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VATICAN'S EASTERN POLICY IN 1958-2010

Maciej Mróz

University of Wrocław,
3, Koszarowa Str., Wrocław, Poland, 51-149,
e-mail: maciej.mroz@uni.wroc.pl

In the past few centuries, the Vatican diplomacy has, along with the French and Russian ones, gained the reputation of one of the best in the world. Despite shifting the stress to strictly religious matters and new interest the Vatican diplomacy has shown in the problems such as international security, ecology, demography, still focuses on the relationships with traditionally Catholic European countries: Italy *ex definitione*, Spain and Poland, Germany with its two sides of Christianity, protestant Great Britain and the eldest daughter of the Church – secular France. At the time of exploratory talks, informal meetings and, finally, negotiations with governments, Vatican diplomats were partners highly regarded for their professionalism, precision, word economy and discretion. self-restraint and compromise.

In the first years of John Paul II's pontificate the Vatican Secretariat undoubtedly appreciated the qualified successes achieved by the most expert diplomats of Paul VI. The political sense of the Polish pope and especially his absolute conviction that it was necessary to break with the post-Yalta order in Europe and the world, which he perceived as a moral disaster, meant that the Vatican Eastern policy did not end with the collapse of the USSR and the 1989 *Spring of Nations* but merely reached a different stage. Vatican's Eastern policy in 1958 – 2010 was pursued during the postwar subjugation of Central and Eastern European by communism, as well as during the political and systemic transformation, which began the great disruption of democracy and independence initiated by the *Spring of Peoples* 89.

Key words: Vatican diplomacy; Poland; Germany.

In the past few centuries, the Vatican diplomacy has, along with the French and Russian ones, gained the reputation of one of the best in the world. Moreover, it has been held in such high regard not only by professional researchers dealing with this section of international relations or papacy history but also writers, Vatican experts or even those whose knowledge of Vatican's international activity has been limited, to say the least. On the other hand, it is hard not to quote the well-known and anecdotic statement of prelate Domenico Tardini, the head of the first section and deputy secretary in the Secretariat of State during the Pius XII's pontificate, who very harshly assessed the work of Vatican diplomats: *People always say the diplomacy of the Holy See is the best in the world. If ours is the first, I'd like to see the second* [4, p. 55]. In fact, the process of professionalization of papal diplomacy was initiated shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, continued during the Second War and finished in the times of *Vaticanum Secundum* reforms. At that time the diplomatic point of gravity was shifted from the *ad extra* sphere which was, broadly speaking, political to *ad intra* sphere, that is the pastoral one. Despite shifting the stress to strictly religious matters and new interest the Vatican diplomacy has shown in the problems such as international security, ecology, demography, the role of women and even economy (hence the participation of Vatican diplomats in the UN or Council of Europe

meetings), Vatican still focuses on the relationships with traditionally Catholic European countries: Italy *ex definitione*, Spain and Poland, Germany with its two sides of Christianity, protestant Great Britain and the eldest daughter of the Church – secular France. Naturally, due to the growing significance of South America and Africa among the Catholic regions, the Vatican diplomacy has been active there for years, performing sometimes the role of mediator in regional conflicts [8, p. 203–220; 3, p. 89].

At the time of exploratory talks, informal meetings and, finally, negotiations with governments, Vatican diplomats were partners highly regarded for their professionalism, precision, word economy and discretion. They gained their first experience in this difficult area during the reign of Pius XII and took up the most prominent positions in the Secretariat of State and papal diplomacy during the pontificates of Paul VI and John Paul II. Is it right to claim that the negotiation of partial agreements or small concessions from the governments in Warsaw, Prague or Budapest and the ensuing warming of State – Church relations, which was achieved by the best Vatican diplomats, was a significant success of the Holy See or rather a new settlement between the Empire and the Papacy which meant indirect acknowledgement of Communist regimes? The assessments presented here are one-sided, albeit for different reasons, and may, in some way, disregard the political, sociological or religious context [9, p. 127]. However, they reflect the dilemmas that the Vatican decision makers within the Secretariat of State had to face. The *Ostpolitik* which was adopted at that time demanded from the Vatican the *pro foro externo* acknowledgement of the USSR superpower status and the Yalta–Potsdam international order. It required diplomatic maneuvering and significant ability of self-restraint and compromise.

In the first years of John Paul II's pontificate the Vatican Secretariat undoubtedly appreciated the qualified successes achieved by the most expert diplomats of Paul VI. In Eastern Europe they carried out the policy of *salvare il salvabile* – the policy described by Card. Agostino Casaroli as *not very commendable* [5 p. 50–55]. However, the dynamics of political transformation in Eastern Europe accelerated the reorientation of Vatican policy supplying it with new tasks and perspectives. The political sense of the Polish pope and especially his absolute conviction that it was necessary to break with the post-Yalta order in Europe and the world, which he perceived as a moral disaster, meant that the Vatican Eastern policy did not end with the collapse of the USSR and the 1989 *Spring of Nations* but merely reached a different stage [6, p. 58]. John Paul II probably realized the inevitable end of the totalitarian system in East-Central Europe and in the Soviet Union itself. He noticed its progressing decay in the intellectual and moral sphere, as well as its inability to face basic social problems and people's aspirations. He decidedly rejected, however, the claims that he himself had a profound contribution to the dismantling of the communist system in Europe stressing the fact that communism *collapsed on its own, due to its immanent weakness*. In fact the Vatican Eastern policy of the years 1963–1990, especially in the era of Archbishop Casaroli, enabled the growth of that *patient sowing* which allowed a greater margin of freedom in Mid-European countries

(except Czechoslovakia) and, with time, also in the Soviet Union, and paved the way for the great bid for freedom of the year 1989 which led to the collapse of totalitarianism in the Eastern part of the continent.

Vatican's Eastern policy in 1958–2010 was pursued during the postwar subjugation of Central and Eastern Europe by communism, as well as during the political and systemic transformation, which began the great disruption of democracy and independence initiated by the *Spring of Peoples 89*. Being in the service of the universal Church, as a proven over the centuries instrument of the papacy that was used to achieve religious and pastoral purposes, and in the second half of the XIX century – to a lesser extent – also for *stricte* political purposes, Vatican diplomacy realized its mission in the double dimension, i.e. at the level of *ad intra* and *ad extra* in two different political and social realities of the post-Cold War world. Successive popes since John XXIII, who, through disruption to the routine of the court and his unconventional activities in the international arena, has strengthened the authority of the papacy and made it an important player on the stage of the world politics and diplomacy, through Paul VI's pastoral diplomacy and the involvement of the papacy in politics of *détente* as well as in a process associated with the preparations for the CSCE in Helsinki, finishing with crucial for Central and Eastern Europe pontificate of John Paul II, in dialogue with the states led by the communist parties, tried to expand the margin of freedom for the Church and religious freedom for millions of Catholics in the Eastern bloc [10, p. 41–56]. It was during the years 1958–1989/1990 when the Vatican's Eastern policy acquired its most classical form, characterized by institutionalization of relations with the communist authorities at every level – from the constant, albeit interrupted by sudden changes in direction of the dialogue with Poland to the «impossible» to reach compromise on several appointments to the episcopate with Czechoslovakia, or to the difficult, painful for both Vatican and Hungary normalization process finished by *atto* [9, p. 85–128]. Paul VI, in spite of many variations, changes and even omissions, developed it in a creative way and gave new impetus to the Eastern policy of the Vatican, called pastoral diplomacy of the Pope, but Pope John Paul II made it a priority of his long and crucial for the enslaved by communism Central and Eastern Europe pontificate. During the pastoral diplomacy of Paul VI the Vatican concentrated its efforts and actions on all countries of Central and Eastern Europe, but priority was given to the relations with Hungary and Czechoslovakia because of the condition of Catholicism in those states, and because of the situation in the world and dialogue with the Orthodox Church relations with the USSR were also of paramount importance. Poland, with a constantly growing Catholic Church, which became stronger after the period of Stalinism, and with social movements that involved Catholics, which were absent in other communist countries, naturally took a special place among the number of Central European states and did not need diligent care of the Holy See, so that negotiations with the authorities in Warsaw took place in 70s of the past century regularly, usually at the highest level and were focused on a broader spectrum of issues in relations between the state and the Church. Since the fall of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in the Soviet Union itself, the recovery process started, which began as early as

the decadent *ancien regime* did (including the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Hungary). In case of Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus establishment of diplomatic relations between the Vatican with the states of the region took place [1; 2].

The next step in the institutionalization of mutual contacts was to initiate, but not always by the initiative of Vatican, the forecast on a full or partial settlement of the status of the Catholic Church in particular countries. For the last 20 years contracts concluded between the Holy See and the states of Central and Eastern Europe have already been partially assessed and still will be. Above all they will be verified in terms of an increasing process of desacralization of public life and secularization also in the former communist countries. In some countries, not without resistance, retraction of Catholicism, motivated by political rather than pastoral considerations, from the alliance of the altar and the throne takes place, which will undoubtedly lead to the recognition of the Church *in gremio* for pluralism and democracy. Otherwise it could be endangered by further erosion of credibility and marginalization, especially in large urban areas.

Negotiations and agreements signed between the Holy See and the states of Central and Eastern Europe, in no way meant that the Eastern policy of the Vatican achieved the goals formulated by the successive popes and reached the end. New challenges were clearly evident in the former Soviet Union, where the activities of the Holy See and the Pope's diplomacy were sometimes dramatically contested with the political, social and religious reality above all in Ukraine, Belarus and particularly in the Russian Federation. Taking place in an atmosphere of accusations of proselytism on the part of the highest Orthodox factors, institutional recovery of the Catholic Church in Russia, missionary dynamism and efficiency of the Greek-Catholicism in Ukraine and started practically from scratch in the extremely unfavorable conditions revival of Catholicism in Belarus provoked conflicts on many levels and contributed to the *de facto* dialogue freeze between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches both locally and worldwide. However, in recent years, expansive in some degree model of Catholicism in Russia and its coexistence with the dominant in this area orthodoxy were based on dialogue. However they have been replaced by another model affiliated by Benedict XVI and the nunciature in Moscow. This model is characterized by self-limitation of Catholicism or by its defensive stance which pushes it to the margins of religious and social life of the contemporary Russian Federation [9, p. 335–336]. Eternal desire of Rome related to the *Road to the East* resulted neither in progress in Catholic-Orthodox dialogue and ecumeny at the local level, nor in the convergence of both faiths. Instead, regardless of the intentions of the Vatican, there are new sources of conflict, which at the same time promotes intolerance, xenophobia and complicates international religious relations.

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СХІДНА ПОЛІТИКА ВАТИКАНУ 1958–2010 рр.

Мацей Мруз

*Вроцлавський університет,
вул. Кошарова, 3, м. Вроцлав, Республіка Польща, 51-149,
e-mail: maciej.mroz@uni.wroc.pl*

В останні кілька століть дипломатія Ватикану, поряд з французькою та російською, отримала репутацію однієї з найкращих у світі. Незважаючи на зосередження уваги на суто релігійних питаннях у статті показано і новий інтерес дипломатів Ватикану такі, як міжнародна безпека, екологія, демографія, а також зосереджена на відносинах з традиційно католицькими країнами Європи: Італія *ex definitione*, Іспанії та Польщі, Німеччини з її двома сторонами християнства, протестантська Великобританія і старша дочка Церкви – світська Франція. Під час попередніх переговорів, неформальних зустрічей і, нарешті, переговори з урядами, Ватиканських дипломатів партнери високо цінують за їх професіоналізм, точність, слово економіки і розсудливість, стриманість і компроміс.

У перші роки понтифікату Івана Павла II Секретаріат Ватикану, безперечно, оцінили за успіхи, досягнуті найдосвідченішими дипломатами Павла VI. Політичний сенс Папи і, передусім, його абсолютна впевненість були необхідними для того, щоб порвати з пост-Ялтинським порядком у Європі та світі, який сприймали як моральну катастрофу. Це означало, що Східна політика Ватикану не закінчується крахом СРСР і навесні 1989 року досягає лише іншого етапу. Східна політика Ватикану 1958–2010 років переслідував в післявоєнний період ціль викорінення з Центральної та Східної Європи комунізму, а також під час політичної і системної трансформації, яка почалася поширенням демократії і незалежністю, котрі стали поштовхом до «весна народів».

Ключові слова: дипломатія Ватикану; Німеччина; Польща.