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THE ATTITUDE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN POLAND TO THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR (1936–1939)

Abstract: During the Spanish Civil War the Catholic Church in Poland sided with General Francisco Franco. The reasons behind such an attitude should be sought in repression against the Spanish clergy by Spain's left-wing government and in the attitude of the Holy See, which had given its blessing to the rebellion already in September 1936. The Church in Poland saw the Spanish Civil War in black and white. Everything associated with the left-wing Republic was shown as the greatest evil, anti-civilization, Satan's domain. The Francoists, on the other hand, were usually presented in a positive light, as twentieth-century crusaders fighting in the name of Christian civilization.

Key words: Spain, civil war, Catholic Church, Poland, language of propaganda.

Given its ideological nature, the intervention of other states and the participation of international volunteers on both sides, the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) politically crossed the borders of the Iberian Peninsula. It led to a deep polarization in Europe and in the world between supporters of 'people's Spain' and 'national Spain'. The divisions over the Iberian conflict also affected Poland.

Generally, the Popular Front's Republic was supported by the left and left-leaning circles. The government generally pursued a neutral policy,¹ although exceptions are evidenced by the interest in the events in Spain displayed by Section II of the General Staff,² the export of war supplies to

¹ Jan S. Ciechanowski, *Podwójna gra. Rzeczpospolita Polska wobec hiszpańskiej wojny domowej 1936–1939*, Warsaw, 2014, p. 48.

² Robert Majzner, *Polski wywiad wojskowy wobec polityki III Rzeszy 1933–1939. Militarne aspekty polityki III Rzeszy w świetle analiz Oddziału II Sztabu Głównego Wojska Polskiego*, Toruń, 2009, pp. 228, 231–34, 236–37; Jan S. Ciechanowski, 'Półwysep Iberyjski', in *Polsko-brytyjska współpraca wywiadowcza podczas II wojny światowej*, 2 vols, Warsaw, 2004, vol. 1: *Ustalenia Polsko-Brytyjskiej Komisji Historycznej*, ed. Tadeusz Dubicki, Daria Nałęcz

Spain³ or assistance provided to some Spanish citizens by the Polish authorities and the Polish diplomatic mission in Madrid.⁴ Unofficially, the government leaned towards the Francoists, an attitude prompted by a number of factors, including aversion to the international communist camp and to the Soviet Union. This was manifested in, for example, the not entirely correct attitude towards the Spanish Republic's diplomatic mission in its last few weeks in Warsaw.⁵ Yet the Francoist government was not officially recognized until the final stage of the Spanish Civil War, in February 1939.

The Francoists found their sympathizers in nationalist, Catholic and conservative circles. There was also a small group of Polish volunteers fighting on the side of the rebels.⁶ The pro-Francoist circles did not hide their attachment to the Catholic Church, from which they drew inspiration both for the internal and foreign policy.

Bearing in mind the role of the Church as the central point of reference for many political circles in the Second Polish Republic, the author of the present article examines the Church's attitude to the fratricidal conflict in Spain and tries to find an answer to the question of what determined the ecclesiastical circles in their attitude to the events unfolding in distant Spain. The question of correctly defining the Catholic Church has remained a relative question to this day. Usually, we understand it to encompass not just the hierarchy and ordinary clergy, but also the faithful. Given the limited length of the article as well as methodological problems associated with trying to determine the attitude of the faithful at large to

and Tessa Stirling, pp. 267–68; idem, *Podwójna gra*, pp. 298–455; Dariusz Rogut, 'Sprawozdanie z międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej "Polska a Hiszpania. Z dziejów koegzystencji dwóch narodów w XX wieku". Opole 19 X 2010 r.', *DN*, 43, 2011, 1, pp. 277–78; Piotr Kołakowski, 'Działalność placówki wywiadowczej "Lecomte" Oddziału II Sztabu Głównego WP w Paryżu 1936–1939', *DN*, 44, 2012, 3, p. 67.

³ Marek P. Deszczyński and Wojciech Mazur, *Na krawędzi ryzyka. Ekspert polskiego sprzętu wojskowego w okresie międzywojennym*, Warsaw, 2004; Dawid Kabaciński, 'Polsko-hiszpańskie kontakty gospodarcze w okresie międzywojennym', *PH*, 101, 2010, 4, pp. 656–61; Marek P. Deszczyński, 'Polska Hiszpanii', *Karta*, 12, 1994, pp. 92–102; Ciechanowski, *Podwójna gra*, pp. 456–560.

⁴ Jan S. Ciechanowski, 'Gregorio Marañón y la Legación de la República de Polonia en Madrid durante la Guerra Civil Española (1936–1939)', in *We wspólnej Europie. Polska-Hiszpania XVI–XX wiek. Referaty wygłoszone podczas sympozjów historyków polskich i hiszpańskich w Lublinie i Logroño 1999–2000*, ed. Cezary Taracha, Lublin, 2001, pp. 289–304; idem, *Podwójna gra*, pp. 102–06, 211–20, 280–81.

⁵ Idem, *Podwójna gra*, pp. 290–96.

⁶ Idem, 'Polscy ochotnicy po stronie narodowej w czasie hiszpańskiej wojny domowej (1936–1939)', in *Studia polsko-hiszpańskie. Wiek XX*, ed. Jan Kieniewicz, Warsaw, 2004, pp. 117–51; idem, *Podwójna gra*, pp. 588–90; Wacław Pardo, *Polski legionista generała Franco*, ed. Cezary Taracha, Radom, 2001, pp. 29–30, 49–51.

the war in Spain, the author analyses the Church hierarchy, selected representatives of the non-episcopal clergy (guided in his selection by their intense activity as either scholars or journalists), the Catholic press (that is press subordinated to Church institutions) as well as Catholic Action — one of the biggest organizations of the laity at the time.

After the First World War and Poland's regaining of independence, the Catholic Church played a significant role in the life of society, with the clergy often supporting some political circles. Priests would speak out on the current affairs of the reborn state, but just as often the Church would present its position on important international events. The war in Spain (1936–39) is a case in point.

Nineteenth-century industrialization strengthened the position of European workers. Owing to their economic disadvantages, they became increasingly susceptible to socialist ideas highlighted by groups from 1864 making up the First International Workingmen's Association, which stressed the need to change the existing state of affairs in favour of the proletariat. The groups making up the First International respected Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who in their work did not fail to include, in addition to the socio-economic aspect, the question of worldview. As militant atheists, Marx and Engels shaped the ideological side of the workers' movement, which became decidedly anti-religious.

Initially, the Church was silent about the century's pressing social problems, focusing on fighting all manifestations of liberalism and Freemasonry. It was only when it noticed the growing de-Christianization of workers in Europe that it began to fight for 'proletarian souls', a challenge taken up by Pope Leo XIII with his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, in which the Church stood up for the workers, criticizing rapacious capitalism, but at the same time stressing that differences between the social classes were the foundation of society. The encyclical became the basis for Catholic social teaching.

In the late nineteenth century the international workers' movement split into reformist and revolutionary factions. Both were by definition Marxist and critical towards Christianity, especially Catholicism. Much earlier, in the 1860s, there emerged anarchism, which viewed the Church as the cause of all evil in the world.⁷ While the reformist faction began to slowly change its programme, making it increasingly moderate, the revolutionary and the anarchist movements remained unchanged. The victory of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia contributed to the emergence

⁷ Paweł Machcewicz, 'Kościół w hiszpańskiej wojnie domowej 1936–1939', *Przegląd Powszechny*, 1991, 3, p. 414.

of the first ever communist state — the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic — which embarked on a policy of combating religion within its own territory and through communist parties in various countries also in Europe and the world, although this was not the main goal of the international communist movement.

In Spain anarchist doctrine had been gaining followers since the 1860s. One of its recurring leitmotifs was the fight against the Church and religion. The bloody riots of 1909 unleashed by the radicals were also directed against the Church.⁸ The same can be said of the events of the spring of 1931, which led to the fall of the monarchy.⁹

Spanish anti-clericalism is still discussed by scholars, who try to explain its origins.¹⁰ Although Spain was regarded as a fervently Catholic country,¹¹ if we take into account the fact that Spanish Catholicism was more external than internal, bordering on bigotry, based on some rituals rather than genuine, profound piety, and if we add to that the privileged position of the clergy, the explosion of ‘anticlerical fury’ will no longer be so surprising.¹² In considering the essence of Spanish anti-clericalism, we need to distinguish its two strands: plebeian and intellectual.

The former was a response of the frustrated, poor part of the population to the social situation in Spain, where some of the clergy belonged to the privileged classes, also in financial terms. The poor would easily succumb to anti-Church propaganda, seeing all priests stereotypically as fabulously wealthy parasites.

The origins of intellectual anticlericalism are more complex. Some of its manifestations could be discerned as early as the eighteenth centu-

⁸ Paweł Skibiński, ‘Antyklerykalizm? Próba refleksji nad przyczynami prześladowań Kościoła katolickiego w Hiszpanii’, in *Studia polsko-hiszpańskie. Wiek XIX*, ed. Jan Kieniewicz, Warsaw, 2002, p. 123; Vincente Cárceles Ortí, *Mrok nad ołtarzem. Prześladowanie Kościoła w Hiszpanii w latach 1931–1939*, transl. Karol Klauza, Warsaw, 2003, p. 62; Machcewicz, ‘Kościół w hiszpańskiej wojnie domowej’, p. 412.

⁹ Machcewicz, ‘Kościół w hiszpańskiej wojnie domowej’, pp. 412–13; Zygmunt Zbaraski, *Zemsta Judy czyli rewolucja hiszpańska*, Warsaw [ca. 1935], pp. 8, 13–14; Jacek Bartyzel, ‘Umierać, ale powoli!’. *O monarchistycznej i katolickiej kontrrewolucji w krajach romańskich 1815–2000*, Kraków, 2006, p. 289; Wojciech Brzozowski, ‘Konstytucyjne ramy stosunków państwo–kościół w Hiszpanii na przestrzeni XX wieku’, in *Francuska ustawa z 9 grudnia 1905 roku o rozdziale kościołów i państwa z perspektywy stu lat*, ed. Michał Pietrzak, Warsaw, 2007, pp. 150–52.

¹⁰ Machcewicz, ‘Kościół w hiszpańskiej wojnie domowej’, pp. 412–13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 424.

¹² Bogdan Koszeł, *Hiszpański dramat 1936–1939. Wojna domowa w polityce mocarstw europejskich*, Poznań, 1991, p. 15; Aura Wyleżyńska, ‘Z duszą Twoją na ramieniu — za Pirenejami’, in *Hiszpania malowniczo-historyczna. Zapirenejskie wędrówki Polaków w latach 1838–1930*, ed. Piotr Sawicki, Wrocław, 1996, pp. 450, 454–55; Gabriela Makowiecka, *Po drogach polsko-hiszpańskich*, Kraków, 1984, pp. 94–95.

ry,¹³ or even earlier, according to Tadeusz Miłkowski.¹⁴ It surfaced during the First Carlist War¹⁵ and later through the so-called progressives.

In the following years people representing this strand of anti-clericalism became even more radical in their aversion to the Church, believing that it hindered the modernization of the country in the direction taken by neighbouring France. These representatives paved the way for the events of the spring of 1931, when the Church became, alongside the monarchy and the army, one of the victims of the newly established Second Republic. There emerged an unwritten alliance between plebeian and intellectual anti-clericalism. Both strands complemented each other. Intellectual anti-clericals presented the aggression of the mob against the people of the Church as revenge for years of oppression. They also used the events of 1931 statutorily to deprecate the role of the Church in the state.

When after a brief period of normalization in the relations between the Church and the republican government during the so-called 'black biennium', power was taken over by the Popular Front, the relations between the Church and the state cooled again. Plundering and destruction of churches, profanation of graves, violence against people of the Church perpetrated by groups beyond any control could not be described as favourable conditions for achieving a *modus vivendi* between the centre-left government and the Church, which began to see the authorities of the Republic as a typically tyrant government against which, in line with Thomas Aquinas' teachings, people had to rebel.¹⁶

That is why the rebellion in the army in July 1936 was supported by the Church,¹⁷ which, although by nature far from considering war as a means of solving conflicts, nevertheless did not exclude it in exceptional circumstances. In the Church's social teaching war was treated in terms of an ethical fact and was never described as 'good', but in some cases it could be regarded as a defence of values and thus could become a war that was ethically justified, that is a war in which one of the sides was fighting for fundamental rights that were threatened.¹⁸

¹³ Luis M. Enciso Recio, 'Oświecenie w Hiszpanii', transl. Magdalena Mielcarek, in *Studia polsko-hiszpańskie. Wiek XVIII*, ed. Jan Kieniewicz, Warsaw, 2000, p. 34.

¹⁴ Tadeusz Miłkowski, 'Narodziny współczesnego antyklerykalizmu w Hiszpanii', in *Studia polsko-hiszpańskie. Wiek XIX*, p. 95.

¹⁵ José Álvarez Junco, 'Proces powstawania narodu w XIX-wiecznej Hiszpanii', transl. Maria Skibińska, in *Studia polsko-hiszpańskie. Wiek XIX*, p. 197.

¹⁶ Machcewicz, 'Kościół w hiszpańskiej wojnie domowej', p. 420.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 415, 419.

¹⁸ Henryk Skorowski, 'Wojna i pokój w nauce społecznej Kościoła (II)', *Wojsko i Wychowanie. Pismo żołnierzy zawodowych WP*, 1993, 6, p. 26.

Most of the hierarchy and ordinary clergy in Spain, with the exception of a group of priests mainly from the Basque Country,¹⁹ sided with the rebels. Bishops Enrique Pla y Daniel, Rigoberto Doménech, Tomás Muniz Pablos, Isidro Goma and Marcelino Lazago Olaechea called the war a 'crusade'.²⁰ For Cardinal Isidro Goma it was an armed plebiscite, a clash between civilization and barbarity, hell and Christ, Spain and anti-Spain. The Bishop of León, José Álvarez Miranda, equated the Popular Front's Republic with Soviet-Jewish-Masonic secularity. In July 1937 the Spanish episcopate sent a letter to the bishops of the world,²¹ in which it expressed its support for the Francoists and concluded that the rebellion of the military against the left-wing government of the Spanish Republic was fully justified by the need to defend the Catholic faith. According to Wojciech Opióła, the letter lent complete credence to the myth of communism as a threat to Catholic Spain.²²

Within the first few weeks of the outbreak of the conflict in Spain, Pope Pius XI had expressed his opinion about it. During an audience for a group of Spanish fugitives the pontiff expressed his regret at the outbreak of the war, mentioned the cruelty perpetrated against the Catholics and denounced Soviet propaganda as well as ideas of collaboration between the Catholics and the communists. In December 1936 the pope called all priests murdered in the 'red' zone martyrs for the faith and sent a blessing to General Francisco Franco.²³ However, the pontiff warned against hatred towards the enemies of the Church, stressing in one of his pronouncements that they still should be regarded as brothers.²⁴

Pius XI also referred to the war in Spain in his encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, in which he said that the Spanish communists perpetrated atrocities stemming from their ideological system devoid of any restraints, tearing out the very idea of God from human hearts. In his view General Franco was a defender of religion battling barbaric Bolshevism.²⁵

The pope was depressed by what was happening on the Iberian Peninsula. Despite some positive gestures towards the rebels, he did

¹⁹ Wojciech Opióła, 'Stanowisko polskiej prasy katolickiej wobec wojny domowej w Hiszpanii 1936–1939. Analiza dyskursu medialnego', *Media, Kultura, Społeczeństwo*, 5, 2010, 1, p. 11; Machcewicz, 'Kościół w hiszpańskiej wojnie domowej', p. 417.

²⁰ Paweł Skibiński, *Państwo generała Franco. Ustrój Hiszpanii w latach 1936–1967*, Kraków, 2004, p. 30.

²¹ Machcewicz, 'Kościół w hiszpańskiej wojnie domowej', s. 419–20; Opióła, 'Stanowisko polskiej prasy katolickiej', p. 10.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²³ Andrée Bachoud, *Franco*, transl. Wojciech Gilewski, Warsaw, 2000, p. 144.

²⁴ Cárceles Ortí, *Mrok nad ołtarzem*, p. 163.

²⁵ Bachoud, *Franco*, p. 144.

dare to say that both sides were... natural-born murderers. The Basque case was anyway the reason why the pontiff *de facto* recognized General Franco's government only after his troops took control of northern Spain in 1937. Generally, Pius XI's attitude to the Spanish conflict can be regarded as cautious.²⁶ According to both Hugh Thomas and Paweł Machcewicz, this may have been caused by Franco's too close relations with Mussolini and Hitler, as was evidenced especially by the attempt to influence Cardinal Goma to keep Pius XI's anti-fascist encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* a secret.²⁷

The last two weeks of the Spanish Civil War coincided with changes in the Vatican. Pius XI died in February 1939. The conclave elected as his successor the then Secretary of State, Eugenio Pacelli, who assumed the name of Pius XII. Some historians claim that when Pacelli was in charge of the Vatican's diplomacy, he was one of the opponents of the Spanish Republic and supporters of General Franco. In the historiography one can find emphases, for example, on the pope's greetings sent to Franco on the occasion of his victory in the war, disregarding the fact that this was dictated by the considerations of diplomatic protocol.²⁸

The period of the Spanish Civil War, especially its first stage, was exceptionally difficult for the Spanish Church in the 'red' zone.²⁹ The period might even be called a time of martyrdom. Left-wing *milicianos* would kill 70 priests a day, and the leader of the Spanish communists, José Díaz, boasted in March 1937 that the Church no longer existed.³⁰ Antony Beevor wrote about 13 bishops, 4,184 priests, 2,365 monks and 283 nuns killed at the time.³¹

The Catholic Church in Poland was aware of the situation of the Church in Spain. It saw analogies with its own situation in 1920,³² when its existence had been threatened as a result of the Bolshevik offensive. That is why the Polish clergy supported General Franco in his fight against the left-wing government. This was not the only reason of such an attitude.

²⁶ Machcewicz, 'Kościół w hiszpańskiej wojnie domowej', p. 423.

²⁷ Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, London, 1990, pp. 512, 683; Machcewicz, 'Kościół w hiszpańskiej wojnie domowej', pp. 423–24.

²⁸ Kazimierz Piwarski, *Watykan a faszyzm (1929–1939)*, Warsaw 1960, pp. 144–145.

²⁹ Jarosław Macała, "Wojna chrześcijaństwa z barbarzyństwem". Polska prasa katolicka wobec wojny domowej w Hiszpanii 1936–1939', *Studia nad Faszyzmem i Zbrodniami Hitlerowskimi* (hereafter *SnFiZH*), 20, 1997, p. 121; Machcewicz, 'Kościół w hiszpańskiej wojnie domowej', p. 409.

³⁰ Cárceles Ortí, *Mrok nad ołtarzem*, pp. 90, 92.

³¹ Antony Beevor, *Walka o Hiszpanię 1936–1939. Pierwsze starcie totalitaryzmów*, transl. Halina Szczerkowska, Kraków, 2009, p. 130.

³² Macała, "Wojna chrześcijaństwa z barbarzyństwem", p. 127.

There is no doubt that it was also influenced by the support (not absolute, as I have noted) of Pope Pius XI and the Spanish Church for the rebels.

When examining the attitude of the Church in Poland to the Spanish Civil War, we should carry out separate analyses of the attitude of the Church hierarchy, Catholic Action, the ordinary clergy and the Catholic press, subordinated to ecclesiastical institutions both on the national and on the diocesan or even parish level. All these entities undoubtedly held a similar view on the *guerra civil* in Spain.

The hierarchy was aware of its significant role in society, which it tried to use, usually successfully, when imposing what it believed to be the right picture of the Spanish war on the faithful. In this version of the events, the rebellion of the army was a modern crusade against the tyrannical, atheistic government.

In late August and early September 1936 a pastoral letter of the Polish bishops was read out in churches. The letter was drafted at the monastery of Jasna Góra at Częstochowa by members of the episcopate who had taken part in the first plenary synod in reborn Poland.³³ The letter, along with the letter of the Polish bishops to the Spanish bishops sent at the same time,³⁴ should be regarded as one of the most important documents illustrating the attitude of the Catholic clergy in Poland to the Spanish *guerra civil*.

The document was anti-communist in its tone and indicated to the faithful the direction which Catholic sympathies should go with regard to the two warring sides. Catholics could not hesitate in their judgement of the events in Spain after they had heard what the Polish bishops thought about the subject.³⁵

Although in the document the bishops did not unequivocally equate anticlerical circles in Spain with communism, they did imply that the path from 'godlessness' eventually led to this totalitarian ideology.

The bishops did not see or, rather, did not want to see the involvement of Germany and Italy in the Spanish Civil War on the side of the rebels, which was obvious by late August 1936. In any case, it was no coincidence that in August of that year the Non-Intervention Agreement was signed with a view to preventing the internationalization of the war. Despite signing the agreement, Berlin and Rome sabotaged its provisions, which made the question of non-intervention an illusory one. The ecclesiastical circles

³³ Opióła, 'Stanowisko polskiej prasy katolickiej', p. 11; Stefan Glaser, 'Znaczenie i moc obowiązująca uchwał I. Polskiego Synodu Plenarnego', *Ruch Katolicki*, 1938, 9–10, p. 397.

³⁴ *Mały Dziennik* (hereafter MD), 11 September 1936, p. 3.

³⁵ *Kurier Warszawski* (hereafter KWar), 6 September 1936, p. 24; MD, 6 September 1936, pp. 3–4.

in Poland saw the entire international background of the Spanish *guerra civil* only in the context of Soviet factors influencing the Iberian Peninsula.

In no way did the Church leaders try to present to the faithful the complex political situation in Spain, the ideological divisions as well as the reasons that prompted this nation, until recently regarded as 'arch-Catholic' to support anti-clerical parties.

The pastoral letter was criticized by the left. The bishops were wrongfully accused of wanting an agreement with... the fascists (including Hitler's regime), and of trying to thwart progress and freedom.³⁶ Thus the Spanish Civil War exacerbated the conflict between the Church and the left in Poland.

In their letter to the Spanish bishops the Polish bishops, this time even more pro-rebel in their tone, addressed their Spanish brothers in faith.³⁷ Although the letter did not explicitly name the enemies or support the rebels, it presented the gloomiest possible picture of the situation in Spain, which, as it happened, was no fabrication of the enemies of the Spanish Republic at the time. An important element of the letter was the assertion that the episcopate was praying for the Church in Spain with the entire Polish nation. This was a simplification. Although no research has been done to examine the attitude of the entire Polish society to the Spanish Civil War, it can clearly be concluded that most people in Poland (excluding the 30 per cent or so who belonged to the national minorities) were indifferent to the war.

In October 1936 an opinion about the Spanish conflict was expressed by the Primate of Poland, Cardinal August Hlond. In a radio address, the cardinal referred generally to communist crimes, characteristically for many bishops not distinguishing between the various left-wing or liberal-left movements, calling all of them communist. The primate called on the people of Greater Poland (Wielkopolska), who were organizing a Week of Mercy, to turn the cradle of the Polish statehood into a 'Polish Alcázar'.³⁸

We may wonder at this point what prompted the primate to adopt such a position. When we take into account the polarization of the Polish political scene in those days, the growing popularity of left-wing groups, the aversion of the hierarchy and the ordinary clergy to the ruling regime (still dominated by the supporters of the late Marshal Józef Piłsudski), the

³⁶ *KWar*, 13 September 1936, p. 26; Kazimierz Czapiński, 'Biskupi obradują... Sojusz z faszyzmem', *Robotnik*, 8 September 1936, p. 3.

³⁷ *KWar*, 9 September 1936, p. 9.

³⁸ *Tygodnik Parafialny Parafii św. Antoniego Padewskiego w Poznaniu-Starołęce* (hereafter *TP Padewski*), 25 October 1936, p. 6.

clergy's fear of losing their authority in society because of anti-clerical activities of not only communists or socialists but also of left-leaning and liberal intellectuals, it will not be hard to understand that the Church began to see itself as a 'besieged fortress' that would survive thanks to mobilization and a determined fight against the left.

In his inaugural speech at the Christ the King Congress in Poznań (in June 1937) Cardinal Hlond, analysing the work of the Catholics, said that it tried to encompass also those countries in which governments were fighting hard against the Church. For him those countries included the Soviet Union, Mexico and 'red' Spain.³⁹ Issues discussed at the congress included the communist threat in Poland. 'Red' Spain was used as an example to illustrate the 'fruits of godlessness'.⁴⁰

In an address to Polish emigrants in France and Belgium the primate, referring to the problem of the communist threat, compared the situation in 'red' Spain to the situation in the Soviet Union. Both these countries were examples of a 'paradise for the workers'.⁴¹ Such constant comparisons of 'red' Spain to the Soviet Union were intended to make the faithful aware of the danger of the situation. In Cardinal Hlond's perception, 'republican' and 'democratic' Spain was becoming a faithful copy of the Bolshevik regime, which over a decade earlier had threatened the newly restored Polish state.

We may wonder why the primate sent such an unequivocal address to Polish emigrants in France and Belgium. If we take into account the fact that most Polish volunteers fighting in the Spanish Civil War did so on the government side⁴² (that is in the Comintern's International Brigades)⁴³ and worked in Belgian and French mines,⁴⁴ the reasons become

³⁹ TP Padewski, 11 July 1937, p. 3.

⁴⁰ *Wiadomości Kościelne Parafii Matki Boskiej Bolesnej na Św. Łazarzu w Poznaniu* (hereafter *Wk Łazarz*), 4 July 1937, p. 1.

⁴¹ *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, 31 March 1937, p. 3.

⁴² It has never been possible to determine the exact number of Polish volunteers (all citizens of Poland regardless of their nationality) fighting in the International Brigades. The usual estimates (of all who were members of the brigades) range from 1,560 to 8,000 volunteers. See Wojciech Opióła, 'Polska prasa prawicowa wobec interwencji Włoch i III Rzeszy w Hiszpanii 1936–1939', *SnFiZH*, 32, 2010, p. 352; Ciechanowski, *Podwójna gra*, pp. 561, 564.

⁴³ The International Brigades were set up by the Executive Committee of the Communist International in the autumn of 1936. To this day it has proved impossible to establish the exact number of volunteers who fought in the brigades. Various figures are given, with the number of brigade members ranging from twenty to over seventy thousand. See Richard Baxell, *British Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War. The British Battalion in the International Brigades, 1936–1939*, London, 2007, p. 158.

⁴⁴ Ciechanowski, *Podwójna gra*, p. 562.

very clear. However, we cannot forget that the Jarosław Dąbrowski Brigade included also volunteers who came directly from Poland.

The head of the Church in Poland wanted to use his authority to influence those Polish emigrants who were at risk of becoming communists and to prevent them from succumbing to 'red' propaganda.

In one of his appeals the primate stressed that some countries were ruled by godlessness with revolutionary tribunals at its disposal, which resulted in terror, the ruin of thousands of churches and monasteries, as well as the cruel death of many bishops, priests, monastics and lay activists. According to the cardinal, the source of these events was the work of Freemasons,⁴⁵ whose role at the time was exaggerated by the Church. Owing to their aversion to the Church in its institutional dimension, Masonic lodges were blamed by it for all the evils in the world at the time. Their work was often regarded as an element of the Judaism-Freemasonry-Marxism triad, with Judaism being the cause and Marxism the outcome of the Freemasons' work.

Cardinal Hlond referred to the Spanish Civil War in February 1939, that is, in the last few weeks of the conflict. In a radio address marking the death of Pope Pius XI, the primate alluded to 'red' Spain, where enemies of the Church basked in the blood of people of the Church who died for Christianity like their predecessors in the times of Nero.⁴⁶ Once again the primate presented the declining Spanish Republic as the kingdom of Lucifer, forgetting, however, that since the second half of 1937 crimes against the clergy in the 'red' zone had been increasingly rare and that one of the key positions of the People's Army (*Ejercito Popular*) of the Republic was held by a Catholic, Vicente Rojo.

As we analyse the attitude of the Church in Poland to the Spanish Civil War, we can conclude that it proved to be the right subject to show the faithful the aims of 'godless communism' and to draw Polish-Spanish analogies with regard to the communist threat.

Interesting in this context is the attitude of the Bishop of Katowice, Stanisław Adamski, who was closer in his views to the rebels than to the 'reds', but who was nevertheless embarrassed by the Francoists' use of religion for political purposes.⁴⁷ Without questioning this, we need to bear in mind that in his assessment Bishop Adamski did not take into account the ideological or even religious nature of the Iberian conflict,

⁴⁵ *Wiadomości Parafialne parafii mosińskiej* (hereafter *WP mosińskiej*), 15 June 1937, p. 1.

⁴⁶ *Ruch Katolicki*, 1939, 3, p. 99.

⁴⁷ Stanisław Adamski, 'Parafialna Akcja Katolicka. Rola i zadania Parafialnej Akcji Katolickiej', *Ruch Katolicki*, 1938, 1, pp. 16–17.

which prompted both warring sides to refer to their sources of ethical principles — Catholic religion in the case of the Francoists.

Opinions about the events on the Iberian Peninsula were also expressed by representatives of the Church's scholarly elite, who created an image of the Iberian war among Catholic intellectuals and in some political circles. It could even be said that opinions about the war expressed by such well-known priests as, for example, Father Stanisław Trzeciak, influenced the attitude of the nationalist movement to it.

In their views on the events beyond the Pyrenees, members of the Church's scholarly elite were also pro-Francoist. Such was, for example, Father Stanisław Trzeciak's position. In his opinion the Spanish war resulted from preparations for a revolution in which an important role was to be played by Jews seeking revenge for the events of the fifteenth century and using Freemasons and the working class for the purpose. He believed that after the victory of the Popular Front Spain began to be controlled by the Bolsheviks applying the methods described in *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.⁴⁸

Such assertions were also promoted by Father Seweryn Kowalski, a biblical scholar, who noted that the Jews were responsible for crimes against the Church, both in the Soviet Union (which he called 'Bolshevia') and 'red' Spain.⁴⁹

Father Trzeciak and Father Kowalski's theses were by no means original, as many journalists and scholars linked 'Jewry seeking revenge on Spain' to Freemasons before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War or even before the overthrow of the monarchy in Spain.⁵⁰

The Spanish Civil War was referred to by Father Zygmunt Wądołowski, a Catholic feature journalist, who found an outlet for his reflections about the socio-political situation in Poland and the world in the conservative periodical *Czas*. Analysing the threats to the Church, Father Wądołowski reminded the readers that in 'red' Spain Catholics were brutally persecuted on account of their religion.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Stanisław Trzeciak, *Program światowej polityki żydowskiej (Konspiracja i dekonspiracja)*, Warsaw, 1936, pp. 51, 70–71, 76, 84; idem, 'Żydzi hiszpańscy mszczą się za rok 1536. Odczyt ks. dr. Trzeciaka w Krakowie', *Mały Dziennik Krakowski*, 20 September 1936, page number illegible.

⁴⁹ Seweryn Kowalski, 'Posłannictwo i tragedia narodu żydowskiego', *Ruch Katolicki*, 1936, 7, p. 314.

⁵⁰ Józef Tyszkiewicz, *Inkwizycja hiszpańska*, Komorów, 1998 [reprint of the 1929 edition], pp. 52, 100.

⁵¹ Zygmunt Wądołowski, 'Katolicy a niebezpieczeństwa chwili bieżącej', *Czas*, 10 January 1937, p. 5.

The situation in Spain was also touched upon by a Silesian priest and teacher, Father Walery Jasiński, who presented 'red' Spain in the context of the situation in the education system. Opposing a secularized school system, the priest believed that it eventually led to the sad state of affairs which could be observed in Spain at the time.⁵²

Father Zygmunt Kaczyński called the Francoists 'soldiers of Christ' battling a mob led by Marxist ideologues. The Polish Catholic Press Agency, which he had headed since 1929, provided information from the Iberian Peninsula to many newspapers associated with the Church, which too wrote about the events in Spain in the spirit favouring Spanish nationalists. This made their accounts biased.

Catholic Action also played a significant role in informing society of the situation at the other end of Europe. While the Church's scholarly elites disseminated an image of the Spanish *guerra civil* mainly among intellectuals, parish and diocesan branches of Catholic Action presented the situation on the Iberian Peninsula to those groups within society for whom the Church often remained the only source of knowledge of the world. Catholic Action would organize lectures about the situation in Spain⁵³ during which speakers would show the Francoists in a positive light. The organization was also the inspiration behind the sending, in September 1936, of an image of Our Lady of Częstochowa to General Franco with a letter signed, among others, by the general of the Pauline Fathers, Father Pius Przeździecki. In the letter the signatories expressed their full solidarity with General Franco.⁵⁴

The question of the Spanish Civil War was raised during a Catholic congress co-organized by Catholic Action in September 1936. Its participants were both priests and laypersons. The speakers included Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, Father Zygmunt Choromański, Father Jan Rostworowski, Waclaw Bitner and Aleksander Romer. Romer suggested that the congress adopt a resolution expressing its approval of the Polish episcopate's opinion about the situation on the Iberian Peninsula and express its fraternal sympathy to Spaniards persecuted for defending the Catholic faith. The suggestion was received with a thunderous applause.⁵⁵

In the spring of 1937 the Diocesan Institute of Catholic Action in Kielce organized a cycle of lectures devoted to communism. The speakers

⁵² Walery Jasiński, 'Tragedia domu rodzinnego i szkoły w zlaicyzowanej Europie', *Ruch Katolicki*, 1936, 9–10, p. 441.

⁵³ *TP Padewski*, 3 January 1937, p. 5; 3 April 1938, p. 5.

⁵⁴ *MD*, 26 September 1936, p. 5.

⁵⁵ *KWar*, 13 September 1936, p. 25.

included Seweryn Czetwertyński, Jędrzej Giertych, Professor Ludwik Skoczylas and Izabela Lutosławska-Wolikowska. Lutosławska-Wolikowska (daughter of the Polish philosopher Wincenty Lutosławski and Spanish writer Sofía Pérez Eguía y Casanova) devoted her speech to the fratricidal war in her other homeland, expressing her support for the Francoists.⁵⁶

An activist of Catholic Action, Father Józef Bełch (writing under the pseudonyms of Józef Młodowiejski and Józef Wieśniak), stressed that his sympathies were with the nationalists and condemned those political circles in Poland that dared to sympathize with 'red' Spain. He used expressions of understanding for the Republic to attack the 'Wici' Union of Rural Youth of Poland. Father Bełch and many other priests fought the young members of the organization. They regarded it as having communist leanings, as Father Bełch tried to demonstrate in one of his articles, justifying the thesis by pointing to the Union's sympathies for the Spanish 'reds', whom he called 'Antichrists', and with whom the young Wici members allegedly had entered into an alliance and agreed on 'common social and educational goals' [sic!].⁵⁷

Father Bełch would mention the brutal murders and destruction of churches by members of the Spanish left. Wanting to demonstrate that members of Wici were communists or that they, at best, were swayed by this political movement, the Catholic author presented some facts apparently proving that Wici organized various campaigns in support of 'red' Spain, like the adoption, in early November 1936, by the Regional Congress of Wici Delegates in Handzlówka (near Łańcut) of a document expressing solidarity with the Spanish Popular Front.⁵⁸ Three months later Bełch mentioned by name Wici members taking part in the congress and expressing their solidarity with the Spanish leftists, members including figures known for their radical views such as Leon Lutyk and Władysław Pałys.⁵⁹

On another occasion Father Bełch, analysing the ideology of the Wici movement supporting a separation between the Church and the state, said that such a separation had led Spain to a fight against the Church, the seizure of its property and the breaking off of the concordat.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ *Ruch Katolicki*, 1937, 4, pp. 189–90.

⁵⁷ 'wspólne cele społeczno-wychowawcze' (common social and educational goals), Józef Młodowiejski, 'Agraryzm — program gospodarczy "Wici"', *Ruch Katolicki*, 1937, 3, p. 127.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁵⁹ Józef Wieśniak, 'Czy zmiana w stosunku "Wici" do katolicyzmu?', *Ruch Katolicki*, 1937, 6, p. 272.

⁶⁰ Józef Młodowiejski, 'Stosunek "Wici" do religii', *Ruch Katolicki*, 1937, 4, p. 176.

A Catholic Action member and priest from the Parish of St Urban in Brzeszcze, Father Józef Hetnał, focused on the question of effectively fighting communist propaganda. Although the Spanish Civil War did not feature prominently in his article, the priest did not hide his indignation at slogans supporting the 'red' Republic.⁶¹

Another priest associated with Catholic Action, Father Józef Drabowicz, stressed in an article that what had become common in Spain was hostile, godless propaganda and bloody terror: executions of priests, imprisonment or imposition of taxes intended to bring the Church to economic ruin.⁶²

A regular collaborator of *Ruch Katolicki*, a Catholic Action periodical,⁶³ Father Feliks Baran from the USA, wondered in an article about the cause of the Church's difficult position in countries like Spain. In his view the cause was not only the activities of 'Jews, Freemasons or communists', but also the fact that the Catholics themselves were responsible, because they did not fully realize the cultural superiority of Catholicism.⁶⁴

In the inter-war period the Catholic press was very popular among the faithful, especially when it came to periodicals and newspapers published by various ecclesiastical institutions. The press that can be called the Church press often presented a distorted picture of the Spanish Civil War,⁶⁵ in which the Catholic Church and the political circles associated with it were portrayed as victims. Authors would cite subjective sources: accounts by those siding with the rebels and victims. The accounts were often exaggerated, a normal phenomenon in psychology. Most of these were 'third-hand' descriptions, because they were disseminated by the Catholic Press Agency, which in turn drew on selected international sources.

An example here is *Przewodnik Katolicki*, published by the Archdiocese of Poznań, the editor-in-chief of which was Father Franciszek Forecki.⁶⁶ Alongside articles confined to describing the fighting without any editorial comment,⁶⁷ it published a series of articles with a decidedly

⁶¹ Józef Hetnał, 'O przeciwdziałanie propagandzie komunizmu', *Ruch Katolicki*, 1937, 11, p. 515.

⁶² Józef Drabowicz, 'Pokój czy walka komunizmu z Kościołem katolickim?', *Ruch Katolicki*, 1938, 3, p. 116.

⁶³ Opióła, 'Stanowisko polskiej prasy katolickiej', p. 7.

⁶⁴ Feliks Baran, 'Dlaczego nie zdobywamy?', *Ruch Katolicki*, 1938, 5, pp. 212–13.

⁶⁵ For more on the Catholic press in Poland and the Spanish Civil War, see Macała, "'Wojna chrześcijaństwa z barbarzyństwem'", pp. 115–35; Opióła, 'Stanowisko polskiej prasy katolickiej', pp. 5–19.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶⁷ *Przewodnik Katolicki* (hereafter *PrzK*), 11 July 1937, p. 475.

pro-Francoist standpoint.⁶⁸ Yet it did note the presence on the Francoists' side of foreign combatants, including Germans, towards whom the Church was prejudiced, on account of the past⁶⁹ and Hitler's anti-Catholic policy. However, in order to prevent any doubts with regard to the Francoists' intentions arising in the minds of the readers, the authors stressed that many Francoists were critical about the Germans' activities.⁷⁰

The Spanish conflict found its way into the section of a periodical intended for children and young people. Father Zbigniew Wroniewicz, who was in charge of altar boys near Kępno, wrote an article for the youngest readers in which he briefly presented the situation of the Church in Spain, where the communists murdered priests and nuns on a daily basis. In his way he wanted to make young people aware of the threat of communism to the Church. He wrote that Spanish priests were unrivalled when it came to dying with dignity, an attitude that aroused admiration even among their tormentors. Wroniewicz stated that larger cities in Spain saw mass murders of people of the Church.⁷¹

On another occasion *Mały Przewodnik* wrote about the martyrdom of a young priest, Atanasio Rodriguez, who was treacherously imprisoned by the 'reds', when he arrived in a prison in Extremadura to hear confessions and give communion to a group of people sentenced to death. The young priest died an extremely cruel death on the cross, like Christ.⁷² Yet the murders were relativized, for neither Father Wroniewicz nor other authors mentioned equally murders committed in the rebel zone, for example, the murder of Federico García Lorca.⁷³

The youth supplement to *Przewodnik Katolicki* also published amateur poets' works devoted to Spain. In this case, too, the authors presented the horror of Christians living in the 'red' zone, where even children could die for publicly showing their attachment to religion.⁷⁴

Przewodnik Katolicki and its supplement for the Eucharistic Crusade (a parish organization for younger children) also described frequent cases of arrest and imprisonment of priests in Spain. The authors stressed that in their attack on Christianity the 'reds' even went as far as to imprison eminent scholars whose only sin was apparently that they wore cassocks.

⁶⁸ Roman Mieliński, 'Przed tak wielkim sakramentem (Wrażenia z Kongresu Eucharystycznego w Budapeszcie)', *PrzK*, 19 June 1938, p. 418.

⁶⁹ *PrzK*, 26 June 1938, p. 447; 18 December 1938, p. 869.

⁷⁰ *PrzK*, 14 August 1938, p. 561.

⁷¹ *Mały Przewodnik* (hereafter *MPrz*), 10 July 1938, p. 192.

⁷² *MPrz*, 25 September 1938, p. 268.

⁷³ Günter W. Lorenz, *Federico Garcia Lorca*, transl. Krzysztof Radziwiłł and Janina Zeltzer, Warsaw, 1963, pp. 109–19.

⁷⁴ *Mały Przewodnik dla Krucjaty Eucharystycznej*, 20 November 1938, p. 311.

An example was the case of the priest and astronomer T.J. Rhodes. Citing an account by the vicar general for the Diocese of Guadalajara, the journal wrote about the devastation of many churches in areas controlled by the 'reds'. The subject of non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War was tackled as well.⁷⁵

In August 1938 the readers were informed that the Francoist troops had begun to regain control over the territory captured earlier by the 'red' army following an offensive from the Ebro River. At the beginning of the following month the periodical wrote at length about General Franco's consent to the British proposals concerning the withdrawal of foreigners from Spain. This led to a gradual withdrawal of some international volunteers fighting on both sides, a move clearly welcomed by *Przewodnik Katolicki*.⁷⁶

According to the periodical's journalists, this was mainly thanks to General Franco, who was portrayed as a great friend of the Church, as evidenced by the fact that he would send priests as Spain's official representatives to a number of international conferences. In the last few months of the Iberian conflict the 'red' government was rightly accused of not telling the truth, when it denied the crimes against the Church in the initial stage of the *guerra civil* and the later persecution. Permission to celebrate mass given towards the end of the war was seen as a tactical move intended to make the international public believe that within the Frente Popular zone religious freedom was a fact. The periodical also wrote about the successes of the Francoists in Catalonia.⁷⁷

Towards the end of the war the journal reported that the end of military operations was imminent. At the same time it pointed to those who were guilty of starting the bloody conflict: the Jews sent by Bolshevik leaders, who began to turn the Spanish public opinion against the Church and monarchic public order. The periodical also questioned the Spaniards' religiosity, noting that it was manifested more in the form than in the content. This was the type of 'religiosity' against which the periodical warned its readers.⁷⁸

Spain was also discussed in *Ruch Katolicki*. The periodical wrote about the heroism of the Church, which triumphed despite cruel persecution by the leftist government, as faith was eventually reborn in the 'red' zone. An example was Barcelona, for years the centre of Spanish anarchism and all extremist movements. It was precisely in 'red' Catalonia's capital that

⁷⁵ PrzK, 1 August 1937, pp. 517, 523; 2 October 1938, p. 650; 23 October 1938, p. 726.

⁷⁶ PrzK, 21 August 1938, p. 577; 4 September 1938, p. 609; 23 October 1938, p. 733.

⁷⁷ PrzK, 23 October 1938, p. 726; 29 January 1939, pp. 81, 83.

⁷⁸ PrzK, 12 March 1939, p. 179; 19 March 1939, p. 183.

religious life was revived again. According to authors writing in the periodical, this was thanks to lay Catholics, who in July 1936 did not join the uprising, but were loosely associated with the autonomous Catalan government, the Generalitat. This was a revolutionary assertion, for it contradicted the prevailing accusations in the Catholic discourse against those Catholics who distanced themselves from the Francoists. Yet those were people who stood up for Spanish priests imprisoned by the republican authorities and created an 'underground' Church like the Church of the first Christians.⁷⁹

A very popular newspaper at the time was *Mały Dziennik* published by the Franciscans since 1935.⁸⁰ The paper expressed pro-Francoist sympathies, equating everything associated with the left-wing government with that which was anti-Christian and communist, and highlighting the crimes committed in the 'red' zone. Its editorial board argued that Warsaw should quickly recognize General Franco's nationalist government in Burgos and mentioned every activity intended to achieve that end. In the newspaper's view, the officers' rebellion was to be a form of punishment for the left for its crimes.⁸¹

The mass-published *Mały Dziennik* could be regarded as a newspaper shaping public opinion. It showed the situation in a way intended to make the readers realize which of the warring sides was right. This was suggested by the very titles of the articles. In the first few weeks of the Spanish *guerra civil* the daily stressed the existence of terror in the left-wing zone. Despite the fact that in July 1936 Franco was not yet the head of the military junta, the paper wished him victory, mistakenly addressing him as colonel. He was seen as the man who would put an end to the persecution of the Church and the tyranny of the communists.⁸²

Referring to Franco as colonel was not the paper's only error. One issue contained an article about an insurgent unit approaching Madrid, a unit headed by... José Antonio Primo de Rivera, who at that time was, in fact, in a republican prison. There was also an announcement of the heroic death of the defenders of the Toledo Alcázar and the capture of the fortress by the 'reds',⁸³ which also turned out not to be true, because

⁷⁹ *Ruch Katolicki*, 1938, 6, pp. 286–87.

⁸⁰ Opióła, 'Stanowisko polskiej prasy katolickiej', p. 6.

⁸¹ *MD*, 18 July 1936, p. 2; 22 July 1936, p. 2; 23 July 1936, p. 2; 28 July 1936, pp. 1–2; 31 July 1936, p. 1; 1 August 1936, p. 2; 20 August 1936, p. 2; 30 August 1936, p. 2; 3 September 1936, p. 2; 5 September 1936, p. 2.

⁸² *MD*, 21 July 1936, p. 5; 23 July 1936, p. 3; 10 September 1936, p. 2; 12 September 1936, p. 2.

⁸³ *MD*, 6 August 1936, p. 10; 20 September 1936, p. 2; 25 September 1936, p. 2.

the area was eventually seized by the rebels, who released the cadets from the siege.

The events in Spain were seen as an outcome of Comintern's activities, while the armed rebellion of the army was 'the beginning of societies' response to the Soviet offensive'. The war was a religious war, a Manichaeic conflict between the old Christian culture and the destructive Jewish thought of Marx, Lenin and Trotskii, who were described as 'red murderers'. There was another contrast employed as well: Western culture versus Asian barbarity,⁸⁴ or simply good versus evil.⁸⁵

Spain was a dangerous memento, a warning for Poland, for this was where the communists carried out their subversive work. Thus appeals were made to the authorities and to entire population to be vigilant in the face of the increasingly active Communist Party of Poland (KPP) and other left-wing groups. An effective way of fighting communism was to be a return of Catholic and nationalist ideas.⁸⁶

The nature of the Spanish left was revealed on the example of Catalonia, where mass murders were committed after the anarchists' victory over the rebel troops. The authors writing for the daily observed at the same time that any 'moderate' revolutionary movement would eventually lead to barbarity.⁸⁷

Journalists and columnists writing for *Mały Dziennik* entered into polemics with journalists of the socialist periodical *Robotnik*, who supported the Spanish Popular Front and who were accused of turning a blind eye to the crimes committed in Spain by the 'reds'. They wrote about succumbing to Jewish influences and expressed surprise at the attitude of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) to the Spanish Popular Front despite the tragic past of, for example, the Russian socialist movement eradicated by the Bolsheviks. They were also outraged at the fact that the left collected money for the 'red' Spain, stressing that this money would have ensured jobs for many Poles.⁸⁸

Editorial teams of other papers were attacked for their positive attitude to the Spanish 'reds', as is evidenced, for example, by the negative review of Joanna Gintuł's reports, published in *Wiadomości Literackie* and devoted to the events in Barcelona. The author was criticized

⁸⁴ *MD*, 28 July 1936, p. 3; 2 August 1936, p. 1; 7 August 1936, p. 1; 18 August 1936, p. 10; 1 September 1936, p. 3; 4 September 1936, p. 2.

⁸⁵ Macała, "Wojna chrześcijaństwa z barbarzyństwem", p. 125; Opióła, 'Stanowisko polskiej prasy katolickiej', p. 8.

⁸⁶ *MD*, 31 July 1936, p. 1; 5 September 1936, p. 3.

⁸⁷ *MD*, 7 August 1936, p. 3.

⁸⁸ *MD*, 1 September 1936, p. 3; 8 September 1936, p. 5; 17 September 1936, p. 3.

for glorifying the ‘red’ militias and describing nationalists as ‘depraved fascists’. Her references to the alleged participation of priests on the side of the rebels were confronted with accounts of other witnesses to her disadvantage. Often the accounts cited were terrifying and could be compared to scenes from a Dantean inferno.⁸⁹

The Spanish *guerra civil* was presented in the daily also in the context of international politics. The newspaper had a positive opinion about the position of Benito Mussolini’s Italy, stressing that the neutral policy of the great Western democracies had failed and that the only solution was a military intervention against the Comintern forces entrenched on the Iberian Peninsula. Its authors pointed to Poland’s interest, that is averting the danger of Spain becoming subordinated to the Soviets, and hoped that France would come to its senses and cease to support the ‘reds’ in Spain, as the daily accused it. Thus the Spanish war was seen as a factor distinguishing Poland’s foreign policy from that of France.⁹⁰

Often articles published in *Mały Dziennik* would point to similarities between the events in Spain and the events in Russia twenty years earlier, with their authors noting that the Spanish revolution was another stage in the world revolution intended by Lenin, which would eventually lead to Sovietization of the country.⁹¹

In mid-August 1936 *Mały Dziennik* interviewed Sofia Casanova, a Spanish poet for years living in Poland, who sided with the nationalist camp. In the interview Casanova pointed to the role of the communist movement in the preparations for a revolution on the Iberian Peninsula.⁹²

In the first few months of the Spanish Civil War the daily wrote about many aspects of the conflict, including even the fate of Polish citizens in Spain. It also mentioned the famous flight to the rebel zone of Polish pilots — Kazimierz Lasocki, Kajetan Czarkowski-Golejewski, Kazimierz Ziemiński, Adam Szarek oraz Morawski, a commercial agent⁹³ —

⁸⁹ MD, 9 September 1936, p. 3; 18 September 1936, p. 2.

⁹⁰ MD, 25 July 1936, p. 2; 26 July 1936, p. 1; 29 July 1936, p. 1; 1 August 1936, p. 2; 2 August 1936, p. 1; 5 August 1936, p. 1; 9 August 1936, p. 3; 11 August 1936, p. 1; 12 August 1936, p. 2; 13 August 1936, p. 1; 19 August 1936, p. 3; 20 August 1936, p. 3; 23 August 1936, p. 1; 25 August 1936, p. 3; 27 August 1936, p. 3; 28 August 1936, p. 2; 3 September 1936, p. 2; 6 September 1936, p. 4; 16 September 1936, p. 2; 18 September 1936, p. 3; 29 September 1936, p. 3.

⁹¹ MD, 7 August 1936, p. 2; 8 August 1936, p. 2; 9 August 1936, p. 2; 11 August 1936, p. 1; 14 August 1936, p. 3; 20 August 1936, p. 2; 23 August 1936, p. 1; 24 September 1936, p. 3.

⁹² MD, 18 August 1936, p. 8.

⁹³ MD, 22 July 1936, p. 2; 28 July 1936, p. 1; 29 July 1936, p. 1; 30 July 1936, p. 2; 1 August 1936, p. 2; 9 August 1936, p. 2; 11 August 1936, p. 1–2, 9; 12 August 1936, p. 2; 13 August 1936, p. 10; 18 August 1936, p. 2, 10; 19 August 1936, p. 1; 20 August 1936, p. 1; Tadeusz Kawecki, ‘Gdy Niemcy chronią obywateli polskich w Hiszpanii’, MD, 25 August

who were to deliver three-engine Fokker aircraft, purchased in the United Kingdom for the rebels. The expedition that ended tragically for Lasocki and Morawski, who died in a plane crash.⁹⁴

There were also reports of the murder, committed in the leftist zone, of an honorary consul of the Polish Republic, Vicente Noguera, and the consequences of the murder, that is even greater cooling in the relations between Warsaw and Valencia. In addition, there were references to the policy of non-intervention, the opinion of which was negative, as the assumption was that the policy was not implementable.⁹⁵

Mały Dziennik devoted much attention in particular to the role of France, Italy, Germany and the Soviet Union in the events in Spain and the dangers stemming from this. The conclusion was that Bolshevism in Spain should be combated by means of the country's forces and not with the help of National Socialists. The daily paid attention also to the operations on the front and published literary works devoted to the events in Spain.⁹⁶ The daily moreover focused on repression against the Church and murders, committed in the 'red' zone, of officers of the Spanish army who were against the Republic.⁹⁷

Mały Dziennik presented the 'reds' as soldiers who had nothing in common with the idea of chivalric combat, for when it came to fighting hand-to-hand, they apparently would flee the battlefield.⁹⁸

Often the very form of presenting the information showed with which side the editorial team sympathized. An example is an article published in early November 1938. One of its subtitles, 'Children will return to their homeland', clearly indicated that a victory of the Francoists would mean for Spain a return of stability, symbolized by a return of Basque children evacuated at the beginning of the hostilities in Euskadi.⁹⁹

Towards the end of January 1939, when the nationalists captured Barcelona, there were reports that they were giving food to the starving

1936, p. 3; 26 August 1936, p. 2; 27 August 1936, p. 2; 29 August 1936, p. 1; 6 September 1936, p. 1; 9 September 1936, p. 2; 19 September 1936, p. 2; 23 September 1936, p. 2; 25 September 1936, p. 3.

⁹⁴ Ciechanowski, *Podwójna gra*, pp. 537–38.

⁹⁵ *MD*, 23 August 1936, p. 1; 30 August 1936, p. 1; 1 September 1936, p. 4; 5 September 1936, p. 3.

⁹⁶ Aleksander Junosza-Olszakowski, 'Śmierć w Hiszpanii (nowela)', *MD*, 20 September 1936, p. 10.

⁹⁷ *MD*, 21 July 1936, p. 2; 24 July 1936, p. 2; 5 August 1936, p. 1; 9 August 1936, p. 2; 13 August 1936, p. 2; 14 August 1936, p. 2; 15 August 1936, p. 2; 22 August 1936, p. 1; 29 August 1936, p. 3; 1 September 1936, p. 1; 18 September 1936, p. 2; 22 September 1936, p. 1; 26 September 1936, p. 2; 27 September 1936, p. 2; 29 September 1936, p. 12.

⁹⁸ *MD*, 16 February 1937, p. 2.

⁹⁹ *MD*, 31 October–1 November 1938, p. 1.

residents. On the other hand the withdrawing leftist troops apparently destroyed everything in their way — this was an example of how the daily would create a black legend of the republican troops. Its authors reflected on the future relations between nationalist Spain and Italy. They did not hide the fact that Mussolini strongly supported General Franco, which made Burgos dependent on Rome. This dependence was seen, however, as a source of future conflicts between the two countries, as it was believed that Spanish nationalism would not stand subordination to a foreign state and would seek collaboration also with countries like France and United Kingdom.¹⁰⁰

The subject of the Spanish Civil War was raised in the Jesuit periodical *Przegląd Powszechny*. In October 1936 Jan Ptaszycki emphasized the great barbarity happening in the leftist zone. At the same time he wrote that violations of ethical principles in the ‘red’ zone should unite all honest people in opposing such actions, regardless of their political views, social status or even religion. Ptaszycki noted provocatively that violence against the Spanish Church should outrage even... atheist intellectuals, since they stressed their readiness to respect the views of others.¹⁰¹

Ptaszycki’s article was provocative given the fact that the ‘atheist intellectuals’ were decidedly sympathetic towards the Spanish Frente Popular. The author stressed that distancing oneself from the Spanish nationalist camp was acceptable, but it was unforgivable to identify oneself with the advocates of ‘red’ barbarity, whom he saw among the supporters of the Popular Front.¹⁰²

Ptaszycki was not, however, consistent in his writings, for he attacked the French Catholic writer François Mauriac for his neutral attitude to the events beyond the Pyrenees. Nor did he forgive the Polish periodical *Robotnik* for its support of the Spanish left. Ptaszycki saw the war in terms of a mortal combat to defend culture and nation. He identified the ‘red’ side with demonic evil and violence perpetrated against the Church and its servants. In this he clearly questioned the legitimacy of the republican government. He referred to the opinions of the former President of Spain removed by the Popular Front in 1936, Niceto Alcalá Zamora, according to whom those responsible for starting the civil war were anti-clericals and Freemasons.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ MD, 28 January 1939, pp. 1, 3.

¹⁰¹ Jan Ptaszycki, ‘Wobec hiszpańskich wypadków’, *Przegląd Powszechny*, 1936, 10, pp. 86–87.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 87–89.

When criticizing Mauriac for treating the two sides of the Spanish conflicts as equal, Ptaszycki expressed his conviction that the French writer's Catholicism was questionable, based on free interpretation of what constituted the foundations of the Church and thus far from orthodoxy.¹⁰⁴ We see here a clash between traditional Catholicism, often referred to today as integralist, and open, liberal, personalist, Western European Catholicism, which rose in stature considerably after the Second Vatican Council.¹⁰⁵

The author concluded that the most appropriate attitude to the conflict was to support the Spanish nationalists, the political force that had decided to confront the enemies of Christianity, using force. Ptaszycki was convinced that the Church would have a powerful ally in the state, should the Francoists win, because they were fighting not just for power but also in defence of fundamental values.¹⁰⁶

Father Edward Kosibowicz (editor-in-chief of *Przegląd Katolicki*)¹⁰⁷ drew on Vatican sources to present some terrifying data on the victims of 'red' terror. In this he stressed the communist background of the perpetrators, including among the communists also anarchists and activists of the allegedly Trotskyist POUM,¹⁰⁸ responsible for the deaths of the biggest number of priests. He had a positive opinion about the attitude of the Polish minister of foreign affairs, Józef Beck, in the League of Nations — Beck was hostile to the minister of foreign affairs of republican Spain, Julio Álvarez del Vayo. Father Kosibowicz used harsh words when writing about the socialist periodical *Robotnik* for its pro-republican attitude. For him Spain was the worst possible example producing the worst fruit.¹⁰⁹

In December 1936 *Przegląd Powszechny* published an article by Władysław Sobański (in 1924–27 Poland's ambassador to Madrid), who presented the Spanish war as a clash between the destructive Satanism of

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 90–91.

¹⁰⁵ Eugeniusz Rafalski, *Polityka Watykanu w przededniu II wojny światowej (na tle głównych akcji dyplomatycznych)*, Warsaw, 1978, p. 337; Michał Białkowski, 'Korzenie ideowo-instytucjonalne Klubu Inteligencji Katolickiej w Toruniu. Szkic do badania środowisk katolickich nurtu intelektualnego', in *W kręgu idei. Państwo–Edukacja–Religia. Księga Pamiątkowa ofiarowana dr Katarzynie Kalinowskiej*, ed. Witold Wojdyło et al., Toruń, 2011, pp. 322–27.

¹⁰⁶ Ptaszycki, 'Wobec hiszpańskich wypadków', pp. 92, 94.

¹⁰⁷ Opióła, 'Stanowisko polskiej prasy katolickiej', p. 9.

¹⁰⁸ POUM (Partido Obrero Unificada Marxista), a group accused by the Stalinist communists from the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) of Trotskyism, was consistently revolutionary and decidedly anti-Stalinist in its stance, which led to its dissolution in May–June 1937 by the Spanish NKVD agents.

¹⁰⁹ Edward Kosibowicz, 'Sprawy Kościoła', *Przegląd Powszechny*, 1936, 12, pp. 104–05, 108, 110–12, 114.

hatred, and the Christian order and progress. The Polish diplomat was critical about those Catholics who disliked the Spanish nationalists. Sobański invoked Pius XI, who was against collaboration between Catholics and communists, and called on Poles to separate themselves not just from communism, but also from both ignorant and conscious supporters of this political movement. For Sobański Spain was a land bathed in the blood of martyrs and arena of 'exploits by the knights of the hammer and the sickle'.¹¹⁰

Drawing on Lenin's assertions that Spain was allegedly the next country after Russia where revolution was to take place, he mentioned Bolshevik activities before the Popular Front came to power. The former Polish ambassador could not resist the temptation of comparing the situation in Spain to the situation in Russia twenty years earlier. The President of the Spanish Republic, Manuel Azaña, was for him a Spanish Kerenskii.¹¹¹

The author assumed that the activities of the Bolsheviks in Spain would prompt Italy and Germany to intervene more decisively, which turned out to be true, the only difference being that this happened independently of the Soviet intervention. In Sobański's view the war could at any moment lead to a Europe-wide conflict.¹¹²

The Spanish Civil War was indirectly touched upon in an issue of *Przegląd Powszechny* of March 1937. In an article devoted to Miguel de Unamuno, Otto Forst de Battaglia mentioned the philosopher's negative attitude to the Popular Front's Republic.¹¹³ He forgot to mention, however, Unamuno's conflict with the rebels, as a result of which the philosopher was put under house arrest.

In early 1939 the Jesuit periodical presented the final period of the war from the perspective of the great powers. Its authors wrote about intensified military operations by Italian troops, facilitated by the withdrawal of the Soviets from active support of 'red' Spain. When describing the Catalan campaign, they mentioned that the Francoist troops were put at the disposal of the Italians.¹¹⁴

Apart from major Catholic periodicals of national significance, increasingly popular were local periodicals published by some of the wealthier parishes. Many such periodicals were founded in the inter-war period in

¹¹⁰ 'wyczynów rycerzy młota i sierpa' (exploits by the knights of the hammer and the sickle), Władysław Sobański *Przegląd Powszechny*, 1936, 12, pp. 247–48.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 296–97.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 298.

¹¹³ Otto Forst de Battaglia, 'Miguel de Unamuno (29.IX.1864–31.XII.1936)', *Przegląd Powszechny*, 1937, 3, pp. 352–57.

¹¹⁴ *Przegląd Powszechny*, 1939, 2, pp. 247–48.

Greater Poland, a phenomenon associated with the specificity of the region, a bastion of 'Catholic Poland'. It can well be said, after Wojciech Opióła, that alongside Niepokalanów, Poznań was the most important Catholic publishing centre in the country.¹¹⁵

The parish press put the blame for the outbreak of the Spanish war on left-wing politicians like Manuel Azaña and Francisco Largo Caballero. It was their 'imported, godless communism' that led to General Franco's military intervention.¹¹⁶

Parochial authors highlighted the crimes of the 'reds' in Spain committed against the Church. Its authors wrote that in the leftist zone everything associated with the Catholic religion had been destroyed and the faithful had 'their religious feelings torn out'. They did not confine themselves to accounts describing desecration of centres of worship, but also wrote about killings of priests and laypersons, citing terrifying data. In early 1937, drawing on information from the Spanish College in Rome, the parish press informed its readers that in the first few months of the Spanish *guerra civil* between 40 and 50 per cent of all priests had been killed.¹¹⁷

Referring to non-Polish agency sources, the periodicals wrote about the killing, over a period of two years, of 129 priests in the Province of Barbastro, 350 in the Diocese of Lerida and 350 in the Diocese of Portosa. Those that were to be blamed for this were mainly communists.¹¹⁸

At the same time, Jews were blamed for the crimes against the Spanish clergy. This was to drown out the echoes of the *Kristallnacht* by painting a picture of the events in which people needed not be sorry for the German Jews, for the vast majority of the international public opinion stood up for them anyway, while almost no one stood up for the victims of 'red terror'.¹¹⁹

In showing the contrast between the murderers and their victims, priests were presented as those who had remained faithful to Christianity, paying with their lives for it. They did not betray Christ even in front of the firing squad. Cases of priests siding with the Popular Front were explained by the political naivety of those servants of the Church who, fighting for a better life for the poorest, fell victim to humanitarian disinterestedness. When the 'scales finally fell from their eyes', they were sidelined by the left-wing government.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Opióła, 'Stanowisko polskiej prasy katolickiej', p. 5.

¹¹⁶ *WP mosińskiej*, 1 July 1938, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ *TP Padewski*, 30 August 1936, p. 6; 21 February 1937, p. 6; 16 January 1938, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ *TP Padewski*, 7 August 1938, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ *TP Padewski*, 29 January 1939, p. 3.

¹²⁰ *TP Padewski*, 7 August 1938, p. 3.

Another factor enabling people to see the difference between the communists and the clerics was the latter's constant readiness to forgive their persecutors.¹²¹

Interestingly, the Catholic Church in Poland also showed the crimes of the Spanish 'reds' against representatives of Christian denominations other than Catholicism. Thus it signalled to the faithful that communism was the enemy of all religions. Catholic journalists tried not to leave aside anything that could confirm the faithful in their negative attitude towards the Spanish 'reds'.¹²²

The civil war was used by the parish press as an example for the faithful of what the rule of the left could lead to. Priests warned against a possible takeover of power in Poland by Marxist parties, for, in their view, this would make the Spanish scenario come true in Poland as well.¹²³ The left was a 'bad seed' poisoning the nation. If the seed were to germinate in Poland '[...] we would see the wretched Spain here!'¹²⁴ The authors mentioned that in the Popular Front zone Spanish Catholics were forced to live in celibacy, for the Church and with it, sacramental marriage had been eradicated there almost completely. They emphasized the enormity of the lay Catholics' suffering at the hands of the 'reds'.¹²⁵

It was communism that was held responsible for the barbarity. Although occasionally crimes committed by anarchists were mentioned as well, in a vast majority of cases the blame was assigned to 'the Kremlin's agents'. Communism was held guilty of the destruction of churches and murder of priests as well as members of the laity. The Church press referred in this case to rebel sources or sources sympathizing with the rebels.¹²⁶

There is no doubt that the communists did have a hand in those crimes, but their role was certainly exaggerated. Although the PCE leaders were hostile to the Church, they also called for an end to all actions that could be used by the Francoist side in its propaganda. So why did the Catholic Church in Poland blame the communists for most of the anarchists' crimes? Of key significance in this was undoubtedly the fact that in the reborn Polish state communism was much more real than other extreme left-wing movements. For a considerable part of Polish society

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² *TP Padewski*, 31 October 1937, pp. 2–3.

¹²³ *TP Padewski*, 17 January 1937, p. 6.

¹²⁴ 'mielibyśmy u siebie nieszczęśliwą Hiszpanię!' (we would see the wretched Spain here!), *Wk Łazarz*, 31 January 1937, p. 1.

¹²⁵ *TP Padewski*, 20 September 1936, pp. 2–3; 8 November 1936, p. 6.

¹²⁶ *TP Padewski*, 15 August 1937, p. 3; 2 January 1938, p. 6.

communism was a genuine threat. Only just over fifteen years had passed since the Bolsheviks had penetrated deep into Poland. This is why communism could be used to scare society within which some groups were open, not so much to communist, but certainly to left-wing ideas.

The parish press was allergic to communism. In opinions formulated on its pages it was the worst possible system, in many respects worse than Hitler's totalitarianism. This state of affairs was certainly influenced by the atheism inscribed in the programmes of communist parties as well as their fight against all religions, especially the Catholicism. All left-wing initiatives in Poland were seen by the Church as attempts to introduce the communist system. That is why an extremely important factor in thwarting the communists' plans was the mobilization (as in 1920) of society whose imagination could be moved only by a picture of the civil war in Spain where the 'reds' treated the Church ruthlessly and mocked faith.

The civil war in Spain was an example of how criminal communism could be and how real its threat was in Poland as well. The murder of Father Stanisław Streich by a madman in early 1938¹²⁷ was used as an example of communist crimes and compared to the extermination of Catholic priests in Spain. For some people of the Church in Poland the murder of Father Streich was, however, more barbaric than the murders of priests in Spain, because in Spain priests were killed in the streets or their private homes, while Father Streich was killed in a church, in front of the faithful.¹²⁸

The parish press criticized the government for its lack of unequivocal support for the Francoists. Yet its criticism focused mainly on legal parties of the left-wing opposition. The authors writing in the periodicals were aware of the weakness of the Communist Party of Poland — dissolved, incidentally, by Comintern in 1938 — which is why they attacked the Polish Socialist Party, popular among the workers and sometimes also among intellectuals. The Polish Socialist Party's periodical, *Robotnik*, was often forced to refute accusations of anti-clericalism or even anti-Christianism. For the parish press the very fact that socialists expressed their solidarity with those 'who murdered thousands of priests and hundreds of thousands of faithful Catholics and burned hundreds of Catholic churches'¹²⁹ made them enemies of Christianity.

¹²⁷ Henryk Lisiak, *Narodowa Demokracja w Wielkopolsce w latach 1918–1939*, Poznań, 2006, p. 236.

¹²⁸ *WP mosińskiej*, 15 March 1938, p. 3; *TP Padewski*, 6 March 1938, p. 6; 13 March 1938, p. 2; 24 April 1938, p. 2.

¹²⁹ 'co mordowali tysiące kapłanów i setki tysięcy wiernych katolików i palili setki świątyń katolickich' (who murdered thousands of priests and hundreds of thousands

The parish press informed its readers of the religious life of Spaniards who would secretly go to mass and buy books about religion. When analysing religiosity in the country, the authors stressed that the most widely read book across Spain was the Bible. Examples were given of conversion even among the most zealous communists.¹³⁰

By showing such contrasts the Catholic press intended to confirm Catholics in the belief that the 'red Spain' camp was totally dehumanized, without any values, while the nationalist camp was following the principle of love for the neighbours, even if the neighbours did not deserve such feelings on account of their cruel behaviour. The communists and other left-wingers were to be punished for fighting the Church.¹³¹

In conclusion, it should be said that the Catholic Church in Poland sided decidedly with General Franco. The most important reasons for this support included the Spanish Church's cruel experiences under the left's rule and fresh memories of the danger in which the Polish Church found itself in 1920. It was precisely by referring to the dramatic events of over fifteen years earlier that the Polish Church wanted to influence the faithful and make them denounce any sympathies towards the leftist government of republican Spain. On the other hand, the civil war in Spain was an excellent example for the Polish Church through which it could show all those balancing between the Catholic faith and increasingly catchy leftist slogans what could befall Catholicism, if a Popular Front (made up of communists and advocates of united opposition against fascism) were to be victorious in Poland.

(Translated by Anna Kijak)

Summary

The Spanish Civil War (1936–39) was one of the most important European conflicts in the interwar period. Although when it came to military operations it was confined to the territory of Spain (continental Spain, the Balearic Islands, Canary Islands and Spanish Morocco in North Africa), politically and ideologically it went beyond the country's borders on account of the fact that Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union intervened on both sides, and because of the division of Europe and both Americans into supporters of the warring sides, that is the so-called republicans and Francoists. The events in Spain attracted the attention

of faithful Catholics and burned hundreds of Catholic churches), *TP Padewski*, 5 March 1939, p. 4.

¹³⁰ *WP mosińskiej*, 15 January 1938, p. 6; 1 June 1938, p. 4.

¹³¹ *TP Padewski*, 9 August 1936, p. 3.

of people in Poland too, with many groups, not only political, adopting an unequivocal stance on the issue, as exemplified by the Roman Catholic Church.

During the Spanish Civil War the Catholic Church in Poland sided with General Francisco Franco. The reasons behind such an attitude should be sought in repression against the Spanish clergy by Spain's left-wing government and in the attitude of the Holy See, which had given its blessing to the rebellion already in September 1936.

The most emphatic evidence of the Polish Church's attitude to the events on the Iberian Peninsula can be found in the Polish episcopate's letters to the faithful in Poland and to Spanish bishops in 1936. The clergy and lay activists expressed their opinion about the Spanish tragedy also in the Catholic press, both national and parish press, and by launching various initiatives, like lectures and letters of support for General Franco.

The Church in Poland saw the Spanish Civil War in black and white. Everything associated with the left-wing Republic was shown as the greatest evil, anti-civilization, Satan's domain. The Francoists, on the other hand, were usually presented in a positive light, as twentieth century crusaders fighting in the name of Christian civilization.

Another recurring theme was the alleged Jewish and Masonic influence on the Popular Front's left-wing leadership. The events in Spain were described as an outcome of Jewish and Masonic activity.

(Translated by Anna Kijak)

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