

SUMMARY

Following the conclusion of World War II, Poland came under the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. The communist victory in the parliamentary elections of January 19, 1947, further consolidated their political dominance. From this point onward, the communist authorities systematically repressed all political opposition. Among their primary targets was the Roman Catholic Church. A coordinated campaign against the Church commenced in 1949, utilizing the apparatus of the Security Office (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa*, UB) and later the Security Service (*Służba Bezpieczeństwa*, SB). This repression persisted until 1989, marking the end of the communist regime in Poland.

The aim of this dissertation is to analyze the approach of the security apparatus towards the Catholic Church in the Nowy Targ district between 1945 and 1975. Through the course of the research, the author identified the leadership and personnel of the local security structures, specifically those officers tasked with monitoring and suppressing the clergy. These individuals implemented the directives of the Polish Workers' Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*, PPR) and its successor, the Polish United Workers' Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR), as well as the state administration, in their efforts to combat the Church. During this period, in over fifty parishes in the district, at least six hundred priests engaged in pastoral ministry, serving a population known for its strong religious devotion.

While investigating the clergy, the functionaries of the repressive apparatus classified their attitudes toward the communist authorities into three categories: 'hostile,' 'passive,' and 'loyal' clergy. The officers closely monitored the priests' adherence to state regulations and their conduct during election periods. Priests who openly opposed the prevailing Marxist-Leninist ideology were subjected to various forms of surveillance, such as object or record-keeping observation cases. The security services systematically expanded their network of informants, which included both clergy and lay faithful.

To further undermine the Church, officers from the Security Office and Security Service involved clergy in state-approved initiatives such as the 'patriotic priests' movement or the nationalized 'Caritas' charity. They exploited internal conflicts within the Church, particularly those involving tensions between clergy or between clergy and the laity, to advance their operational goals. One of the most protracted and complex disputes was the national conflict in the Spiš and Orava regions, centered on the use of Polish or Slovak in liturgical services.

In their broader efforts to weaken the Church, the communist authorities also targeted its financial stability, imposing heavy taxes on priests and parishes and mandating detailed inventory records. The construction of new churches and religious buildings was subject to approval by state authorities. Despite these sustained efforts at suppression, the Church endured and emerged from the struggle strengthened.

Prudenci, 19 listopada 2024 r.

Ms. Kinga Jędrzejewska