

THE COMMON CAUSE

FORTNIGHTLY OF THE POLISH SECTION OF THE "SWORD OF THE SPIRIT"

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Mgr. ZYGMUNT KACZYŃSKI

TRUTH IN UNDERGROUND POLAND

I TOUCH WITH EMOTION AND respect, like holy relics, the few copies of the leading Catholic organ of Underground Poland *Prawda* (*The Truth*). They reached London amidst fantastic risks, smuggled across barbed wire and Gestapo cordons, carried out of that gigantic concentration camp of Europe, known as Poland. I noticed that the size of *Prawda* increased considerably since last year, just as the number of its readers and supporters increased among the fighters for freedom.

Prawda is the organ of the "Front of Poland's Revival." Its ideology is characterized by the following passage, in an issue of August 1942:

"We have adopted some time ago the watchword: 'Any system with God is good, any system without God is bad.' That is our whole political creed. We do not formulate our own political programme, we do not indulge in controversies with the existing movements; but we are definitely opposed to any political activities in Poland which may be contrary to the principles of Catholic faith and morality.

"We have ruled out exclusiveness. We are interested in something more than politics in the usual meaning of the term. We demand honesty. We have confined our political programme to claiming honest laws, honest government and honest political and social work.

"Our watchword, 'a system with God,' has a special significance in present times. It satisfies the longing for honesty, which has accumulated in human minds with revolutionary intensity through the years when the supremacy of divine law over human lives was ignored or forgotten."

That is the language with which *Prawda* addresses the Polish nation at home. In an atmosphere of terror without precedent in history, menaced by death and concentration camp, hungry and miserable, our countrymen are inspired by the vision of a better future which they expect after the cataclysm of war. That was the language of the Apostles under the reign of Nero and the beginning of the new Christian era.

But *Prawda* is not alone in its work. It is assisted, like a mother by her child, by a new periodical *Prawda Młodych* — *The Truth of Youth*. The Polish patriots responsible for *Prawda* realized that no plan of reconstruction is possible without the participation of the younger generation. They knew that those who make in wartime the greatest sacrifices of life should have a say in shaping the future and they appreciated the importance of the part played by young people in any constructive work.

The tone of *Prawda Młodych* recalls to us the time of our own youth, when we also revolted against everything that seemed too settled, too easy and comfortable. . . . Youth always has high ambitions and makes uncompromising demands.

Prawda also publishes a special supplement devoted to sociological and economic studies. It contains an extensive economic and sociological bibliography, as well as plans and programmes of a post-war organization of the world. *Prawda* openly condemns the totalitarian systems, both Marxist and Nazi, proclaiming the principles on which economic life should be based in accordance with Christian ethics and the teaching of the Church.

Besides ideological articles, which are obviously of the highest interest to the readers, *Prawda* contains interesting news and dispatches from correspondents in various parts of the country. It is obviously distributed throughout Poland, in Warsaw, Cracow, Wilno and Lwow. The incidents described by the correspondents illustrate the attitude of the Germans towards the Polish population. The news from eastern Poland throws some light on the intentions of Soviet Russia. Here is a letter published by *Prawda* in October 1942, that is half a year before the official conflict between Russia and Poland and before

the discovery of the mass grave of Polish officers in Katyn:

"The vicarage in . . . The old parish priest shows the house to the 'komandir' of Soviet parachutists and partisans behind the German lines, dressed with exaggerated elegance. The 'komandir' has the vicarage searched. He finds 2,000 zlotys (£5) and grins ironically.

"Chicken food," he says sarcastically. In the writing desk the 'komandir' discovered a deed box with papers, Polish State

bonds, notes of the old Bank of Poland, etc. He brushed them aside with some disgust.

"Why do you keep this trash?" "It may be worth something after the war," said the vicar.

"After the war?" the Bolshevik laughed. "You may burn it all now. It won't be worth anything after the war. . . ."

"If the Polish Government returns from London . . ."

"There will be no Poland," the Bolshevik commissar banged the table with his fist,

"After the war there will be only Russia in Europe."

Such genuine conversations with Soviet partisan officers give some idea of the intentions of Russia not only with regard to Poland, but also to other European countries. Similar incidents were reported in many other Polish newspapers, of which there are over a hundred in the territory occupied by the Germans. *Prawda* is the organ of lay Catholics.

irrespective of their political views. Its columns are open to members and sympathisers of all parties, including the socialists. The battle for Christian truth has become in our times an Apocalyptic struggle for thought, for the spirit, for the conscience of humanity. The Kingdom of Christ is the Kingdom of Truth — "regimen veritatis." Christ gave His life for the truth of His Kingdom, which will deliver us. "Veritas liberabit nos" (John viii, 32).

JAN REMBIELIŃSKI

POLISH ARCHITECTURE

IS THERE AN ELEMENT WHICH MIGHT BE described as "polonism in architecture?" I wondered, going through the Exhibition of Polish Architecture, organized in London, at the R.I.B.A. headquarters, and reading the interesting and well illustrated book of Roman Soltynski "Glimpses of Polish Architecture."



The Church of Our Lady in Cracow (thirteenth — fourteenth century)

On the back page: The Interior of the Church in Debnó (fifteenth century).

It is a rather puzzling question. Architecture, of course, does not have a theme, like literature, painting or sculpture, which can have national subjects. The raw material of the architect is not as clearly national as the language used by a writer, or even the rhythm and tune of folk music included in his works by a composer. Form and proportion, which are elements of the architect's art, are universal — while the utilitarian character of architecture only accentuates its universal and somewhat abstract nature. It is a well-known fact that material attainments of civilization are more easily adopted and propagated than intellectual achievements. It seems therefore hardly surprising that in architecture an art so closely bound up with science and engineering progress, the tendency towards a certain amount of international uniformity is greater than in many other spheres of creative activity.

Whatever may be the reasons, there is no doubt that, as far as architecture is concerned, the world of the western civilization has been largely unified in the last thousand years, and the history of architecture ran a parallel course in most European countries. The same styles succeeded each other in different countries at approximately the same time, and they were, broadly speaking, the same in all the countries — with certain local and national variations. And yet these individual peculiarities, sometimes

apparently trifling and difficult to define, mean a great deal and make the difference between what belongs to us and what seems alien.

I shall not endeavour to describe or enumerate the particular features of Polish architecture displayed in the many periods of history. The space at my disposal and — more important — my knowledge of the subject are totally inadequate for such a task. I shall therefore confine myself to a few marginal observations which occurred to me as I wandered through the rooms of the Exhibition.

The Romanesque period of architecture, which began about the time when Poland entered the circle of Christian nations, does not seem to have produced a Polish version — if we are to judge by the remaining monuments of that epoch. The Polish churches of that time do not differ in any way from the contemporary churches of Western Europe, though they do not equal them in size and splendour. In the subsequent periods, however, notably late Gothic and Renaissance, Polish architecture acquired a definite individuality of its own.

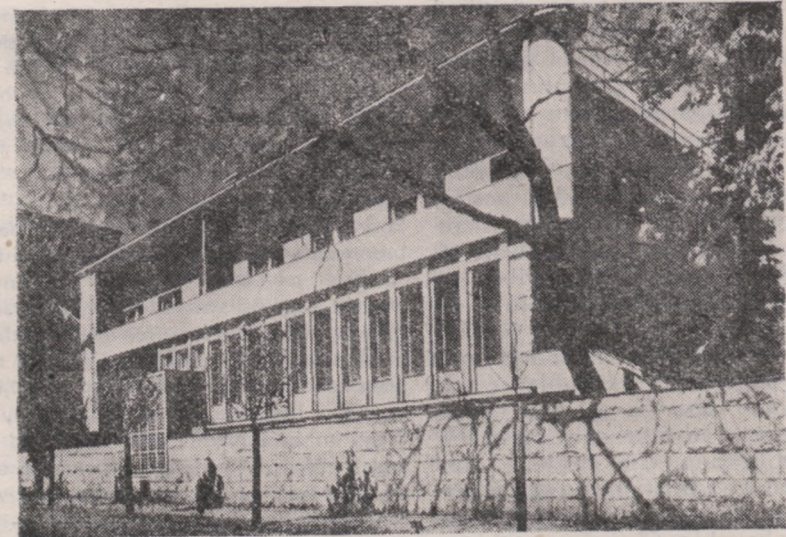
I shall not attempt to deal with technicalities of design and construction. I should like rather to dwell for a moment over some features which strike even the casual observer as clearly different and individual. Polish architecture had a wealth of colour, which produced effects of an entirely different kind from the subdued grey of contemporary Western European architecture. This love of colour found a particularly vivid expression in the charming fifteenth century church of Debnó, typically Polish in its rainbow raiment. The polychromic decorations of the medieval cathedrals of Poland, as, for instance, that of Sandomierz, had an individuality that was definitely their own. This love of colour, characteristic of Polish architecture, found in modern times a new expression of the mural painting of Matejko and Wyspianski in the Cracow churches and in the vivid patterns painted in recent times on the old houses in the Old Market Square of Warsaw.

This feature may be ascribed to oriental influence and it has frequently been put down as such by competent British observers. There is some truth in that suggestion. The influence of oriental art made itself felt in Poland as well as in Venice. The position of the last rampart of the west, washed for centuries by storms and waves from the east, could not fail to leave a mark in art and architecture.

The Poles, who waged a long struggle against the East, acquired to some extent the oriental taste for colour, ornamentation and splendour. The art of Venice also stood out in Italy by its love of rich colours and lavish decorations. But Poland, adopting some of the external pomp and gorgeousness of the East, resisted more stubbornly than some people in the west the subtler and deeper moral influence of the East, with all that it implies. It refused to adopt either the models of the immediate East — the Dostoevskis, Tolstoy and Lenin — or those of the more distant worlds of theosophy, secret societies, Buddhist ethics and Yogi. Poland is apt to cause today in the western world an embarrassed surprise similar to that produced in the sixteenth century in Paris by the delegates of the Polish Parliament, who came to offer the throne of Poland to Henry Valois. They amazed the Frenchmen by the richness of their clothes, reminiscent of Turkey and Persia, and at the same time by the purity of their Latin oratory, delivered with truly Ciceronian ease and polish,

surpassing anything known at that time at the French court.

This influence of the East, or rather of the wars waged against it, was also noticeable in Polish baroque. Poland, converted to Christianity later than Western Europe proper, had taken part only in some of the crusades and the spirit of religious exaltation expressed in Gothic architecture was only partially shared by the Poles. The period of Poland's crusades was the seventeenth century and our crusaders were Zolkiewski, Chodkiewicz and Jan Sobieski. It was a century of Poland's struggle against the Crescent, when Polish blood was freely offered in the defence of the faith. No wonder that Peter Kochanowski's translation of "Jerusalem Delivered" surpassed the original in power of poetic expression, for Kochanowski had wit-



Modern dwelling-house in Warsaw. (Designed by architect B. Pniewski.)

On the back page: The Church of Our Lady and its baroque tower in Czestochowa (Jasna Gora).

nessed wars against the Infidel, while Tasso looked upon the crusades as a fairly remote memory of the past. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that the special exuberance and force of Polish baroque was inspired by the spirit of the period during which that style flourished in Poland. It was a truly Gothic architectural fervour, that seems to have had no contemporary parallel in Europe. Where is the baroque church tower comparable to that of the famous Our Lady's Church in Czestochowa?

Little good can be said about the eighteenth century in Poland. While political instinct and public morality declined, the tradition of wholesome family life was nevertheless preserved intact and remained a foundation of strength in the subsequent period of foreign occupation. That is perhaps why the architecture of that period created a type of Polish country house, modest but dignified. It suited the landscape and the requirements of the country so well that it has not been superseded to this day. The eighteenth century also produced the courtly elegance of Stanislas Augustus, represented by the Lazienki palace of Warsaw, small and probably relatively inexpensive, but full of truly royal refinement and of the subtle melancholy of an ending reign.

I may be too early to judge the modern Polish architecture, to which both the Exhibition and Mr. Soltynski's book devoted a good deal of

Wawel, designed by an Italian in the purest Renaissance style, has nothing particularly Polish in its shape and structure. Considered separately and in the abstract, it is as Italian as the chapel of the Colleoni family in Bergamo. But when we consider the historical associations of this gem of all the Wawel chapels, the impression which it produced on scores of generations — when it was imitated both by magnates founding churches on their estates and by the modest builders of wayside shrines — we cannot help feeling that it has become very much a part of Poland and of its national tradition.

Architecture is different from all the other arts by being not merely the expression of the artistic sense of the nation, but also a part of the material substance of the country itself, as much as the fields, forests and mountains. That is why we, Polish exiles, saw in the Exhibition of Architecture not a collection of artistic exhibits, but rather a picture of our country — from the Sudeten to Dvina, from the Baltic to the Zbrucz — like a picture of a long unseen mother. And in looking at that masterpiece of elegance and splendour, the Lwow chapel of the Boims, we did not see the beauty of its art, but rather the old inscription on the chandelier in its dome: O VOS OMNES QUI TRANSITIS PER VIAS, ATTENDITE ET VIDITE, SI EST DOLOR SICUT DOLOR MEUS?

STANISŁAW KOWALSKI

THE BIBLE

IT IS NOT MY INTENTION TO indulge in a study of the history of religion or of the origins of religious sentiment.¹ It will suffice to state that the religious instinct is inseparable from man and that it always finds expression in two principal ways: metaphysical thought and fear or astonishment caused by the mystery of existence (whether it be terror inspired by a thunderbolt, or failure to understand the reason of the death of millions of innocent people); and the presence of moral codes of conduct, regulating the behaviour of individuals and of communities.

The group of nations which developed the highest civilization of our period lives within the sphere of Christian religion. Christianity is accepted by the majority of the civilized nations of the world as the source of authentic revelation and the basis of the moral laws on which civilization is founded.

Modern rationalism, inspired by the study of matter, dealt a powerful blow to the religious consciousness of civilized communities. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries left a strong mark in that respect. The view that the results of modern research cannot be in agreement with the principles of Christianity was responsible for a certain amount of indifference. It was suggested that the negation of religion based on revelation amounts to progress, while everything associated with religion is backward and obsolete.

This theory overlooked the fact that the attack against religion affected the very foundations of our civilization, which owed in previous centuries its balance and equilibrium to the influence of Christianity. The religious disaffection reduced the strength of the moral rules of conduct which, on the contrary, should have been reinforced in proportion with the increased intensity of social strife and technical efficiency of science. The social and political disasters which we have been witnessing for several decades are due to the fact that man's physical efficiency has overtaken his moral development.

A closer investigation of the mechanism of modern life proves that, as far as the masses are concerned, their estrangement from religion was not due to any rational process of thought, but to a much simpler and commoner phenomenon. It was the growing attachment to comfort, inspired by the numerous facilities provided by modern science. A point was reached where comfort and progress were recognized to be identical with each other, and personal pleasure was admitted to be the aim of progress. Any moral or religious discipline, however, disregards considerations of comfort and imposes certain restrictions.

The utilitarian desire of saving some semblance of a moral code and disposing at the same time of all inconvenient restrictions led to the establishment of private codes, which they described as "their own philosophy of life" or "their own religion." These "private religions" were easily invented and bore a certain superficial resemblance to genuine ethics, because — as I have stressed before — men brought up in the western civilization use notions and ideas evolved by Christianity even when they deny it, for the whole system of their lives is based on Christian teaching.

But no makeshift invention, even made by people of honest intentions, no improvised code of morals can replace in its social function a genuine religion based on metaphysical concepts. Religion can fulfil its task only if its foundations and moral rules are not dependent on any variable elements — in the liturgical language on any temporal things. The whole problem consists in having for foundation a set of standards unaffected by time or events, which always remain the same. Otherwise the final criterion of good and evil may become either the welfare of the community, or the ideal of German domination in the world, or some other notion. People who refuse to believe Christian revelation should accept the moral laws of Christianity, immovable and absolute, if only because they provide the only means of saving the world from a final catastrophe.

One of the main reasons of the outbreak of the present war was the co-existence in the world at the same time of several moral codes. It is increasingly evident that there cannot be any international co-operation without some common standards of conduct. Without such standards it is impossible even to wage war. A nation which discarded metaphysical foundations of ethics may quite easily declare it highly moral to

gouge out the eyes of prisoners or torture them. Such a step might paralyse an honest adversary and become a black-mail liable to help criminals to win a war and put humanity back to a state of barbarism. The Japanese reaction to the abominable German decision to put the British prisoners in chains was highly significant. The Japanese took up the German example and developed it, seeking excuses in events several months old. The ferocity of the present war was greatly increased by the fact that modern weapons found their way into the hands of coloured peoples which had hitherto remained outside the scope of influence of the Christian system of ethics.

It is generally admitted that the present war is an ideological one. Various more or less accurate interpretations of this statement have currency. The truth is that the present war is a war of religion. It is commonly said that fighting will go on until the Allies march into Berlin, until German industry is destroyed and the war criminals appropriately punished. If we are really fighting an ideological war, we should add that we shall not lay down arms until the whole world, or at any rate the area of western civilization, is subject to one moral law. In a group of nations living at peace with each other there may be different systems of government, but there must be only one morality.

There is nothing very alarming in this claim, and nothing that savours of the religious conflicts of the Thirty Years' War. There is no intolerance and no Inquisition, but a simple desire to have a common basis of understanding. Unless the same thing is to be looked upon as good by one nation and as evil by another, and unless these contradictory views are to cause endless conflicts, there must be one common moral standard.

MAGDALEN D.

MELANCHOLY MEMORIES

"THERE IS AN AGREEMENT WITH POLAND. We shall be free; everyone says so!" The words, shouted at a distance by a man out of breath, struck the Poles working on the gurta like a blow. The harbinger of freedom ran the last half mile with a sack of bread on his back, to be able to share the news with the others as quickly as possible. "How do you know?" "Everyone says so at headquarters." "Do you mean we will not have to work?" "I don't know, nobody knows; but an agreement has been concluded." "What will it mean for us?" "I told you nobody knows." Then Daddy brought some pails of water from a distant well. He was called "starik" ("old man") by the Mongols and considered a wizard. On being told the news he looked calmly round and said: "I always told you that the war with Germany would bring an agreement; now come and let us pray." Nobody protested, although the working time was not yet over. The Poles went to a house and knelt down for prayer — for the first time since our arrival in this God-forgotten corner of the earth, the words of prayer were filled with gratitude and joy. God had taken pity on us at last and helped us in our bitter distress.

We went out and we saw on the faces of our Mongolian masters a new expression of uncertainty, doubt and respect. "So it was not for nothing that you have prayed to your God for so long. Now you are free men," observed one of them.

But we waited for the results of the agreement in vain. On the following day we were driven out to work as usual, and the rate of work was nearly doubled. The whole Sowchoz was seized by a frenzy of activity. All the women up to 50, even those who had not been working so far, on account of their health, were summoned for labour. We were very anxious. Perhaps the agreement did not concern us? Perhaps we were forgotten? Only Daddy and Irene, who worked in the Sowchoz office, because she could write Russian, comforted us and said, "Be patient, the pact will reach us too." Our physical and moral strength, heavily taxed by one and a half years of hard labour in exile, was barely sufficient to stand this last trial.

Then, suddenly as usual, a commission of the N.K.W.D. (the new name of the G.P.U.) appeared four weeks after the news of the agreement and our Russian passports were immediately exchanged for blue certificates, which also served as travel vouchers to any place in the U.S.S.R. Work was interrupted and all the Poles began to make hasty prepara-

As to the other religious systems of ethics, they exist almost exclusively outside the sphere of western civilization. There would be no point in trying to subdue them by force; but the work of the missionaries and the attraction exerted by western civilization will have their effect, especially if the West recovers its former vigour and moral force.

There are, however, real dangers even in those contrasts between Christian and non-Christian civilizations. Some of these ancient cultures have developed recently far-reaching ambitions and they may desire to spread their ideas throughout the world. These tendencies are encouraged by the fact that modern transport has reduced the effective size of the world, by the adoption of modern science by coloured nations and by their growing consciousness of equality with, if not superiority to the white people. Until recent times all international dealings, even with non-Christian nations, were based implicitly on the acceptance of Christian ethics in a certain wider sense. Now there is a risk of a decline of western civilization, which might be superseded by another, imposing a new ethical code.

I realized this during a recent visit to the Middle East. I saw in the streets of a large city a life closely resembling in its material aspect the life of western Europe. In another few years it may be quite identical. But the similarity was merely superficial and the spirit was entirely different. I felt distinctly that the familiar instruments and machines were put at the service of different instincts, inspired by a moral code different from our own. My feelings were not free from a certain impersonal fear. It was very much the feeling which I experienced for the first time in 1937, watching a march of the Hitler Jugend

through one of the squares of Hamburg. As far as the coloured peoples are concerned, my reactions would have probably been far stronger if, instead of observing a town of the Middle East, I had seen a military review in Tokio in 1941, in the presence of the Divine Emperor.

Admitting the principle of complete religious freedom, it is impossible not to recognize that the technical progress of recent years and the resulting dwindling of distances impose the need for a common world moral code. Without such common standard, any collaboration between nations would be unthinkable. No international agreement can have any value if each of the signatories attaches a different meaning to its terms. It has been hitherto tacitly understood that the moral rules of western civilization were the foundation of international relations. It is important to maintain them as such.

The present war is being fought for a moral order. We should note, however, that this order has been disturbed within the western civilization itself. This indicates the presence of a traitor or an anti-Christ among us. After all the menace of annihilation came from the territories of western civilization, not from without. The dangerous growth seems to have taken root within our own body. Hitler is no more than a magnified symptom of the disease, presenting all its characteristic features in their worst form.

The balance between technical progress and moral force has been disturbed. Many people have abandoned moral principles in their lives, for a variety of reasons. Many of them believe that they are justified in respecting only the law of their own interest. Others, including some large and strong groups, believe it right to profess loudly elevated

moral principles and defy them in practice, or respect them only in so far as they conform to their interests. Finally many people and many nations refuse to admit that moral laws should be as binding for political parties, parliaments, banks or governments as they are for individuals.

I believe that the Allies will win the war, because they are fighting for a good cause, but peace cannot be won by a cold system of calculation, disregarding moral values and the need for sacrifice. I am afraid that, as before, as soon as hostilities are ended and the soldiers recede into the background, people who had done little to achieve victory may come to the fore, believing themselves justified in securing profits when the danger is over and using the names of a few great personalities as a screen for their activities.

In the complicated and involved life of the modern world there does not seem to be any definite current of moral thought. Civilized communities have been growing indifferent to moral problems, except in time of war, when the idea of selfless sacrifice, inseparable from any true morality, becomes temporarily useful as a weapon helping to achieve victory. While individual people still endeavour to preserve appearances and pay lip service to moral principles, they have often lost sight of the true meaning of life, inclining to the view that the only aim of technical progress and of human existence is the achievement of the maximum of physical comfort.

THE COMMON CAUSE

(Letter to the Editor)

Dear Sir,

May I be permitted to endorse the suggestion made by Mr. Gilbertson for a great League of Prayer for Poland, our "Common Cause."

Many of us have, ever since the beginning of Poland's long "Via Dolorosa" made it our daily duty to recite the sorrowful mysteries for her suffering people, together with the frequent recital of our late Cardinal's special prayer for Poland.

Would it be possible to combine the representation of the Polish Eagle with one of Our Lady of Walsingham, for the badge. I beg to offer this suggestion. You will receive many others no doubt. The formation of such a league is something for which many of us have been waiting for a long time.

Thanking Mr. Gilbertson for voicing our wishes, and hoping to see their speedy realization.

I beg to remain,

Yours faithfully,

L. BLACKWELL,
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¹ This article is taken from a book, which will shortly be published in the Polish language.