pp. 151–159; P. Machcewicz, *Operacja „Olcha”*. Władysław Bartoszewski, *Radio Wolna Europa i Służba Bezpieczeństwa*, „Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość” 2 (2006), pp. 115–142; P. Szwacha, *Tematyka wsi i ruchu ludowego na antenie Rozgłośni Polskiej Radia Wolna Europa—zarys problematyki*, in: E. Jaska, P. Wiench (eds.), *Media o wsi. Media na wsi*, SGGW, Warsaw 2017, pp. 81–91; A. Trudzik, *Między Wspólnym Rynkiem a Wspólnotą Brytyjską—Wielka Brytania w „Kalejdoskopie” emitowanym na falach RWE (1960–1966)*, „Studia Europaea Gnesnensia” 1–2 (2010), pp. 95–117.

<sup>21</sup> R. Moczkoan, „*Na Antenie*” i „*Wiadomości*”: *okoliczności rozpoczęcia i zakończenia współpracy*, „Archiwum Emigracji. Studia—Szkice—Dokumenty” ½ (2015), pp. 47–76.

literary criticism, which were employed to analyse the available and relevant literature, memoirs and letters.

RFE journalists presented the millennial subject in a religious and political context. One example of this was the coverage of Pope Paul VI's sermon delivered in Rome on the Millennium Poloniae, and the contrasting broadcast of the speech held in Poznań by Władysław Gomułka, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party, to mark the millennium of the Polish state. While the Church celebrations were held in a solemn tone, the replayed (and sometimes read) speeches of party dignitaries featured distinct propaganda overtones. On the other hand, successive anniversary broadcasts recalling the year 1966 were of a more informal nature.

### 3. Chronological caesurae

Historians have expressed different opinions with regards to how long the preparations for the millennium celebrations lasted. Andrzej Paczkowski, in an episode of the series *The Most Recent History of Poland/Najnowsza historia Polski* (on the relationships between the Church and state), argued that the novena began in 1956 and lasted 10 years (*The Most Recent History of Poland/Najnowsza historia Polski*, 1995). Jan Żaryn nominated the text of *The Pledge of Jasna Góra/Śluby jasnogórskie* of 26 August 1956 as “the basis for the programme of the Great Novena, ending with the Millennium Year (1957–1966).”<sup>22</sup> The Primate initiated *The Pledge* in parishes across Poland on 5 May 1957, continuing annually in August at Jasna Góra for nine years. Each year the faithful renewed *The Pledge* on the first Sunday after the feast of 3 May. The novena was accompanied by a pastoral programme addressed to the entire Polish society.<sup>23</sup> In his sermon during the 1966 millennial celebrations in Rome, Paul VI also referred to the nine-year preparation by Poles for the occasion (*Speech of Pope Paul VI / Przemówienie papieża Pawła VI*, 1966).

The years 1965–1966 marked a difficult period in the relationship between the Church and state due to *The Pastoral Letter of the Polish Bishops to their German Brothers / Orędzie biskupów polskich do biskupów niemieckich* and the

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<sup>22</sup> J. Żaryn, *Państwo—Kościół katolicki w Polsce 1956–1989. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Bellona, Warsaw 2010, p. 40.

<sup>23</sup> A. Micewski, *Kościół—Państwo 1945–1989*, WSzIP, Warsaw 1994, p. 42.

Millennium of Christianity. This study considers these events as a separate chronological caesura. As reported by RFE in 1965, during the fourth session of the Second Vatican Council, Polish bishops took the opportunity to invite members of the episcopates from different countries to the millennium celebrations in Poland (*Przebaczamy i prosimy o przebaczenie/We forgive and ask for forgiveness*, 1990; Żaryn, 2004, 2010). In this way, the invitation gave the matter international prominence a year earlier. RFE noted that “the beginning of the millennium celebrations of the Poland’s Christianisation coincided with a landmark event in the history of the Church—the end of the Second Vatican Council” (*Special Programme/Program specjalny*, 1991). As a result, on 13 November 1965, Pope Paul VI referred to the upcoming celebrations.

The communist authorities reacted to *The Pastoral Letter Orędzie biskupów* (one of 56 invitations sent) by launching a propaganda campaign.<sup>24</sup> Following the persecution of the Polish Episcopate, Primate Stefan Wyszyński was refused his passport and could not participate in the inauguration of the millennium celebrations held in Rome (*We forgive and ask for forgiveness/Przebaczamy i prosimy o przebaczenie*, 1990).

As the article reviews the events preceding the Millennium and the broadcasts on the subsequent anniversaries of the event, the chronology goes beyond the years 1965–1966.

#### **4. RFE’s Polish Broadcasting Service on millennium celebrations in Poland**

Preparations for the millennium celebrations were preceded by a peregrination of a copy of the painting depicting Our Lady of Częstochowa. RFE reported that the painting was consecrated by Pius XII in May 1957 and began to travel around Poland in August (*Archiwum PRL / Archives of the People’s Republic of Poland*). Between 1957 and 1965, it “travelled unrestrained” (*Przebaczamy i prosimy o przebaczenie / We Forgive and Ask For Forgiveness*, 1990). From the very beginning, the Great Novena was accompanied by a religious revival. There

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<sup>24</sup> M. Mazur, *Polityczne kampanie prasowe w okresie rządów Władysława Gomułki*, LTN, Lublin 2004, p. 37; B. Noszczak, *Nobel za Orędzie? List o Stanisława Wawryna SJ do prymasa Stefana Wyszyńskiego w sprawie możliwości przyznania Episkopatowi Polski Pokojowej Nagrody Nobla za wystosowanie Orędzia do biskupów niemieckich*, „Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość” 30 (2017), pp. 482–492.



were many local initiatives by priests and the lay faithful: masses, pilgrimages, meetings, marches and conferences.

The millennium celebrations were also announced during meetings that Wyszyński held abroad. RFE listeners learnt about a mass celebrated by Primate at Mariazell Basilica in Austria on 3 May 1964, and the medal of the Millennium of Poland's Christianisation presented to the youth there (*Holy Mass / Msza święta*, 1964). The celebrations were also heralded by the Archbishop of Wrocław, Bolesław Kominek, during an address to the Austrian Polish diaspora in Vienna on 12 June 1965 (*Przemówienie arcybiskupa Wrocławia Bolesława Kominka / Speech by the Archbishop of Wrocław Bolesław Kominek*, 1973). In addition to this, it can be concluded that the enormous organisational effort of the Polish diaspora largely integrated pro-independence and Polish communities. All these events were meticulously reported by RFE.

Between 1957 and 1966, the main celebrations of the Christianisation of Poland were preceded by religious preparations including the peregrination of a copy of Our Lady of Częstochowa around the country. Until 1965, the communists did not interfere with the religious celebrations, but in 1966, they began to confiscate the copy of Our Lady of Częstochowa and move it from place to place. Following the campaign against bishops to punish them for *The Pastoral Letter / Orędzie biskupów*, “a war was declared against the holy painting” (*We Forgive and Ask For Forgiveness / Przebaczymy i prosimy o przebaczenie*, 1990). As Witold Pronobis and Grzegorz Sołtysiak reported on RFE, the Citizen's Militia would lay ambushes on the designated routes, seize the painting and desecrate it. Then, the copy would be given to a church other than planned. During yet another militia operation, the copy was taken to Jasna Góra, “under strict orders that it should stay there” (*Archives of the People's Republic of Poland / Archiwum PRL*). After this peculiar “arrest” of the painting, the tenacious faithful carried on with the peregrination of the empty frame until September 1966.

RFE reported that, facing the anti-Church campaign against the Episcopate for *The Pastoral Letter Orędzie biskupów*, on 19 December 1965, Wyszyński responded “for the first time to the slanders and lies” (*We Forgive and Ask For Forgiveness / Przebaczymy i prosimy o przebaczenie*, 1990), deeming as unjustified, the allegation that the content of the letter had not been shown to the Communists. The Primate argued that, “It is not customary to publicise correspondence addressed to a specific person. We had no such obligation. Even if we wished to make it public, what would the censors do to it given it was their regular practice to make many amendments and deletions even in a regular

letter? Would the letter still be authentic then?” (*We Forgive and Ask For Forgiveness/Przebaczamy i prosimy o przebaczenie*, 1990).

RFE's coverage of the millennial celebrations was based on the principle of contradiction. The religious celebrations were promoted, but it also broadcast an almost 40-minute anti-Church speech by Władysław Gomułka, that the First Secretary of the Polish Workers' Party delivered during a demonstration in Poznań, on the occasion of the millennium (*Władysław Gomułka's Speech at the Demonstration Przemówienie Władysława Gomułki wygłoszone na manifestacji; Excerpts from Different Programmes/Fragmenty różnych programów*, 1969; *Discussion of the Round Table/Dyskusja Okrągłego Stołu*, 1966; *Władysław Gomułka's Speech on the Millennium/Przemówienie Władysława Gomułki poświęcone Milenium*, 1966). As the state-run celebrations were intended to play down the role of the religious festivities, two days after the Gniezno celebrations of 14 April 1966, the Communists organised a festival of the People's Army of Poland (*We forgive and ask for forgiveness/Przebaczamy i prosimy o przebaczenie*, 1990). The contrasting coverage of events on RFE stemmed from the Radio's political nature and the desire to reach large audiences that necessitated messages to be comprehensible and easy to interpret. A detailed and balanced criticism of Gomułka's speech in Poznań was provided in an episode of *Kawalkada czasu / Cavalcade of Time*, at that time hosted by Paweł Zaremba, and featuring General Marian Kukiel, Tadeusz Piszczkowski, Jan Tokarski and Józef Żmigrodzki. Assessing the speech, it was admitted that Gomułka was well prepared as regards historical knowledge, but this knowledge served to launch a vicious attack on Primate Wyszyński and the Episcopate (*Władysław Gomułka's Speech on the Millennium /Przemówienie Władysława Gomułki poświęcone Milenium*, 1966). Gomułka was reported to have exploited historical facts and traditions to praise the “socialist system” and the speech was compared to the “rasping of iron over glass” (*Kawalkada czasu/Cavalcade of Time* 1964–1974).

The tense relationships between the Church and state were confirmed in the coverage of the millennium celebrations on RFE (*Archives of the People's Republic of Poland/Archiwum PRL*). The inauguration took place on 14 April 1966 at Gniezno Cathedral, with a celebratory Mass held by Primate Wyszyński. Parts of the sermon and the chanting were replayed courtesy of two foreign participants who made private recordings (*Sacrum Poloniae Millenium: Jasna Góra Report/Sacrum Poloniae Millenium: Jasnogórski reportaż; Sacrum Poloniae Millenium. A Celebration Broadcast/Sacrum Poloniae Millenium. Audycja*

z okazji). RFE reported that the Communists went to great lengths to disrupt the inauguration by preparing a “great folk festival” to be held two days later so as to honour “the glorious anniversary of the crossing of the Oder and the Neisse by the People’s Army of Poland”. RFE sarcastically stated that, “The authors behind this provocation apparently sought, with dubious effect, to juxtapose the merits of the communist government for the new western border of Poland with the alleged plotting of the Polish Episcopate, which was dangerous for the permanence of this very border. The expression of the plotting was, obviously, the notorious letter from the Polish bishops to their German counterparts” (*Special Programme/Program specjalny*, 1991).

RFE noted that the day after the Gniezno festivities, an “alternative” state-run celebration was held, during which Gomułka attacked the Polish Episcopate in a speech broadcast on Polish radio and television. It gave him an opportunity to inform the nation that “the party has no intention of letting the Pope and foreign bishops enter Poland” (*Special Programme/Program specjalny*, 1991). According to RFE, Gomułka’s justification went as follows: “In response to the fact that the Episcopate has embarked on a large-scale political campaign that is detrimental to the Polish *raison d’état* and intertwines with the preparations for the Millennium of Poland’s Christianisation, the party has decided that it would be an expression of acceptance of this harmful policy if the government gave its consent to the arrival of the Pope and bishops from other countries” (*Władysław Gomułka’s Speech at the Demonstration/Przemówienie Władysława Gomułki wygłoszone na manifestacji*, 1966). These statements reveal a strong discrepancy as to how the Millennium was perceived by the authorities and Church dignitaries. The campaign against the hierarchical Church and the propaganda in the national media confirmed there was a battle for the souls of the participants, and attempts to replace religious ceremonies with state ones.

The communists did not allow Pope Paul VI and Western bishops to join the main celebrations in Częstochowa on 3 May. In the *Behind the Scenes / Za kulisami* section of the April 1966 issue of *Na Antenie/On Air*, under the headline *Against the Millennium Pilgrimage/Przeciwko pielgrzymkom milenijnym*, there is a note about the government’s decision to ban foreign pilgrims from attending the festivities, which was officially justified by organisational (“to avoid excessive crowding”) or technical problems. Moreover, the issuing of individual visas at the Polish border by Orbis travel agencies and LOT airlines was suspended, while foreign journalists and correspondents were also barred from attending the celebrations (*Behind the Scenes/Za kulisami*, 1966, p. 8).

The celebrations of Poland's Sacred Millennium held at the Jasna Góra Monastery in Częstochowa on 3 May 1966 were presided over by Karol Wojtyła, who was still the Archbishop of Kraków, not the Pope. Thus, while he was not a major focus for Radio Free Europe's Polish Broadcasting Service, he was already recognised for his teachings and active participation in the Second Vatican Council. In March 1946, he wrote a mystical poem called *Pieśń o Bogu ukrytym* (*Song of the Hidden God*), a creative reference to St. John of the Cross. Two years later, Wojtyła completed his studies and received a doctorate for his dissertation entitled *Problem wiary u św. Jana od Krzyża* (*The Doctrine of Faith in St. John of the Cross*). In 1951, he took leave to complete his habilitation thesis, for which he conducted a systematic study of the ethical thought in the works of the phenomenologist Max Scheler. On 12 December 1953, Wojtyła's habilitation thesis called *Ocena możliwości oparcia etyki chrześcijańskiej na założeniach systemu Maksa Schelera* (*Re-evaluation of the Possibility of Founding a Catholic Ethic on the Ethical System of Max Scheler*) was unanimously accepted by the Faculty of Theology at the Jagiellonian University. However, the Polish Communist authorities abolished the Faculty, thereby preventing Wojtyła from receiving the degree, an incident reported by Radio Free Europe's Polish Broadcasting Service (*Fakty, wydarzenia, opinie*, 1978). Wojtyła's other works included teachings on Christian sexual ethics articulated in *Miłość i Odpowiedzialność* (*Love and Responsibility*), a 1960 book published in Lublin, and a number of philosophical essays, e.g., *Personalizm tomistyczny* (*Thomistic Personalism*) and *O humanizmie św. Jana od Krzyża* (*On the Humanism in St. John of the Cross*). Wojtyła was also recognised for his journalistic work as he wrote for the Kraków-based Catholic periodicals *Znak* and *Tygodnik Powszechny*<sup>25</sup>.

RFE broadcast excerpts from the homily and blessing from the Primate, together with commentary (*Sacrum Poloniae Millenium. Welcoming the Primate of Poland/Sacrum Poloniae Millenium. Powitanie Prymasa Polski; Sacrum Poloniae Millenium: Jasnogórski reportage / Sacrum Poloniae Millenium: Jasnogórski reportaż*, 1967). They featured the enthusiastic cheers and applause of the faithful attending the events and the Primate expressing his gratitude for "the Mother and Queen's presence in the history of the Polish Church" (*Special Programme/ Program specjalny*, 1991). The May 1966 issue of *Na Antenie On Air* opens with a comprehensive article *A Thousand Years Ago/Tysiąc lat temu*, which poses the following question: "What was happening in other countries while Poland was

<sup>25</sup> Cf. G. Weigel, *Świadek nadziei*, Znak, Kraków 2012.

receiving Christianity?" (*A Thousand Years Ago/Tysiąc lat temu*, 1966, p. 1). The act of accepting Christianity and entering into Western culture was displayed against the background of events in Europe (in France, Germany, England, Scandinavia, etc.).

## 5. Conclusions

RFE's broadcasts were balanced despite their religious and political nature, with religious content juxtaposed with propaganda messages from the government. The broadcasts strongly exposed and defended the authority of Stefan Wyszyński, as evidenced by the aired statements of Paul VI, who recognised the Primate as the spiritual leader of the nation. Wyszyński enjoyed not only the Pope's wholehearted support, but also the sympathy of the director of the RFE's Polish Broadcasting Service and its large audience. This support became evident to listeners when they were able to hear Polish translations of the papal speeches delivered at the millennium celebrations. Most of the goals listed in *The Policy and Operational Objectives for the Polish Millennium / Polityka i cele operacyjne na Tysiąclecie Polski* were accomplished.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> R. Habielski, P. Machcewicz, *Rozgłoszenia Polska Radia Wolna Europa w latach 1950–1975*, vol. 1, Wyd. Ossolineum, Wrocław 2018, p. 390.

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