

SCRIPTA MANENT

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per la concessione delle fotografie
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LA CHIESA E LA SVOLTA DEGLI ANNI 80/90 IN EUROPA CENTRO ~ ORIENTALE

Atti
della conferenza organizzata dall'Ambasciata della Repubblica di Polonia presso la Santa Sede
in collaborazione con la Pontificia Accademia delle Scienze
nell'anno della canonizzazione di Giovanni Paolo II
e del 25° anniversario dell'Annus mirabilis in Polonia e in Europa centro-orientale

Vaticano, 6 giugno 2014

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Ambasciata
della Repubblica di Polonia
presso la Santa Sede

WSTĘP

Z WIELKĄ RADOŚCIĄ oddaję w ręce Czytelników zapis niezwyklej debaty, która odbyła się w ramach konferencji zorganizowanej przez Ambasadę Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej przy Stolicy Apostolskiej we współpracy z Papieską Akademią Nauk w dniu 6 czerwca 2014 roku w Watykanie.

W ćwierć wieku od pierwszych wolnych wyborów w Polsce od czasów II wojny światowej obchodziliśmy wtedy uroczyście 25-lecie polskiej wolności. Cały rok 2014 jest dla nas wspomnieniem tamtego *Annus mirabilis*, kiedy dzięki działalności św. Jana Pawła II i wspartej przez Kościół demokratycznej opozycji w Polsce zapoczątkowaliśmy nie tylko odrodzenie się naszego Państwa po latach nazistowskiego i komunistycznego zniewolenia, ale także daliśmy nadzieję innym krajom naszej części Europy na zamknięcie tamtej ponurej epoki.

W ćwierć wieku później spotkaliśmy się jako rodzina wolnych ludzi i wolnych narodów w Zjednoczonej Europie. Szczególnym akcentem był dla tego spotkania dzień 27 kwietnia, kiedy Ojciec Święty Franciszek kanonizował Papieża Soboru świętego Jana XXIII i Papieża-Polaka, Papieża-Słowianina, świętego Jana Pawła II Wielkiego.

Debata „Kościół i przełom lat 80/90 w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej” zgromadziła bohaterów i bezpośrednich świadków tamtych wydarzeń. Byłoby grzechem skazać ich świadectwa na zapomnienie i nie przekazać ich szerszemu gronu odbiorców. Z tego powodu, kierując się starożytną maksymą *scripta manent* postanowiliśmy utrwalić przebieg debaty w postaci osobnej książki.

Jeszcze raz serdecznie dziękuję wszystkim, którzy przyczynili się do sukcesu konferencji i do wydania niniejszej publikacji: mówcom, uczestnikom, tłumaczom i organizatorom.

Piotr Nowina-Konopka

Ambasador Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej przy Stolicy Apostolskiej

INTRODUCTION

IT IS WITH GREAT JOY that I put in the hands of the Reader the transcription of an unusual debate, held at the Vatican on 6 June, 2014, in the framework of the conference organized by the Polish Embassy to the Holy See, in collaboration with the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences.

A quarter of a century after free elections in Poland – the first after the second world war – we solemnly celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of Polish freedom. The whole of 2014 is for us a year of memories and remembrance of that *Annus mirabilis* in which, thanks to the activities of Saint John Paul II and those of the democratic opposition in Poland supported by the Church, not only did we begin the process of renewal of our nation after years of slavery to Nazism and Communism, but we also infused hope into other nations in our part of Europe, hope that a dark period may perhaps be brought to a close.

And now, a quarter of a century later, we met as a family of free people and free nations in a United Europe. A special accent was added to this meeting on 27 April, when Pope Francis canonized the Pope of the Second Vatican Council, Saint John XXIII, and the Polish Pope – the Slavic Pope – Saint John Paul II the Great.

The debate, “The Church and the Turning Point in the 1980s and 90s in Central and Eastern Europe”, brought together protagonists and direct witnesses of the events of those years. It would be a pity to consign their testimony to oblivion and not convey them to a wider circle of readers. For this reason, and also because we are faithful to the old adage *scripta manent* – written words remain – we have decided to make a book out of this debate.

Once again let me cordially thank all those who have contributed to the success of this conference and to the publication that we are about to present to you: the orators, participants, translators and organizers.

Piotr Nowina-Konopka

Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the Holy See



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Opening Words



PIOTR NOWINA-KONOPKA

A Polish economist, university professor, Catholic activist, spokesman for Lech Wałęsa 1982-1989. Member of the Diet of the Polish Republic 1991-2001. Minister in 1989 and 1990. Secretary of State for European Affairs and assistant to the Head Negotiator Poland – EU 1998-1999. Vice-Director of the College of Europe, 1999-2004. President of the “Robert Schuman” Polish Foundation since 1991. Director of the European Parliament Liaison Office with the US Congress, Brussels/Washington 2006-2012. Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the Holy See since 2013.

LET ME TODAY GREET all those who, together with the Embassy and the Academy, wish to express their gratitude to Divine Providence for that felicitous year, the *Annus mirabilis* of 1989.

That expression was used for the first time by the English poet John Dryden in a celebrated poem in which he glorified the year 1666, because in that year, in spite of the doomsday predictions, no significant calamities took place. In short, worse things could have happened than those that actually did – namely, the Great London Fire, and a series of terrible disasters which struck the city on the banks of the Thames.

Our *Annus mirabilis* truly proved to be a miracle. And if truth be told, that year lasted just a little longer, beginning, if we credit the widely accepted interpretation, on 16 October 1978, in the Sistine Chapel near here. There was no fire, but a plume of white smoke rising from the chimney above the chapel, which announced an exceptional event and allowed all to sense that something more important yet was in the making. The years to come confirmed this premonition in such a way that I think not even the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints with the help of the best devil’s advocates could have put it in doubt. In other words, it would have been difficult to imagine in 1989 that anything better could have happened than what did in fact happen. On the last page of our program you will find the calendar of those events, whose central section starts with the election of Cardinal Wojtyła – the pope “from a distant country”, from Poland. What came to pass after the Conclave, after his first Apostolic pilgrimage to Poland, after the founding of “Solidarność”, and after the proclamation of martial law – what happened to us 25 years ago, I see this as a miracle. And I recall John Paul II’s words on 11 June, 1999 (fifteen years ago), when he addressed the Polish Parliament off the record. They were: “How it happened to us!”

Our meeting today is attended by those who witnessed the events of those times. I thank them for being here. They come from Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Ukraine. I thank Lech Wałęsa, and Tomáš Hálik. Martin Palouš and František Mikloško, György Hölvenyi and Myroslav Marynovicz. Each one of them of course views the facts from his own angle, and reads the history of 1989 differently. I thank the great protagonists of the Vatican of those times, who under the direction of John Paul II brought courage and hope to Central and Eastern Europe, and infused these sentiments into believers and non-believers alike. And Messrs Cardinals Poupard and Sodano, and also Messrs Cardinals Etchegaray, Ravasi, Ryłko and Grochowski who could not be here with us today, but all of whom belonged to those legendary “divisions of the Pope” which were mocked by the dictators.

I cannot list all the highly deserving individuals, but I’m firmly convinced that the Good Lord of History will keep apart a prize for all those who contributed to that effort, those who helped us in Central and Eastern Europe to believe in the “strength of the defenceless”.

I fear that I and His Excellency Sánchez Sorondo, as organizers of this conference, are too moved by our meeting today for us to chair and conduct our symposium with sufficient calm. Let me, then, request Professor Piotr Salwa, Director of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Rome, to perform this task for us. I ask him to do it using “the lens and the eye of the sage”.

PIOTR SALWA

Conference Chairman

**PIOTR SALWA**

A Polish scholar of Italian studies, professor at Warsaw University, member of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Professor at Amsterdam University and Notre Dame University in the US. Recipient of scholarships at Villa i Tatti – Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies in Florence, Herzog August Bibliothek, Premio Mondello, member of the jury of “An Author for Europe”. Director of the Centre of Studies of the Polish Academy in Rome since 2013.



PAUL JOSEPH JEAN POUPARD

A French theologian and historian, ordained to the priesthood in 1954, nominated Bishop in 1979. Rector of the Catholic Institute of Paris 1972-1980, auxiliary Bishop of Paris 1979, Archbishop and President of the Secretariat for Non-Believers at the Roman Curia 1980, Cardinal and President of the Secretariat for Non-Believers 1985, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture 1988-2007, President of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue 2006-2007.

The Church at the Turning Point of the 1980s and 90s in Central and Eastern Europe

*Mr. Cardinal, Mr. President, Mr. Ambassador, Dear Excellency,
Dear Martin Palouš and Don Tomáš Halík,
Esteemed Professors, Ladies and Gentlemen and Dear Friends,*

I HEARTILY THANK HIS EXCELLENCY PIOTR NOWINA-KONOPKA, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the Holy See, for having organized this highly emblematic meeting on the 25th anniversary of the *Annus Mirabilis* in Poland and in Central and Eastern Europe. It happens that this year also marks the canonization of John Paul II – the true protagonist of those historic events. I also thank His Excellency for having significantly invited the other crucial players in those events, beginning with President Lech Wałęsa, Founder of the “Solidarność” Movement, dear Martin Palouš, the dissident and spokesman of Charta 77, dear dissident Don Tomáš Halík, and the others who witnessed those years in the Republics of Slovakia, Hungary and Ukraine.

Dear Ambassador, I thank you in particular, and always remember our first meeting in Warsaw, in the now distant and tragic days when Poland was in a state of war, and we met at the symposium held 30 May-3 June, 1988, with the banned labour union “Solidarność”. In November 2009, on the 10th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Lech Wałęsa, “Solidarność”’s historical founder, whom I also greet respectfully and cordially, declared: “Le renversement du mur de Berlin revient à 50% au pape Jean-Paul II, à 30% à “Solidarność,” et seulement à 20% au reste du monde”¹.

THE ANNUS MIRABILIS

With some degree of detachment, Pope John Paul II devoted the Third Chapter of the *Centesimus Annus* Encyclical, dated 1st May, 1991, to the year 1989 and to “the unexpected and promising development of events in recent years. Their climax, surely, proved to be the events of 1989 in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe”. His first statement (no. 22) is that “the Church committed itself significantly, I should

1. *Paris-Match*, 12-18 November 2009.

say decisively, to defend and promote the rights of man [...]. And this has led us to seek forms of resistance and the sort of political solutions which would more deeply respect the dignity of those who were the victims of a painful series of injustices and resentments, of a ruined economy and heavy social strife". He adds: "Amongst the many factors that brought down the oppressive regimes, the one that was decisive and set the changes in motion, is assuredly the violation of the right to work" (no. 23). "The second factor (no. 24) is assuredly the inefficiency of the economic system, [...] this being a consequence of the violation of the human right to private initiative, property and freedom in the economic field, as well as the total disregard for the cultural and national dimension. But the true cause of the new events, is the spiritual vacuum created by atheism". John Paul concludes (no. 25): "The events of 1989 are an example of the success of the will to negotiate, as well as of the evangelical spirit, against an antagonist who refuses to be bound by moral principles [...]. Certainly, the struggle which led up to the changes of 1989 required lucidity, moderation, suffering and sacrifice; in a certain sense, it was the outcome of prayer, and would have been unthinkable without an unlimited faith in God, the Lord of History".

Likewise, the Pope warns (no. 26): "The events of 1989 took place largely in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, they are universally important because they engender positive and negative consequences which have a bearing on the human family as a whole [...] The crisis of Marxism does not remove the situations of injustice and oppression in the world, from which Marxism itself derived nourishment, and which it turned into its tools". John Paul goes on to state (n. 27): "We must firmly wish that hatred and violence shall not triumph in our hearts, above all not in the hearts of those who fight for justice [...] Concrete steps are needed to create and consolidate international structures that can arbitrate satisfactorily in the conflicts that arise between nations, so that each of them may stand up for its rights and reach the correct agreement and peaceful solution in keeping with the rights of the other nations. All this is particularly the case for the European nations, which are intimately bound together by a common culture and a common history stretching back thousands of years".

25 YEARS LATER

If there is a fundamental lesson to be learnt from the events of the *Annus Mirabilis* of 1989, it is undoubtedly that history can change its direction under the decisive push of a few men armed with deep faith. History is not inevitably subject to inflexible mechanisms, and there are times when the heroism of the will to overcome sustained by prayer can victoriously oppose the supposed fatality of events. How can I forget what John Paul said on January 12, 1990, to the Pontifical Council for Culture, to whom he had given audience: "In the midst of their brethren, the heroic resistance of the Christian communities against an inhuman totalitarianism, has been a cause for admiration. Walls collapsed, frontiers were opened, a great hope has come true. From East to West, and from North to South, history on the move once again challenges an order that was first of all based on force and fear".

The following day, 13 January, when he received the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See, Pope Wojtyła expressed himself most lyrically: "Whole peoples have overcome fear. An unsuppressible thirst for freedom has accelerated this evolution, made walls come down and opened doors. All this has come to bear the features of a radical overturning of the situation. You surely must have noticed that the point of departure here, or the meeting point, has often been a church. Little by little, candles have started burning, becoming a true path of light, as if to say to those who over the years wanted to limit the human horizons on this earth, that man cannot remain in chains indefinitely. Under our gaze it seems that a Europe of the Spirit is coming to life again. Warsaw, Moscow, Budapest, Berlin, Prague, Sofia and Bucharest – to mention only the capitals – have become the stages of a long pilgrimage towards freedom. [...] What is wonderful about the events we have come to witness is that entire peoples are now speaking: women, the young, men, all have stepped beyond fear". How can we not find in these burning words the historical echo of the new Pope's passionate cry, on the day of his enthronement, on the Square of Saint Peter's Basilica: "Have no fear! Yes, open the doors wide to Christ, to his redeeming power, open the frontiers of nations, the economic and political systems, the unlimited fields of culture [...] Have no fear!".

I am most grateful to you, Mr. Ambassador, for having offered us this historical meeting. 25 years after those events, it allows us to render homage to the actors of those truly miraculous events through, as Vaclav Havel said, the exceptional men from Central and Eastern Europe who helped shape them and are gathered here; and above all, to render homage to Pope John Paul II on the day after his canonization, he who more than any other fostered this great and peaceful change; even though, in his saintly humility, he defined himself evangelically as a "useless servant", saying: "It is the Church that has counted in this process, not the pope"². He is the one who, right from his first apostolic journey to his motherland (2-10 June, 1979), and in spite of all the obstacles, tirelessly and decisively destabilized the totalitarian Hydra, starting with the holy mass he celebrated in Victory Square in Warsaw, thus giving an irresistible impulse to the historic movement of "Solidarność".

And it is from Poland that the process impelled in this way developed momentously, moving from the first free elections in Poland after the Second World War, held on 4 June 1989 (and here we are, today, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of that date), on to the government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, followed by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, the free elections in the German Democratic Republic, in Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, and finally the unification of Germany at the heart of Europe.

Let us, then, render homage to the great and saintly Pope John Paul II, whom we might call the "Patron of your Freedom", as Cardinal Parolin felicitously said last Sunday in Warsaw; and to all the actors of the *Annus Mirabilis*, who will now honour us by offering their excellent account of those historic events.

2. M. SIGNIFREDI, *Giovanni Paolo II e la fine del comunismo. La transizione in Polonia 1978-1989* [John Paul and the End of Communism. The transition in Poland, 1978-1989], Guerini, 2013, p. 481.



Testimony from Poland



LECH WAŁĘSA

A Polish electrician, labour union leader and dissident since 1970. Was arrested many times and dismissed from work. A leader of strikes, including the strike at the shipyard in Danzig (Gdańsk) in 1980, co-founder and leader of “Solidarność”. Interned in 1981-1982, awarded the Noble Peace Prize 1983. Took part in the “Round Table” negotiations in 1989. President 1990-1995 of the Republic of Poland, elected by universal suffrage. Married with 8 children.

Esteemed Sirs,

IN ORDER TO TELL YOU all the things that are on my mind, I would need at least as much time as Fidel Castro used to take for his speeches – i.e., as much as four hours. But, having only ten minutes at my disposal, I’ll try to be brief. More than the past, it’s the present and future that interest me. But to discuss these I will need to say a few things about that past. The Communist system had a simple philosophy: to prohibit all free association of individuals, and immediately suppress any form of resistance or opposition. As if this were not enough, 200,000 Soviet soldiers were posted permanently inside Poland, and a million more troops surrounded the country on the outside, not to mention the arsenals of nuclear warheads.

At that time the whole world knew and was quite convinced that only a nuclear war could change the existing situation. The second Christian Millennium was coming to an end, and the world was at a near standstill. I have not the least doubt that, thanks to our dreams and our prayers, we received a gift from heaven: a Polish pope. In this situation of no trust and no hope in any sort of change – with nobody at the end of the second millennium believing that a change was possible – the new Pope came to Poland, one year after his election.

You surely remember how the world at large then focussed its gaze on this Communist country. Almost the whole Polish nation took part in the meetings with the Pope, in the various locations where they took place. The Holy Father at that time mobilized us through prayer. Not through a revolution, not through a struggle against Communism, but through prayer. And in addition he exhorted us with these words: “Have no fear, change the face of the earth, of this earth!”.

Before that, for a full ten years I had tried to gather volunteers for the fight against Communism. I was successful in grouping together maybe a dozen

people, and amongst these were two agents of the special services. But only one year after the Holy Father became Pope, I had managed to bring together 10 million people. And then I was no longer either wise or rich. But it was exactly this togetherness through prayer, this encouragement given us by the Holy Father, met by a tiny group of dissidents, that first helped us to move on, and enabled us to break the teeth of the Soviet bear. And when the bear was no longer able to bite, then other nations, too, joined us, and they too secured their freedom.

In this battle I waged, this battle I headed, unbelievable things came to pass. I myself was surprised at how things were progressing, and how everything was moving towards a victory. All these events were somehow incredible, maybe one day I'll write about them. And so I have no doubt whatsoever that God was present in all this, and that He gave us the chance to enter into the Third Millennium without the deadweight of Communism. Having witnessed those events and those victories, it now behoves us to derive appropriate conclusions and use these conclusions to build the Third Millennium. At that time nobody thought we had the least chance of claiming victory. I would talk to presidents, prime ministers, kings, and not one of them believed that we would ever be able to vanquish Communism.

Now, when we say that we need to build the European unity, I hear the same voices telling us that there is no chance of that happening. Maybe these voices are softer than the voices then, but they continue saying that this unity is impossible, that our attempts will fail. I have heard them in the past, but now, after all my experiences, I deeply believe that, yes, we will succeed, if we only try to build a unity in the same way as we achieved victory then – that is, referring to basic values, to the foundations of faith and to God. Then it will be a good and a wise thing. If we bring together all these elements, we can build the European unity, and it will be a good thing indeed. Yes, this is the challenge for our generation today.

If we fight on, we shall again witness incredible things. At present we have an additional possibility! In Europe we share the same economic system and the same political system. Residual differences between the States remain as far as their development is concerned, and then there are differences created by borders. There are differences in the social policies, in the fiscal systems, in many others still. But these are not big issues, they can be overcome provided there is the good will and the understanding as to the foundations upon which we wish to build. If our secular direction is too far left, I'm sure we won't go very far, nor will be able to build the European unity.

When I broach these topics – and I do so in all continents – the public straightaway gets divided into two. Some would like to build the future of the world basing it on the foundation of individual freedom, the free market and the rule of law. This is what one half of the public wishes. The other half maintains that we will never be able to build anything because sooner or later money, populism and demagoguery will lead us again to fight one another. This is why I

say: to build this world in the best way we need first to develop and share the necessary thoughts and refer to the values we have all agreed to abide by.

The world of many religions, the world in which there are also non-believers, needs ten secular commandments for all. If these are missing, if all these various foundations do not harmonize, then certainly we won't be able to build great things. Our generation, which has been truly successful in many fields, having eliminated so many divisions – this generation, I say, has the chance to start a new and properly thought-out construction of Europe.

I'm waiting for it, and I hope that the positions we have taken will become even more dynamic. Today we are witnessing a battle for the new face of Europe and the globalization process in the near future. Today these two concepts are empty, all depends on what contents we will inject into them, what words we will use to fill them, what programs and structures we will suggest. Let us try to fill these concepts with edifying, just, honest, spiritual things, confirming them with our actions. Only then will we be able to say of this generation: not only did it demolish in a big way, it was also able to build well at the start of the Third Millennium.

For me, a Catholic and a faithful son of the Church, the message of our religion and of the Church which has made me into what I am, will always be the one I feel closest to me. I had the good fortune of meeting the great son of our Church, Saint John Paul II, and had the good fortune, too, of being able to lead our nation to victory. We always understood each other without too many words. In my life I have ever been inspired by faith: my faith in God and the confidence I had in my actions. Today, when I travel around the world, I see that in all religions and in every belief we all see the same God. Only that, sometimes, the teachers are too many and this is the origin of differences and religious troubles.

This is why I appeal to all to seek common values. I call these common values secular to avoid having to associate them with any religion, for today this divides us much more than it unites us. But the meaning is one only, and I believe it coincides with the message of the Polish Pope: let us build a civilization that is based on the common welfare and a mutual respect amongst all human beings. Let us sustain one another and seek what unites us and not what divides us!

**MARTIN PALOUŠ**

A Czech chemist, philosopher, sociologist and jurist. Was one of the first signatories of Charter 77, and spokesman of groups promoting the rights of man, co-founder of the Civic Forum, Member of the National Assembly 1990, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. Ambassador of the Czech Republic in the USA 2001-2005. Later Permanent Representative at the UN 2006. A university professor, he presently teaches at Florida International University.

Testimony from the Czech Republic*

Eminencies, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen!

IT IS, INDEED A DISTINCT HONOR FOR ME to participate personally in this conference focused on the role of the Catholic Church, headed by Pope Saint John Paul II, in the events of the 1970s and 1980s which resulted in the fall of Communism in our part of the world during the *Annus Mirabilis* of 1989, and to be entrusted to serve here as a witness from the Czech Republic.

First of all I would like wholeheartedly to thank the organizers, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and The Embassy of Poland to the Holy See, for promoting this august and friendly gathering here, in the seat of the Academy – an amazing place of learning, reflection and dialogue in the middle of the Vatican gardens.

I have to admit right away: it is not easy for me to be given the floor after a Polish witness, the founder of “Solidarność”, and former President of Poland, Lech Wałęsa.

Two days ago, on June 4, we commemorated the 25th anniversary of the first free elections in Poland – and obviously not only in Poland, but in the whole Soviet block! It was a signal, good news indeed, which couldn't be ignored and remain unnoticed by all the other nations which had been living for decades behind the “iron curtain”. It was a clear message for them that the era of totalitarianism – imposed on them by the Cold War; keeping them in slavery and morally corrupting whole generations; not allowing their members to freely express their political will in spite of the name “people's democracy”, given to this form of government by the communist ideologues – was coming to an end!

There is no doubt that throughout the whole period of the 1970s and the 1980s it was always Poland where the flag of resistance against the communist

* An abbreviated version of this lecture was delivered at the conference “La Chiesa nel momento di svolta degli anni 80 e 90 in Europa Centro-Orientale” on June 6, 2014 in the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in Vatican.

tyranny was raised first and kept higher than anywhere else; that it was again the struggling Poles, leaders by example and inspiration, who decisively helped all other East and Central European nations to achieve the same thing, following their lead after a series of victorious revolutions bursting out one after another in their countries.

And yesterday, a day later, I had an opportunity to see the Rome premiere of a really great movie of Andrzej Wajda – “*Wałęsa. Man of Hope*”. I realized again, how unique and irreplaceable was the role of this man in our more recent historical events; how much not only Poles, but we Eastern and Central Europeans in general owe to him for his personal contribution to our own liberation. Wasn't it our hopelessness and resignation – and not only the brute power of our slave-masters - that kept us so long in our chains? Wasn't it the Polish “*Solidarność*” created by this man of hope that demonstrated to us that we can do something, too, in spite of our seemingly hopeless situation? Wasn't it his Polish inspiration that made us realize that we also are able to say no to the devil, to resist the tyranny, to take concerted action and change our lot? So President Wałęsa, thank you very much, once again, for your courage, faith and determination!

II

Let me use this limited time I have been assigned for my Czech testimony to take you as quickly as I can through our own history in the 1970s and the 1980s leading up to our Velvet Revolution – which started after the brutal attack of police anti-riot forces on the participants of the demonstration in Prague on November 17, was followed by the demise of the Communist Government on December 3, the election of Václav Havel as Czechoslovak President on December 29, and was crowned by our first free Parliamentary Elections on June 8 and 9, 1990. I will break it down into several distinct periods and try to highlight briefly its several milestones, with special focus on the role of Catholic Church.

1968

This account must begin with the reminder of the Prague Spring. It started in January when Alexander Dubček surprisingly replaced Antonín Novotný as First Secretary of the Communist Party's Central Committee, and launched the process of democratization of a totalitarian system of government which communist rule had been imposing on us for the past two decades. It was terminated eight months later by the invasion of Warsaw Pact armies led by the Soviet Union, “invited” by an undisclosed group of communist functionaries with the intention of stopping such a “counter-revolution”.

If the project to endow socialism with a “human face”, carried through by Dubček's “progressive” wing in the communist leadership, had brought a temporary breath of freedom into our society and even roused false hopes that de-

spite all ideological prognostications we were not doomed to live in the “Soviet paradise” forever, the process of “normalization” which started immediately after the arrival and under the supervision of the Soviet military forces, threw the citizens of Czechoslovakia into a state of resignation and hopelessness. Some people decided they had had enough of socialism of any kind and left the country. The vast majority of those who stayed on didn't see any other alternative for themselves other than to start again to play the usual and well-known survival games, as they had done successfully in the past, adjusting themselves flexibly and creatively to the changing circumstances.

1975

The new leadership of the party and the state – as the standard official phrase went in all East Central European one-party systems – had full reason to believe that the policy of normalization under their watch was being implemented successfully and effectively; that its main objective – to again win the hearts and minds of people temporarily poisoned by dangerous, counter-revolutionary ideas – had been successfully achieved. The thorough screening of the whole society which had just ended, not only had purged all its governing bodies of all reactionary or revisionists elements which managed to seize power in the “years of crisis.” It also showed that most of the average citizens who had been demonstrating their firm and immutable allegiance to the “ideals of January” not long before were ready to accept the “social contract” generously offered to them by the new rulers, and to coordinate themselves with a new situation.

The whole political machinery seemed to work again as smoothly as it had in the good old days before the counter-revolution hit. The hard-liners were thus triumphant and their interpretation of the 1968 events monopolized the public sphere. The whole opposition they had been confronted with in the recent past – either in the Communist Party or outside of it – was simply silenced and entirely disappeared.

Only very few people were ready to break the deathly silence from time to time and express publicly their opinions dissenting from the official “party line”. One of them was Václav Havel, a playwright never associated with the Communist Party, who wrote an open letter to its leader, Dr. Gustáv Husák, to alert him about what he was observing throughout a “normalized” Czechoslovak society. The matter of his concern was a deep rift between the outside behavior and the inner beliefs of most Czechs and Slovaks – no longer articulating their own convictions in public, but driven to agree with the regime by nothing else than their own fears; not telling the truth when expressing their political views, but being forced constantly to lie and trying desperately to get used to it. According to Havel, the success of normalization was in fact not a success at all, but on the contrary, a big failure. What can be the long-term result of such an existentially humiliating situation for Czechoslovak citizens, he asked

Dr. Husák. And immediately he gave his own answer – a crisis, even deeper and more radical than the one which had just been seemingly overcome, with unpredictable consequences. In conclusion he wrote: “As a citizen of this country, I hereby request, openly and publicly, that you and the leading representatives of the present regime seriously consider the matters to which I have tried to draw your attention, that in their light you assess the degree of your historic responsibility, and act accordingly.”¹

A few months later, the same Dr. Husák – who in the meantime had become President of Czechoslovakia – added his signature to the Final Act of the Conference on Cooperation and Security in Europe, which in its “third basket” declared the commitment of participating states to respect human rights and the fundamental freedoms of their citizens, and launched the so-called “Helsinki process”.

1977

On January 6, the creation of Charter 77, signed by 242 Czechoslovak citizens, was publicly announced. According to its original declaration it was “a loose, informal and open association of people of various shades of opinion, faiths and professions, united by the will to strive individually and collectively for the respect of civic and human rights in our own country and throughout the world.” The legal basis for Charter 77’s future activities was the entry into force of two major United Nations human rights covenants³ (published in the Czechoslovak Register of Laws No. 120 of October 13, 1976) and the President’s signature on the Final Act mentioned above.

However, the reason why the signatories of Charter 77 – coming indeed from all walks of life: Christians of various denominations, Jews, ex-Communists expelled from the party for their revolt in 1968, independent liberal intellectuals and quite a few young people with no specific background, creed, goals or expectations – decided to join this initiative was not political but, exactly as Havel had predicted in his letter to Dr. Husák, simply existential. The message they were sending to the Czechoslovak authorities was loud and clear: We have had enough. We cannot remain silent, with hypocrisy as an accepted norm in today’s Czechoslovakia, where all basic human rights “exist, regrettably, on paper alone” and so many people have become “victims of a virtual apartheid.”⁵

Here is how philosopher Jan Patočka, who together with Václav Havel and Jiří Hájek (minister for Foreign Affairs in 1968) became one of the three Charter 77 spokespersons, characterized the fundamental objective of the Charter 77

movement and defined the concept of human rights it was standing for. Because of the central importance of his argument, I will quote from him at length. What Charter 77 was aiming at was, according to Patočka, simply “to bring to everyone’s clear consciousness the truths of which we are all in some sense aware [...] The concept of human rights is nothing but the conviction that states and society as a whole also consider themselves to be subject to the sovereignty of moral sentiment, that they recognize something unqualified above them, something that is bindingly sacred and inviolable even for them, and that they intend to contribute to this end with the power by which they create and ensure legal norms [...] Participants in Charter 77 do not take upon themselves any political rights or functions, nor do they want to be a moral authority or “the conscience” of society; their efforts are aimed exclusively at cleansing and reinforcing the awareness that a higher authority does exist, to which they are obliged, individually in their conscience, and to which states are bound by their signatures on important international covenants; that they are bound not only by expediency, according to the rules of political advantage or disadvantage, but that their signatures there mean that they accept the rule that politics are indeed subject to law and that law is not subject to politics.”⁶

1978

On the spring of the year when Polish cardinal Karol Wojtyła was elected Pope John Paul II (on October 16) a debate was taking place in the Charter 77 circles on how to proceed in the general climate of hostility fostered by the communist regime and in the midst of its on-going repressions against the dissidents. Václav Benda, one of the Catholics among them, wrote a text entitled “Parallel Polis”⁷ which drew a lot of attention and stirred further discussions. It pointed to an important dimension not articulated sufficiently in the moral reasoning of Jan Patočka, who died only a few weeks after Charter 77 came into existence. The proposed dialogue on human rights with the government, stated Benda, hadn’t taken place, and it was highly unlikely that it would in the foreseeable future. What the initiative of Charter 77 had managed instead, was to open a certain independent public space, which had not existed before in our society stricken by the totalitarian plague. It was this public space that should be not only defended, but gradually expanded further, with all the means at Charter 77’s disposal.

In the summer, Czech and Polish dissidents organized the first clandestine meeting in the mountains on the border between Czechoslovakia and Poland.

1. V. HAVEL: “Dear Dr. Husák”, in: *Open Letters. Selected Writings 1965-1990*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1991, Selected and Edited by Paul Wilson, p. 83.

2. Quoted from the English version of the *Manifesto of Charter 77* in the Library of Congress (http://rs6.loc.gov/frd/cs/czechoslovakia/cs_appnd.html).

3. The “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights” and the “International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights”.

4. *Manifesto of Charter 77*, op. cit.

5. *Ibid.*

6. J. PATOČKA, “What Charter 77 is, and What it is Not”, in: *The Great Lie. Classic and Recent Appraisals of Ideology and Totalitarianism*, ed. by F. Flagg Taylor IV, ISI Books, Wilmington Delaware, 2011, pp. 457-458.

7. V. BENDA, *The Great Lie. Classic and Recent Appraisals of Ideology and Totalitarianism*, op. cit., pp. 460-476.

They released a joint declaration and agreed to communicate and cooperate on a regular basis. One of the first projects agreed upon was a book of essays written by authors from both sides, to be published by the “samizdat” (in both Czech and Polish independent and unofficial “publishing houses”, distributing their production within the circle of friends and supporters, but also reaching out to an ever growing segment of the population).

In October, Václav Havel wrote for it his famous text “The Power of the Powerless” which was, and actually still is perceived as a kind of intellectual basis for anti-totalitarian dissent.

1979

In May of the year of Pope John Paul II’s first visit to his motherland, in which he addressed Poles by uttering his famous “Do not be afraid!”, a wave of repressions hit the Czechoslovak “parallel polis.” Václav Benda, Václav Havel and eight other members of the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted were arrested. However, this didn’t eliminate the problem which the government had to deal with when the “Helsinki process”, after the first follow-up conference in Belgrade (October 1977 – March 1978), got into full swing. The new people stepped in immediately to replace those who had been arrested. All Charter 77 activities went on and even intensified. Cardinal František Tomášek, the head of Czech Catholic Church, whose original relationship with the Charter 77 had not been very positive, opened up (apparently inspired or even instructed by the new Pope) discrete communication channels with the Catholics among the Charter 77 signatories and gave the green light to the initiatives within the Church supporting the victims of repressions.

1980-1984

Since the Polish dissidents became the main international partners of the Czechs and Slovaks participating in Charter 77 activities – as a result of which the changing circumstances in Poland came to significantly affect the Czechoslovak situation – I need to mention first, albeit telegraphically, what was happening there during this turbulent period.

On August 31, 1980, “Solidarność”, the first trade union not controlled by the Communist Party within the Soviet block, was created in the Gdansk Shipyard, and Lech Wałęsa became its president. It was attracting more and more people, its branches started to mushroom all over Poland. In September 1981 the number of “Solidarność” members reached almost 10 million – nearly one third of all workers in the country! By the end of 1981 “Solidarność” grew into a really powerful political organization in a country stricken by a devastating economic crisis, and started to threaten the constitutionally guaranteed leading role of the ruling party.

On December 13, 1981 General Jaruzelski declared Martial Law. Thousands of “Solidarność” activists, including almost all of its leaders, were detained and its activities immediately banned. Normal public life disappeared overnight in Poland; many people were sentenced to jail for political activities, many others emigrated. “Solidarność”, no matter how paralyzed, however, didn’t cease to exist and turned itself into a clandestine organization, disseminating information, publishing journals and books, distributing financial aid to the victims and their families, still reaching out to the whole Polish population. Martial law was ended on July 22, 1983, but many severe restrictions it had imposed on Poles still remained in effect.

In June 1983, still with the martial law in power, but in the atmosphere of expectation that it would end soon, Pope John Paul II visited Poland for the second time.

In December 1983, Lech Wałęsa, released from detention, received the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo.

So what was happening in Czechoslovakia during these years? The persecution of dissidents continued on a daily basis, one campaign by the secret police followed another, in a similar way to Poland. The life of the “parallel polis” – and again like in Poland – went on and on in all its available forms: human rights advocacy, assistance to the victims of oppression, distribution of unbiased information through the network of independent bulletins, cultural activities, “flying universities”⁸, and other forms of independent education. The contacts with the Polish partners, cooperation in the context of the “Helsinki process” and the regular exchange of information also continued as it had been originally agreed.

Christians were well represented in all these operations. Each year one of them served as a Charter 77 spokesperson and under their watch the Charter was also issuing various documents criticizing the constant and systematic violations of religious freedoms. The Catholic Church became step by step an important player in the field of anti-totalitarian activities, bringing its spiritual message to the on-going independent public debate.

What was quite striking and thus often discussed within Charter 77, was, of course, the size and nature of Czechoslovak dissenting activities compared to Poland. The number of Charta 77 signatories never reached more than two or at best three thousand. Our “parallel polis” was rather a ghetto of open-minded intellectuals and not, as in Poland, a real and effective social movement.

But even here the Latin proverb *exempla trahunt* started to prove its validity. The letter inviting the Pope to visit Czechoslovakia sent to Rome in April of 1984 was signed by 17,000 people, the pilgrimages, the “outdoor activities” of the Church started to attract more and more members of the younger generation.

8. *Expl.*

1985

The major international event of the year, with crucial implications for future developments in Czechoslovakia, happened in Moscow. After two successors to Leonid Brežnev – Andropov and Chernenko, both of whom died one after the other – the third one, Mikhail Gorbachev after being elected Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, announced his plan, which was certainly not very welcome to our conservative leadership. It was “perestroika” and “glasnost”, two programmatic goals which were to change the Soviet system profoundly and make it more effective, especially in its economic performance.

Paradoxically, the new policies in the Soviet Union didn't have an immediate effect in Czechoslovakia, presented by the proponents of “normalization” as one of the most loyal advocates of the Soviet example and leadership. One of their essential components was the departure from the so-called Brežnev doctrine⁹, which had justified sending troops to Czechoslovakia in 1968 to defend socialism in the whole region under Soviet control. “Eto vaše delo”, it is your business, was what Gorbachev told all his “junior partners” throughout the Eastern block in reaction to their inquiries on how to proceed in the future. And this message from Moscow was yet to have its historical implications in the years to come.

But there were other things, not necessarily directly related to the new Eastern winds that had started blowing towards Central Europe from Moscow, signaling that times were really changing and that people were starting to change with them. One of the most significant signals came from the environment of the Catholic Church. The Pilgrimage to Velehrad in the beginning of July to celebrate the 1100th anniversary of the death of St Methodius, the apostle who brought the Christian faith to our lands, turned into a big anti-government demonstration. It was attended by approximately one hundred thousand people, who sent a very clear and strong signal to the present representatives of the Czechoslovak Government accompanying the Vatican delegation led by State Secretary Cardinal Casaroli. Finally, as one of the pilgrims aptly said, even Czechs and Slovaks started to reach the Polish numbers.

1986-1989

The trend which could be observed in the mid 1980s, continued and actually got stronger and stronger over time. The “parallel polis” created by Charter 77, in spite of the fact that the number of its really active signatories remained relatively low, was undergoing a remarkable change. The arrival of members of the younger generation raised the question of its “working methods” and *modus operandi*. Stronger political approaches were recommended and pushed for, instead of Pa-

9. *Expl.*

točka's Socratic moralities and Havel's “anti-political politics”¹⁰. Demonstrations on the largest possible scale, visible protests taking place in public, not only somewhere out there, but on the main squares and busy streets. New independent initiatives of all colors and tendencies appeared as alternatives to the ‘ancient’ Charter 77 initiative – the “grey zone” between the hard-core dissidents and the still state-coordinated mainstream population – started to grow, inhabited by those who felt the new winds blowing and were looking for their own place in the coming process of transformation.

The international context also reflected this sea of change. The spirit of “perestroika” coined by Mikhail Gorbachev couldn't be stopped at the Soviet borders and entered the Eastern zone still firmly controlled by those who would have preferred to keep the “status quo” and preserve the foundations of the existing social order. The Vienna follow-up meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (November 1986 - January 1989) introduced the concept of “human dimension” and strengthened the relevance of human rights questions, including the inputs of their defenders, in inter-state negotiations. Western diplomats intensified their contacts with Eastern and Central European dissidents and started quite openly supporting their full international “legitimization”.

The Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia also tried to find its unique role in this process. There were activities which were growing spontaneously from below, first of all the pilgrimages which became not the preserve of old, traditional believers, but an attractive option for the young, with its own place in society and in a world still seeking regeneration. A petition prepared by the hitherto unknown Moravian farmer Augustín Navrátil, “Suggestions to Catholics on how to Deal with the Situation of Believers” was signed by more than half a million Czechoslovak citizens. A “Decade of Spiritual Renewal” was launched by a group of Catholic activists, openly supported by the official hierarchy headed by Cardinal Tomášek, with a clear aim to add to the ongoing social transformation impelled by Charter 77, an important cultural and historical consciousness affecting the whole of the Czech nation. The canonization of Agnes, a Czech princess from the thirteenth century, scheduled in Rome by the competent organs of the Holy See for autumn 1989, gave another impulse to a quite visible Catholic revival though, as it turned out later, this proved to be only temporary.

1989

And here only a couple of very brief comments on how *Annus Mirabilis* finally brought back our freedom.

Václav Havel had to spend another term – fortunately three months only – in jail as a result of the big Jan Palach demonstration, which took place in Prague in January.

10. Ref. to Havel's 1984 speech “Politics and Conscience”.

The “Several Sentences” petition mobilized the “Grey Zone” in an unprecedented manner, so that even hard-liners in the Party Politburo had to get the message that something was going wrong with their leadership.

The Polish dissidents who had turned into members of Sejm after the election in June, visited Prague on 1st September. They visited their Czech colleagues with their brand new diplomatic passports and caused a headache to the Czechoslovak Secret Service.

Another signal of the end of an era was the East German emigrants passing through Prague in October, jumping over the fence of the German Embassy and later being taken by buses to the train station to travel to the West and leaving their socialist home behind.

The pilgrimage to Rome to witness the canonization of Agnes, in which tens of thousands of Czechs and Slovaks took part, mobilized the Czech Catholics in such a manner that quite naturally, headed by their shepherd, Cardinal Tomášek, they played their own, very specific and very important part in the Velvet Revolution.

III

To conclude, there still is an unfinished debate here: Who did it, after all? Was it Gorbachev and his American counterparts Reagan and Bush who made a new deal between themselves and agreed that the time had finally come to dismantle the political architecture guaranteed by the Soviet Union and the United States during the period of the Cold War in order to prevent the worst from happening – a nuclear conflict between the capitalist West and the socialist East? Or was it Walesa and Havel and other great Central and Eastern Europeans who managed finally to mobilize their nations to get rid of the totalitarian system which had ruined their lives for decades and deprived generations to freely pursue their happiness? Both schools of thought have certainly good arguments to use in this debate. As politicians of all ages and in all places know, their intentions and plans are just one thing. Good luck or fortune is certainly also what matters in human history. But what about providence, the will of God, the intervention of the Holy Spirit?





Testimony from Slovakia



FRANTIŠEK MIKLOŠKO

A Slovak mathematician and teacher. Researcher at the Slovak Academy of Sciences 1971-1983. Was subsequently relieved of his duties for helping to organize the Society Against Violence and for his work in the underground Catholic Church, and forced to work as a labourer. Member of the National Council (The Slovak Parliament) 1990-2010 and President of the same institution 1990-1992 as acting representative of the Christian and Democratic Movement. At present he works in a private studio.

THE FORTY YEARS OF COMMUNISM in Slovakia and Czechoslovakia can be divided exactly into two. The first twenty years saw the rule of a brutal terror against all ideological opposers. In the country there were tens of thousands of political prisoners. In the Czech regions and in Slovakia all the religious orders had been liquidated, both men's and women's orders, and the Greek Catholic Church had also been liquidated. Many bishops, priests, monks and nuns, like so many of the faithful, were locked up in the prisons or in camps to perform forced labour. Then came the Prague Spring, and even if it only lasted a few months, it succeeded in having all political prisoners released, and during that brief lull the people were able to draw a breath of freedom. After that, we experienced twenty more years of Communism. The regime was no longer so brutal, but it forced people into a state of hypocrisy and apathetic behaviour. As far as the Church went, the regime aimed at its natural demise. Indeed, what happened in the 1970s and 80s in Czechoslovakia, and especially in Slovakia, is more than germane to the theme of our symposium.

From 1968 onwards, my life gravitated principally towards a group of three individuals: the mathematician Vladimír Jukl, the physician Silvester Krčméry, who had spent fourteen years in prison for his religious activities, and the bishop (today a cardinal emeritus) Ján Korec, who was ordained in secret and subsequently thrown into prison for eight years. These three men started organizing informal religious meetings with the students of Bratislava. At first it was only a small group of young people. The group adopted a highly organized work system, which consisted of secret weekly meetings in private homes, where we gathered to read the Scriptures, pray, study and discuss. Even after these young people left Bratislava after finishing their studies, we kept up our contacts with them. The 1970s were characterized by the patient set-up of such student groups in all the university campuses of the city.

On 16 October, 1978, we were having a meeting at my house. That evening we turned on the radio, which had earlier belonged to my grandfather, to find out from the Vatican Radio whether the new pope had been elected yet. When we heard the familiar „Anuntio vobis gaudium magnum...” and then the announcement that the Cardinal of Krakow, Karol Wojtyła, had been elected pope, Vladimir Jukl started hugging all of us, saying: “You can’t even imagine what this will bring us.”

The election of Karol Wojtyła indeed proved a turning point in our activities. Silvester Krčmery, whom I already mentioned above, was also well acquainted with Dr. Wanda Póttawska, who was very close to the pope. Mrs. Póttawska often stopped off in Bratislava on her way to Rome, and on her journey back she would spend the night at our place. Such a contact with and direct access to the pope we had never had before, nor will we ever again. The pope often remembered and greeted the Slovaks in his speeches. This filled us with pride and joy. In the course of time he made Saint Cyril and Saint Methodius patrons of Europe, built new Marian basilicas for us, and we saw how he promoted our fellow Slovak Cardinal Jozef Tomko, today a cardinal emeritus.

The climate in Slovakia changed. We came out of hiding. We started publishing samizdat literature. The number of young people taking part in Marian pilgrimages was growing, we wrote letters of protest, in big groups we followed the trials against religious activists. The year 1985 marked a thousand one hundred years since the death of Saint Methodius. It was our wish that the pope should visit Czechoslovakia to celebrate this anniversary. We sent our invitation to him in the usual manner. Indeed, we organized a collection of signatures for a letter which started with these words: “Holy Father, we invite You to Czechoslovakia”. We submitted this letter to him. Out of a total of eighteen thousand signatures, fifteen thousand were of Slovaks. The young people who were collecting these signatures in Slovakia were stopped and beaten by the police. During a pilgrimage organized for the anniversary of Saint Methodius’ death, more than one hundred and fifty thousand people came from the Czech regions, from Moravia and Slovakia. The pilgrims whistled the Communist activists down and would not allow them to speak. The faithful kept on repeating: “We want the Holy Father, we want religious freedom!” For the first time they realized how much strength they had in them, how like a powerful monolith they were becoming.

During the second half of the 1980s, the social unrest in Slovakia, amongst believers as well, was coming to a head. The Communist regime of Czechoslovakia reacted more and more nervously, entrenched as it was in its conservative positions. The climate was extremely tense. Many of us were living absorbed in a kind of vision. I mean the apparitions of Fatima, but we were above all thinking, quite specifically, of Saint Giovanni Bosco’s dream, according to which the Virgin Mary would perform a great miracle one hundred years after the saint’s death. Indeed, Giovanni Bosco had died in 1888. Unexpectedly, John Paul II appeared

in the midst of these Marian hopes, proclaiming the year 1987/1988 a Marian Year. In this atmosphere, the Catholics of Moravia, led by Cardinal Tomášek, began towards the end of 1987 to collect signatures for the freedom of the church. More than half a million signatures were secured, including three hundred thousand in Slovakia.

On 25 March, 1988, during the festivities for the Annunciation, one of the squares in Bratislava witnessed a collective prayer meeting of the faithful to invoke religious and civil freedom. Several thousand people filled the square, and for half an hour they recited the rosary holding lighted candles in their hands. The militia reacted brutally, using sticks, dogs and even water cannon to disperse the faithful. Many people were arrested. At the time this event was talked about all over the world. The people of Czechoslovakia fully grasped the importance of passive resistance. At the end of that extraordinary Marian year, on 15 August, 1988, eighty thousand people made a pilgrimage to the ancient Slovak city of Nitra. There for the first time the young people unfurled and raised the flag of Slovakia. On that occasion I was accompanying the earlier mentioned Cardinal Korec. We were in the thick of the crowd, amidst the pilgrims and the agents of the secret police. When the pilgrimage was over, I was summoned by the commissar to the police station, where they told me: “Mister Mikloško, if you don’t stop, we will intervene!”. The religious actions initiated in the early 1970s by three individuals, each one with a long prison term behind him, were now producing moments of great historical significance.

In the 1970s and 80s there were seven Catholic dioceses in Slovakia, but only three had their own bishop. All three of these bishops were elderly and in poor health. After John Paul II’s election we asked him to support us. At every opportunity – through pilgrims or through his own speeches – he would send greetings to the Slovaks. For all those years, during pilgrimages and in the small communities and in the churches, John Paul II shared our struggle for the freedom of the Church and for our religious faith. We felt directly on our skin how important it was for us to put our trust in the successor of Peter. In this climate, Slovakia prepared itself for the coming of November, 1989, when we witnessed that miracle which for us was the fall of Communism in Europe.

At that time the future Prime Minister of Slovakia, Ján Čarnogurský, was also coming to the fore inside our movement, as well as the future President of the Slovak Parliament – that is, the man who has just now finished speaking to you.



Testimony from Hungary



GYÖRGY HÖLVÉNYI

Hungarian literary critic and historian, teacher, political activist of the Christian Democrat Party, Vice-Secretary of State in government of Viktor Orban in 1999. Later Undersecretary for the Relations with the Churches, Ethnic Minorities and Civil Society up to 2014, General Secretary of the “Robert Schuman” Hungarian Foundation 2009. Elected MEP in 2014.

Honorable Ambassador, Conference, Ladies and Gentlemen,

CONSIDER MY PARTICIPATION AT TODAY’S CONFERENCE as a symbolic act. As a member of the young generation during the end of the Communist regime I became active in Catholic public life in Hungary and later in the foundation of our Christian Democratic People’s Party. My mandate as the Minister of State for Church Affairs ends right here in Rome, on this very day. As of tomorrow, I will continue my work as a Member of the European Parliament, as a fellow citizen from Central and Eastern Europe, representing my home country, Hungary.

The phrase that appeared in the homily of John Paul II for the inauguration of his pontificate has a delicate meaning for Central and Eastern Europe. The encouragement of “Do not be afraid!”, addressing all of us, has the message to take courage in our faith, to take courage in the action deriving from it. It encourages us to think and act as if we were free. This kind of speech was a revolutionary step for all of us.

For us, people from the closed up Central and Eastern Europe, the travelling Pope opened the world. He called the people to an open world from a closed one in every sense of the word, both spiritually and physically. Overcoming the survival strategies and local problems of the damaged home churches, the Church was able to show the way of thinking in larger dimensions.

In my country, Hungary, the main problem of the communist era was the effect of propaganda penetrating several generations of people. From the very beginning, the communist regime went harshly against the churches. Characteristic of this era was the case of Cardinal Mindszenty, his show trial and condemnation, the break-up of almost all religious orders, the nationalisation of the greater part of Church-owned schools, and the creation of the so-called peace priests’ movement.

In the later stages however, they could not find the solution of going overtly against the Church. The propaganda of the time depicted the Church as an old fashioned, exhausted and dead structure. As an ending accord of the past, a club for elderly people going against the progressives.

The materialist system concentrated on material values, suggesting their priority. It discarded and despised the traditions and the spiritual heritage of the Church. It created a lifestyle and a pattern of beliefs, in which consumption became the only standard. While open persecution provokes resistance, this kind of propaganda was slowly poisoning the spirits, making a disease spread over the whole society.

The consequences of such disease are those unhealable wounds that have not been settled after decades, still affecting us today. And we did not think about this in 1990.

It was a decisive moment in my life when John Paul II addressed a speech to us, Hungarian pilgrims at the holy mass in Eisentadt - Kismarton Airport in 1988. Here, in the center of Europe and at the meeting point of three countries, his words assumed a special meaning. Our togetherness and our future deriving from our past became concrete. "Your mission is to build bridges with the Eastern European peoples" – he told us. "Bring my greetings to the whole Hungarian Church and all of the Hungarians." – he said with congratulatory words that gave an enormous motivating power at that time. A little later we could greet our Holy Father in Hungary.

For us Hungarians, John Paul II's visit to Hungary itself brought the hope of direct meeting and a new start. This was because of our twentieth century history which reflected the picture of a beaten, isolated and humiliated country, constantly at the wrong end of history. A picture of a society with less and less cohesion, where many made their own personal compromises.

It transmitted the message for many of us that both Christian and political responsibility do exist and there is a Christian answer to the questions of that time. Christian social teaching does exist.

In that time the Christian Democratic People's Party was founded in Hungary – the founders of which I belong to. This party later became a member of the ruling coalition after the first free elections held in 1990 in Hungary.

From Saint John Paul II the world has learned that every single Catholic believer has a personal responsibility to the world. He transmitted the conviction to us, who were expecting the wonder from the West, that we have to handle these expectations with a critical attitude based on Christian teaching.

After the moral destruction of the communist dictatorship, the East turned its attention towards the criticism of the consumer society of the West and of the negative phenomena of globalisation. This kind of criticism towards the West was not completely comprehensible to us at that time.

However, in the process of transition we had to realize that Western Europe was ahead of us by forty years, with free market economy and welfare states.

This so-called West was not able to provide answers or solutions for Central and Eastern Europe when we think of key human and existential problems. This world and these societies are equally hit by the loss of values and by the lack of the "spiritual compass".

With his personality, John Paul II gave encouragement to the distressed Central and Eastern European countries. He was able to bring a message and hope even to non-believers. The personality and the presence of the travelling Pope enabled a very important affective connection to him. A new face of the Church turned up, which was intended to be hidden from us in the decades of socialism. A Church that is able to tackle the challenges of the present, based on solidarity. A Church with the intention of building and forming the future.

John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa* spoke about the "whole Church which is called to give new hope to the poor". He emphasized the importance of "acknowledging that persons have value in themselves, apart from their economic, cultural or social status and of helping them to make the most of their potential".

He assigned us the responsibility by saying: "Today's Europe is however at this very moment in the process of strengthening and enlarging its economic and political union, yet seeming to suffer from a profound crisis of values. While possessed of increased resources, it gives the impression of lacking the energy needed to sustain a common project and to give its citizens new reasons for hope".

For us Christian people in public life the duty arises of not only analysing the present but working as political decision makers carrying out Christian and value-based policies.

Four years ago, the Hungarian Government was given the large-scale mandate to be responsible for decisive questions that have long been presenting themselves as a challenge. We accepted a new Fundamental Law, we reinforced families, we carried out the border crossing project of unification of the nation, we created new jobs and we extended the equal tax treatment to multinational companies.

The Fidesz-Christian Democrat Cabinet forms its policies on these values. Representing this order of values, it continues to make attempts to renew our society, also taking on possible conflicts.

The call of "Do not be afraid!" is addressing us still today.

The personality of the newly canonized John Paul II and the power deriving from him have an effect on us until this day and it forms the vision of the world in many of us. He was one of the most influential people of his time. He was a charismatic leader of the Catholic Church, able to draw the attention of those who did not believe and were uninterested in the Church's affairs. He induced respect among those who were followers of a slowly disappearing ideology. And for us he meant hope. The life of Saint John Paul II was an example for us and showed that the life arising from faith is able to change a world that was considered as unchangeable.

He gave testimony of the unconditional respect and value of life not only with his personal life but also with his patiently and faithfully borne illness and death, visible to all of us. As a saint of the 20th century, he was the confessor who was able to become an example for the youth.

He said that Christianity is not the past but the key to our future.

“Be strong!” – he told us, young people of that time during his visit to Budapest. “Explore your Hungarian and Christian roots and participate again in the continent’s history!”

Our common history with Polish people and his devotion stemming from it, brought even closer the figure of John Paul II, even closer to us.

As we both say:

“Pole and Hungarian cousins be, good for fight and good for party. Both are valiant, both are lively, upon them may God’s blessings be”.

“Lengyel, magyar két jó barát, együtt harcol, s issza borát, vitéz, s bátor mindkettője, áldás szálljon mindkettőre!”.

“Polak, Wegier, dwa bratanki, i do szabli, i do szklanki, oba zuchy, oba zwawi, niech im pan bóg blogoslawi!”.





Testimony from Ukraine



MYROSLAV MARYNOVCZ

A Ukrainian historian. As a student he was expelled from the Polytechnic School for having criticized the USSR. From 1976 on was actively engaged in opposing the regime, arrested in 1977 and sentenced to seven years hard labour in a lager, later deported to Kazakhstan for a further five years. Researcher at the Institute of Studies on Eastern Europe at Kiev 1990-1993, co-founder and professor of the Greek Catholic University of Leopoldis, Pro-Rector since 2008, President of the Ukrainian Pen Club since 2010.

LET ME GIVE YOU MY TESTIMONY as a former Ukrainian dissident and political prisoner. I spent 10 years in the Soviet gulag, namely at the Kuchino labor camp in Ural. I was there at the time when Cardinal Karol Wojtyła was elected Pope, and I can testify that his election was greeted in all Soviet political labour camps with enormous enthusiasm. Intuitively we all sensed that this figure had been sent by Divine Providence for the spiritual victory over the communist evil. For this reason John Paul II's authority was exceptionally high.

It was proved in a special way in 1981 at Easter time. A group of political prisoners planned to celebrate this great holy festival. However, religious activities were strictly forbidden in the Soviet penitentiary system, so the camp administration warned us that if we celebrated Easter, we would be punished. Of course the threat had no effect: we gathered, prayed together and were punished by being placed into a *kartser* (that is, in a punishment cell) for 15 days.

Well, suffering in the name of Christ has always been an honour for a Christian and we served our punishment with a clear soul. But it occurred to us almost immediately that we should inform all Christians in the world about this event. We decided unanimously that an appeal should be addressed to the Holy Father John Paul II.

I was entrusted with writing the text and, later, the draft was approved by 12 signatories. Soon, the letter to the Pope was smuggled through secret ways to the outside world. Due to the Moscow NGO "Memorial," the text is now available on the Internet. Let me give you only one abstract from this letter: "Your Holiness! We cannot and do not wish to render unto Caesar that which belongs to God [...] We wish that Christians and together with them all the human race can live in peace, goodness and truth, but not through disregarding the most sublime blessing – our God-given soul" (Let me say in brackets, that

this message is still valid, even today.)

Days passed, and suddenly a coded message reached the camp: "The Pope received your letter and prayed for you during a mass in the Vatican". You may imagine: our joy was without measure. The Holy Father had let our voice be heard throughout the world and prayed for us all. He enacted the famous Gospel parable and enabled us to witness before the Lord: "We were in prison and he came to us".

Thirty three years have passed since those events yet the feeling of gratitude has not faded.

Now let me mention some other deeds by saint John Paul II which are especially dear to us Ukrainians.

Unlike many of his predecessors, John Paul II well understood the significance of the tradition of Christian Kyiv and did not put in its place the tradition of Moscow, as is normally done in the West. In all his pastoral letters, the Pope tirelessly emphasized the evangelizing strength of the Kyivan tradition, which he himself personally admired.

John Paul II understood better than his predecessors the historical wrongs against one of Ukraine's major confessions, the Greek Catholic Church, which follows the Byzantine rite, but has long acknowledged the Roman Catholic pontiff as its spiritual leader. One of this church's most painful episodes was the ill-famed Lviv "pseudo-council" of 1946 which cut the church's ties to Rome and placed it under the control of the Moscow Patriarchate. Thanks to the successful discussions between John Paul II and Mikhail Gorbachev, the right of Greek Catholics to religious freedom was confirmed and the Church was legalized in 1989.

But the culminating moment in the spiritual uniting of Ukrainians with John Paul II came during his pilgrimage to Ukraine in the summer of 2001. The Moscow Patriarchate protested loudly against this visit, seeing in it a direct threat to its far-reaching plans to recreate a new form of "union of the brotherly Slavic peoples" into a single nation. Nevertheless, here too the pope held firm. At the same time, nowhere in Ukraine did the pope speak any negative words about Russia. He showed that the real purpose of his visit was not a competition with Moscow, as some presented it, but simply the honoring of the Ukrainian people as such.

Saint John Paul II left an extraordinary influence on the whole body of Polish-Ukrainian relations. In the presence of this Pope, historical opposition lost its starry logic and inevitability, and mutual forgiveness and understanding became the absolute need of the day.

Finally, John Paul II tirelessly affirmed in the world the "civilization of love." He brought before humanity the main postulates of Christianity, high among them the ideas of human dignity, the ethos of non-violence, the foundational role of moral values, the liberating meaning of truth, and others. It might have looked as though the direct consequences of the spiritual and phy-

sical pilgrimage of the pope to Ukraine did not bring such noticeable consequences as in Poland. However, the shining words of Karol Wojtyła, "Be not afraid!", were often recalled at both Ukrainian Maidans, 2004 Orange one and 2013 Euro-Maidan, because these words still possess the power of transforming people's hearts. It was exactly the truth and dignity so tirelessly preached by John Paul II that Ukrainians were striving for. It became clear that on both Maidans germinated the seed that, more than anyone, this great and saint Pope had so generously sowed.

Juliusz Slowacki, the 19th-century Polish poet, was totally correct when he predicted that someday a Slavic pope "will lead various peoples from darkness into light, where God is." John Paul II pointed to those narrow gates of the Gospel that led and still keep leading many nations, including Ukrainians, out of the house of slavery.

May the Lord keep his name in the Book of Being of human civilization as the name of a great Pope who lived, served and died with incredible dignity which ennobles the entire human race.

Eternal Memory to him and Everlasting Peace!

**TOMÁŠ HALÍK**

A Czech philosopher, psychologist and sociologist, secretly ordained to the priesthood in 1978. One of the most important figures of the underground Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia. A friend of Vaclav Havel and close associate of Cardinal František Tomášek, member of the democratic opposition and of Charter 77, actively involved in the pastoral for university students, writer, professor at the Universities of Prague, Oxford and Cambridge. Recipient of the Templeton Prize in 2014.

The Catholic Church in front of the challenges in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980's

“A SPECTRE IS HAUNTING EUROPE – THE SPECTRE OF COMMUNISM”, wrote Marx and Engels in the revolutionary year of 1848. The spectre of Communism fortunately ended its perambulation of Europe 25 years ago, in 1989 – the *Annus mirabilis*.

The half-century of Communist domination in Central and Eastern Europe can be divided into several phases. The first was the forcible Sovietization of those countries in the immediate post-war years. The second starts after the expressions of popular protest against the Stalinist regimes – the 1953 uprising in East Germany, the 1956 Hungarian revolution and the victory of Gomulka's “patriotic Communism” in Poland – and involved the establishment of bureaucratic state socialist regimes. It came to an end with the suppression of the 1968 Prague Spring, when the armies of the five Warsaw Pact countries invaded Czechoslovakia. The third phase was marked by the overall stagnation of the Soviet bloc during the rule of Leonid Brezhnev and ended with the creation of “Solidarność” in Poland in 1980. The fourth phase was Gorbachov's attempt to liberalize the Soviet regime, known as “perestroika”, during the second half of the 1980s, which ended with the events in Central and Eastern Europe at the end of 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The most violent treatment of the churches occurred prior to 1956. When the revolutionary terror of the 1950s had exhausted itself and Communism had grown older and fatter, the euphoria of one part of society and the fear and anger of the remaining part, were replaced by general boredom. After 1968, in the majority of communist states, communist ideology changed into a curious type of state religion – nobody believed in it, not even its own high priests. Not even the vast majority of communist officials believed in Marxism – as a rule they

were simply cynical apparatchiks. There were far less convinced Marxists in the East than in the West. Marxism had been dead in communist countries long before the fall of Communism.

Marxism was a kind of Christian heresy. Chesterton called heresy "truth gone mad", a particle of truth that wrenched itself loose from its context and expanded into dreadful dimensions. Marxism was a kind of inversion of Christian eschatology into the time-space of historical future, which can be planned and realized through revolutionary interventions into history.

The communists expected that changes in the economic base – the elimination of private ownership and the social ownership of the means of production – would automatically bring about changes within the cultural and spiritual "superstructure" and engender a "new Socialist man". Marxist ideology counted on religion dying away automatically in the moment when economic relations change. But when the experiment of socializing the production processes came into force, the revolution in the superstructure did not take place. Christianity in Soviet Russia and later in its satellite states refused to die away. The violence that the communists started to use against churches and believers was in fact proof that their theory had failed in practice. Not even violence helped.

After the fall of Communism some representatives of economic liberalism – many of them former communists – inherited from Marxism a primitive economic determinism and regarded liberalism as "Marxism in reverse". They expected that the opposite changes in the economy, particularly the privatisation of industrial firms, would automatically alter people's attitudes and society's mentality, and that the "homini sovietici" would turn into people with all the "Protestant virtues" that Max Weber claimed were at the root of capitalism. However it is easier to make soup out of fish than to turn fish soup back into fish again – the creation of a moral biosphere for a culture of democracy in the economy and politics of the post-communist countries would seem to demand somewhat profounder changes and more complex nurturing than mere changes of ownership or economic relations.

Some young democracies in post-communist countries still experience the distressful way through the desert. I heard a story about Indians who were being removed by colonists from their original settlements and brought to new ones. Before the end of the trip, the Indians asked for a break, explaining: "Our bodies might be almost at the end of the trip, but our souls are still in those old homes. We have to wait for our souls". Whenever I meet with various tokens of imperfection of the renewed democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, I remind myself of these words. We have to wait for our souls.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn once answered the question of what would follow Communism: "a very, very long period of healing".

There is much talk in Eastern Europe about the need to "come to terms with the communist past" – and clearly that important task has yet to be fulfilled. Condemning Communism is not simply a matter of bringing to trial a couple of

communist criminals or distancing oneself verbally from the old regime and its ideology. It means pointing clearly to the "anthropological roots of totalitarianism", to those forms of behaviour and character traits that enabled the totalitarian regime to survive for so long.

I am convinced, that what kept Communism in power was not belief in an ideology, or even the army and the police, but instead an unwritten pact between the rulers and the ruled: if the latter are apathetic to public life, if they played the game by the rules, then the regime wouldn't interfere too much in their private lives.

The state would ensure the conformed citizens a certain degree of social security and would tolerate all sorts of things - poor working morale, petty everyday economic crime with respect to the "people's property", etc. That secret "social contract" bred an odd kind of human which the Russian writer Alexander Zinovjev and Polish philosopher Fr. Józef Tischner, dubbed "homo sovieticus" – people devoid of initiative, creativity and responsibility.

In his celebrated essay *Power of the Powerless*, written during the communist period, Václav Havel writes about a vegetable salesman who displays in his shop window – as was the custom in those days – a poster with Marx and Engels' slogan "Workers of the World, Unite!" to coincide with the anniversary of the Russian October Revolution. What did the vegetable salesman mean by his action?

The vegetable salesman didn't intend to proclaim anything about workers and their unity. What he was saying to his superiors with the slogan placed among the onions and carrots was: I am a loyal citizen, not a troublemaker. Leave me in peace! I am one of those who regularly takes part in elections in which the Communist Party regularly receives its 99.9 % percent of votes. The regime can count on me when it needs to present the image of a unanimous and content mass of citizens.

In reality that was the secret of the communist regimes' stability. In that atmosphere of constant mutual deception and fear, the only truly dangerous person was the one who, like the child in the story of the emperor's new clothes, unexpectedly stated the simple truth: that the emperor is naked. I can recall the liberating power of Havel's texts: here were words that revealed the true nature of our everyday reality, concealed behind propaganda Newspeak.

The game of subterfuge was disrupted by the fact that its unwritten rules were uncovered and described. Words received the power of light and became a weapon of light, of the power of the powerless.

The courage to tell the truth, to call things by their right names, "to call a spade a spade", was also the most powerful weapon of the Church in her struggle against communist totalitarian regimes.

The Catholic Church in the whole Soviet block received an enormous boost when the archbishop of Krakow, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła was elected Pope in October 1978. The Polish Pope's first visit to his homeland in June 1979 demon-

strated to the entire world the vitality of the Polish Church and the total failure of communist ideology. The psychological atmosphere of that visit gave rise to the "Solidarność" movement. During the communist period, Poland experienced several protests by intellectuals and students and also workers' uprisings. The regime always managed to cope with both kinds without much delay: intellectuals and students did not represent a large mass and therefore no real political force. As for the workers' leaders, they generally never managed to formulate their political demands clearly enough or negotiate with the regime's officials; often they let themselves be pacified with partial social promises or short-term measures. The opposition intellectuals and the discontented workers needed to come together - and the platform enabling such a link-up was now offered by the Church. With the Church's moral and organizational support, a mass movement was created with identifiable workers' leaders and their political advisors coming from the ranks of the opposition intellectuals. One of the intellectual fathers of "Solidarność" was to be the priest and philosopher Józef Tischner, a close friend of the Pope. The creation of "Solidarność" meant for the history of Communism what the Battle of Stalingrad had meant for Nazism.



Czechoslovakia was the country where the Communists made their fiercest onslaught on the churches and particularly on the Catholic Church. In the whole of Europe, perhaps only in Romania and Albania did Christians suffer even more drastic persecution at the hands of Marxist regimes. However, paradoxically that harsh treatment was partly counter-productive. The Czech mentality contains a deep-seated sense of solidarity and sympathy with victims of injustice.

It is clear from memoirs published to date how great was the moral and psychological role played by priests imprisoned in communist jails and labour camps. The thousands of people who passed through the Stalinist prisons and concentration camps returned if not as converts then at least as sympathizers with enormous respect for the Church and the clergy. But for the persecuted Catholics those surroundings were also a school of tolerance and ecumenism: those who had previously moved in homogeneous Catholic surroundings met there with members of other churches, as well as with proponents of secular humanism, liberals, social democrats and even nonconformist Communist intellectuals - and they discovered that in spite of all the barriers, what united them was not just their harsh fate and resistance to the Communist dictatorship, but also a whole series of other values. That rapprochement continued into the 1970s and 80s, when many priests who had either returned from prison or had on account of their over-enthusiastic ministry lost their "state consent for performance of pastoral duties", worked in manual jobs and there discovered forms of ministry akin to those of the French "worker-priest" movement. In this way they made friends both with manual workers and with intellectuals who were banned from working in their professions. A further chapter was the encounters

of Catholics with other representatives of cultural and political dissent and cooperation with them in the 1970s and 80s. The most celebrated platform for this was the Charter 77 movement. The Charter was founded as a citizens' movement (chiefly intellectuals), whose aim was to make the regime respect its own legislation. The first group of several dozen signatories included two well-known Catholic theologians and several distinguished Catholic and Protestant lay people.

A specific role in the final period of Communism was played by the Czech primate, Cardinal František Tomášek. In the late 1970s he was appointed Archbishop of Prague and Cardinal. Soon afterward an astonishing change came over that venerable priest, then in his eighties: the cautious bishop became the courageous cardinal and symbol of resistance to communist totalitarianism. Undoubtedly an important factor in this was the appointment of the new Pope who had no illusions about Communism and encouraged František Tomášek to adopt a more vigorous stance. The Cardinal surrounded himself with three advisors from the underground church and started to make increasing overtures to the political dissidents. With the help of his advisors he began writing his letters to the government - later to become open letters - in which he defended not only persecuted Catholics but also all those denied civil liberties and human rights by the Communist regime.

The mid 1980s also saw the emergence of a pastoral plan, drafted in underground church circles, entitled "The Decade of National Spiritual Renewal", certain aspects of which were reminiscent of Cardinal Wyszyński's project in connection with the millennium of Poland's conversion to Christianity. The Czech project was focused on the millennium of the death of St. Vojtěch (St. Adalbert), the Czech saint, who is an important figure for the entire region of Central and Eastern Europe. A key element of the project was its affirmation of the European ideal and the unity of Central Europe. It was also advance preparation for the year 2000 and intended to be a laboratory of a new lifestyle for the coming millennium. The project was announced in a pastoral letter by Cardinal František Tomášek, who began with the stirring biblical words: "Stand up and raise your heads!" and was addressed not only to Catholics but to society as a whole. It was the time when Gorbachov's perestroika was getting under way and the authors of the project could sense that change was in the air. Their concern, however, was to stress that the healing of society could not be achieved merely by changes in external conditions, namely, changes in political and economic structures, but instead required changes in the entire social climate, changes of mentality and values, in ways of thinking and behaviour. The entire project was spread over a ten-year period. Each year was assigned a particular topic, inspired by one of the Ten Commandments. The commandments were interpreted from the positive angle, however. The commandment "Thou shalt not steal", inspired the topic: Work and Social Responsibility; the commandment "Thou shalt not commit adultery", gave rise to the topic of Family Life; the commandment "Thou shalt not bear false witnesses" referred to the topic of Truth and Justice, etc.

In the second year of the project's implementation, there came the unexpectedly rapid and easy collapse of the Communist regime. In the Czech lands, the events of November 1989 were heralded and intercepted by an ecclesiastical happening which symbolized the great rapprochement between the Church and the nation at that time: just a few days before the student demonstration and the subsequent events that led to the fall of the Communist government, the Blessed Agnes of Bohemia was beatified in Rome in a ceremony attended by many Czech pilgrims and watched with enormous interest by the entire nation on television. During the days of the mass demonstrations, when the regime was deciding whether to capitulate or resort to military force, Cardinal František Tomášek - during a mass in the Prague cathedral to give thanks for St. Agnes - spoke the following memorable words: "In these important moments for the struggle for truth and justice in our country, I and the Catholic Church stand on the side of the nation!". In the months that followed, complete scope for religious freedom opened up. According to opinion polls, the Church achieved an authority in the eyes of the Czech public that it had clearly never enjoyed previously in modern history. However, the situation began to change sharply in the following years: according to current opinion polls, fewer people in the Czech Republic than in any other European country - with the possible exception of the former GDR - acknowledge membership with the church or with a faith articulated through the church.



I am deeply convinced that the situation would be different if our church took more seriously the appeal John Paul II made to Czech Christians during his first visit in Prague in April, 1990: "You shall now build the temple of free life of your church not by returning to what was here before you were robbed of your freedom. Build it in the strength of that to which you matured during persecution".

By and large, the Christian churches in the post-communist countries were caught unawares when they found themselves in a pluralist democratic society that was learning how to adapt its economy, politics and cultures to global trends.

Incidentally, I am convinced that it was the globalization process that swept away the communist regimes. Regimes based on a rigid state-planned economy and the censorship of ideas were unable to withstand the keen blast of competition and the free market of goods and ideas.

The churches of central and eastern Europe learnt in the course of almost half a century to stand up to totalitarian regimes. Many unconsciously expected that the fall of Communism would herald a return to the situation they knew before World War II. However, instead of the traditional pre-modern situation, a complex post-modern vista has opened up. Pluralistic democracy and the post-modern cultural climate represent a type which requires the church to re-define once more its social role and evolve a new and quite distinct strategy.

But certain churches adopted, vis-a-vis the liberal environment, the strategy of hostility and circular defence they had learnt from their confrontation with

the communist regimes. As a result, the churches alienated large groups of those who had sympathized with them at the time of Communism's collapse and had invested great hopes in them on the threshold of democratic renewal.

Christians today find themselves in the situation of a shift of paradigms, not only the paradigms of the civilization they live in, but also the paradigms of living and expressing one's faith. In my view Christians face a new task that is no less momentous than the erstwhile task of creating a civilization on the ruins of the Roman Empire. I believe the task is one of enabling communication between two worlds that are beginning to blend as part of the globalization process, although they are spiritually at opposite poles. On the one hand it is the secular civilization of the West and on the other the traditional world of religions, of which Islam is the most vigorous. I believe that Christians are in certain circumstances capable of understanding both those worlds, because they share certain features with them both.

If Christians managed to be open toward both sides, and tried to understand both those worlds, they could do much to promote a culture of understanding in today's world and help transform globalization into a process of communication.

I think those who went through the dark night of Communism could and should by the power of their spiritual experience not only help build the temple of the church, but also contribute to cultivating the global civilization which is gradually taking the place of the former bipolar world.



ANGELO SODANO

An Italian theologian, expert in canonical right, diplomat. Ordained a presbyter in 1950, consecrated Bishop in 1978, Apostolic Nuncio to Chile 1978, Secretary of the Council of Public Affairs of the Church 1988, Secretary of the Department of Relations with the States at the State Secretariat 1988 (the equivalent of foreign minister), and later Pro-Secretary of State 1990, Cardinal and Secretary of State 1991-2006, dean of the Cardinals' College since 2005.

The Holy See and the Freedom of Peoples

DEAR FRIENDS, the speeches we have listened to have made us relive that historical period which prepared the return to freedom for many European peoples.

At this point, I can only congratulate the Ambassador of Poland to the Holy See for having organized this meeting, which has brought together here in the Vatican Speakers of great excellence, starting with the President Emeritus of the Republic of Poland, Mr. Lech Wałęsa, and then all the other illustrious Speakers hailing from the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Hungary and Ukraine, ending with Professor Halik's searching thoughts on the Church and how it faced the challenges of those difficult years.

For my part, I'm very happy to have heard the homage all of you paid to the work done in those times of trouble by Pope John Paul II, whom we worship today as a Saint on our altars.

Divine Providence chose to use this great son of the Polish Nation to make its decisive contribution to the collapse of that anti-Christian, and thus also anti-human, ideology which goes by the name of Communism.

I wish to pay homage to Pope John Paul II, and equally to Pope Paul VI and to his highly deserving collaborators, the late lamented Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, and Cardinal Achille Silvestrini. The latter, though having reached the venerable age of 91, still clearly remembers those years that were full of suffering and saw so many struggles for the life of the Church and the freedom of peoples.

Today we wish to remember in particular that first decade of Pope John Paul II's pontificate, and how it contributed very strongly indeed to the goal of the year 1989, which today we commemorate as the *Annus mirabilis*. I believe, however, that we should also pay homage to the work of the Holy See – that slow, methodical, silent labour that prepared the event we commemorate today.

Cardinal Agostino Casaroli speaks of it with a wealth of detail in his book, *Il martirio della pazienza – La Santa Sede ed i Paesi comunisti (1963-1989)*.¹

In those years I was in the service of the Holy See, and thus witnessed the huge efforts made by my Superiors under the august instructions of Pope Paul VI at first, and John Paul after that.

I remember in particular the important preliminary work that was accomplished under the pontificate of Paul VI for the Conference of Helsinki on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

In 1975, with the final document of that important conference, gradually a new working space opened up for the Holy See in Poland and in the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

In this context, I wish also to pay homage to two great Polish prelates who aided Monsignor Casaroli in those difficult years: Monsignor Andrzej Deskur here in Rome, and Monsignor Bronisław Dąbrowski, Auxiliary Bishop of Warsaw and a close associate of Cardinal Wyszyński's. I cherish also the memory of the late lamented Archbishop Monsignor Luigi Poggi, who later headed the Commission for the permanent working contacts between the two Parties engaged in dialogue.

In early 1978 I was nominated Apostolic Nuncio to Chile, and even from so far away I was able to follow how the situation was evolving in Central and Eastern Europe. Again I followed from close up in 1988, when Pope John Paul II called me to the Vatican to succeed Archbishop Achille Silvestrini in the post of Secretary for the Relations with the States.

Here in Rome I closely followed the events of the year 1989, that wonderful year which we are here to commemorate today. But do allow me to remind you that 1989 also marked the beginning of a new era in Chile's history, again thanks to Pope John Paul II's efforts. At that time the Chilean people were challenged by many internal tensions due to the political situation in that country, headed by a military regime.

From Rome the Pope followed the unrest in that country. When he came to Chile in 1987 for several days, he urged its people to live in peace and harmony with one another, thus laying the foundations for the democratic evolution which soon came to be.

In Chile, too, Pope John Paul II is remembered as the great peace-maker with neighbouring Argentina. At the end of 1978, serious strife had arisen between these two nations due to a frontier issue in the southern area of the Beagle Canal. John Paul II, who had only recently been elected pope, got mediation going immediately between the two parties, and after five long years of negotiations, on 29 November, 1994, the two states agreed to sign the "Treaty of Peace and Friendship" here in the Vatican.

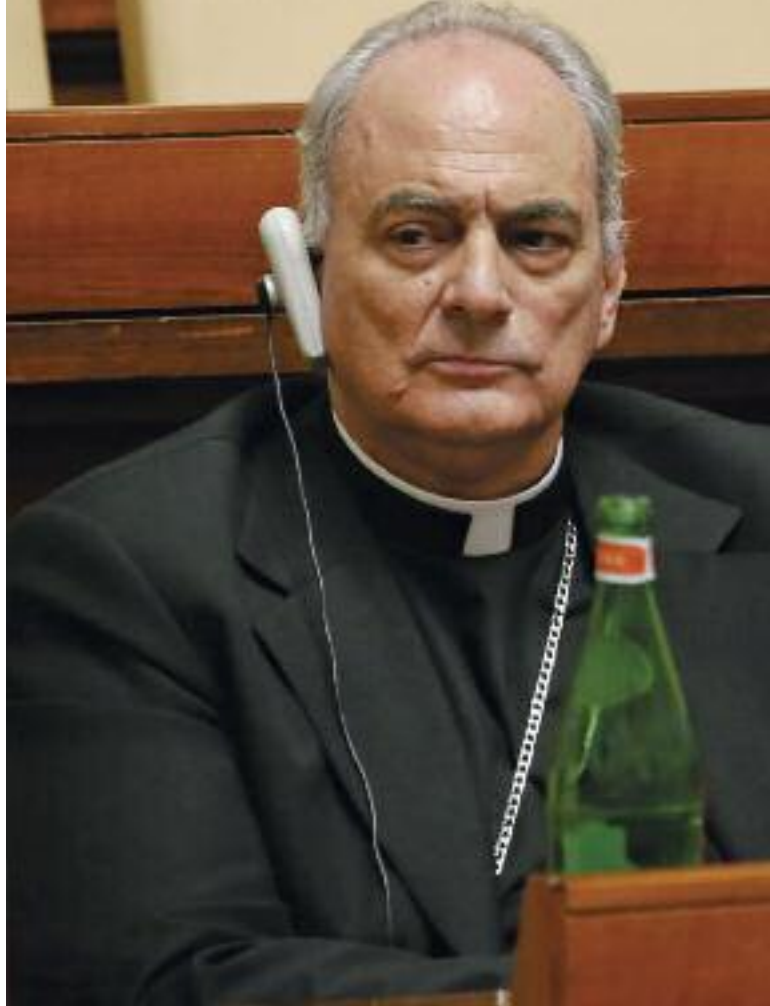
I have wanted to mention this other commitment to peace on the part of Pope John Paul II, initiated in the early stages of his pontificate, to better underline his contribution to a new era of peace and shared understanding also for the peoples of countries lying beyond the pale of Europe.

It is right, then, that future generations should remember Pope John Paul II as a crucial player in bringing peace and harmony both to Europe and to the rest of the world.

1. A. CASAROLI, *Il martirio della pazienza – La Santa Sede ed i Paesi comunisti (1963-1989)* [The martyrdom of Patience – The Holy See and the Communist Countries, 1963–1989], Einaudi, 2000.



Closing remarks and farewell



MARCELO SÁNCHEZ SORONDO

An Argentinian theologian, philosopher and historian of philosophy, was ordained priest in 1968. Professor at the Lateran University and Dean of the Philosophy Department there 1987-1996. Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences 1998. Nominated Bishop in 2001. Secretary of the Pontifical Academy of Saint Thomas of Aquinas. Has authored many scientific publications.

I TAKE THE FLOOR WITH DEEP EMOTION, admiration, and all the feelings we have seen expressed here by these protagonists of the truth, as Václav Havel used to say. And naturally it was Christ who changed the course of history, for he introduced grace and freedom, and it is natural that his successors, in particular his vicars, should, like him, have had a decisive influence on history, since they too contributed to human grace and dignity. We observe this in all ages, but we saw it in particular, and most significantly, with the revolution of world freedom, to use Cardinal Poupard's phrase, especially the freedom of the Slavic world, as brought about by Saint John Paul II, starting in particular with Poland.

I saw the film yesterday: it is wonderful, and I recommend that all of you see it. In it, President Wałęsa demonstrates all the power of this revolution. There we glimpse the figure of Saint John Paul II, somewhere in the background.

But naturally, as I reflect on this revolution conducted by Saint John Paul II, I am reminded of the commentary of Saint Thomas Aquinas' credo, where at the end it is stated: "Peter's faith can never fail because Christ has prayed especially for him".

Instead we see that in other parts of the world faith declines, but it does not decline with the Pope. And of course this is underlined once again in the great figure of Saint John Paul II, Saint Leo and Saint Gregory's peer, and in his closest friends and collaborators who were able to understand him and follow him.

But we also need to say that another extraordinary gesture is at present being made by Pope Francis, following his fast to halt a new air strike in Syria: he has invited President Shimon Peres, the ecumenical patriarch Bartholomew, and President Abu Mazen to come here next Sunday, near Casina Pio IV. This too is a peaceful revolution.

And so, together with the problem of the revolution of freedom against Communism in Europe, which was well described and resolved by Saint John Paul

II, there is the problem of peace in the Middle East. Pope Francis has asked for a prayer to be said. And now, at the Academy of Social Sciences founded by Saint John Paul II, Pope Francis has asked that other problems be tackled: those that are at the centre of the globalized world, such as, for example, the tragedy of the new forms of slavery and the trafficking of human beings which affects 40 million people today and is growing every year by approx. 4 million. And this is the tip of the iceberg. If we go and look, this tragedy touches the very heart of society, and our evangelizing mission as well: for quite clearly if men are not free, or if they are hungry, or if they do not respect their fellow men but exploit them as chattels for profit, then naturally there can be no just society – nor a peaceful one. By the same token, we cannot ask for religious freedom when there is no freedom for human dignity.

Let us then pray to Saint John Paul II for this reason, too: because this is Pope Francis's heartfelt concern as well, in the same way that Saint John Paul II was deeply committed to the freedom of his people, and especially to the Slavic world.

Just as Christ brought grace and freedom to the world, so we see how his successors, starting with Peter, put their efforts into these big problems at the various crossroads of history, thus imparting a great lesson to all of us: history can change if we want to change it, especially through the grace of God. Let us then pray to the Lord that He may also be present today, just as he was present at Saint John Paul II's side.

Thank you.





Speech

**DOMINIQUE FRANÇOIS JOSEPH MAMBERTI**

A French political scientist, lawyer and theologian born in Morocco, ordained to the priesthood in 1981. Diplomat of the Holy See's office at the UN, in Algeria, Chile, Lebanon in 1986, appointed Titular Archbishop of Sagona and Secretary of the State in 2002, appointed Apostolic Delegate to Somalia and Apostolic Nuncio to Sudan and to Eritrea 2002-2006, Secretary at the Section for Relations with States and Secretary of the Interdicasterial Commission for the Churches of Eastern Europe in 2006-2014, appointed prefect of the Apostolic Signatura in 2014.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I AM GRATEFUL TO HIS EXCELLENCY, Piotr Nowina-Konopka, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland, for inviting us here to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of Poland's first free elections. At the same time, I would like to congratulate the Polish Embassy for the session it has organized this afternoon at the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, to underline the special role played by the Church and by Christianity in the events which spelled the end of Communism in Europe.

Indeed, amidst the totalitarian regimes that weighed upon entire generations, the Church always remained a fundamental landmark, in that it was capable of sensitizing consciences towards the moral orientations in life, warning them against the dangers of so-called real Socialism. Today a number of men of the Church, including Cardinals Stefan Wyszyński, Josef Beran, Alojzije Stepinac, József Mindszenty, František Tomášek and others, have indeed come to symbolize this courageous attitude. Right from the beginning these men, as well as many other Bishops of Eastern Europe, came forward to publicly condemn the dangers posed by totalitarianism to the Church and to their Nations, speaking out a clear "no" to its seduction and expressing their solidarity with the persecuted in the face of injustice. The priests, faithful to their ministry, spent hours and hours in the confessionals shaping the consciences of their flocks. The faithful always remained steadfast in their religious belief and preserved the spiritual and cultural heritage of their Countries. All together, bishops, priests, religious and lay figures, suffered for the Christian faith and for their attachment to the Church.

Undoubtedly the election of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła to the Pontificate made it possible for the Churches and the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe to

become the object of the Holy See's special attention. At last, those who amongst the Slavic peoples were believers had not only a Pastor in Rome that spoke their language, but above all a father who also understood their silence and felt that a part of his mission was to give a voice to that silence. In his first *Redemptor Hominis* Encyclical, Saint John Paul II expressed his conviction that the Church must act as a custodian and champion of freedom. In his pastoral trips, too, he never missed an opportunity to stress the Church's deep concern for man, for his liberty and dignity, and for all his rights. How can we not recall, in particular, the Polish Pope's first journey to his homeland, undertaken around this time of year thirty-five years ago? How can we not recall the time in Warsaw, in Victory Square, when he, a son of the Polish soil and also the Pastor of the Universal Church, beseeched the Lord in a loud voice on the eve of Whit Sunday: "May your Spirit descend! May your Spirit descend! And let him renew the face of the Earth! Of this Earth!"? That was the beginning of wonderful things! A few months later "Solidarność" came into being – the labour union that was to lay the groundwork for a decade-long process which led to the first free elections in Poland.

As a consequence of this realization that a moral revival was needed – at first a spiritual and moral revival, and then also a political and economic one – neighbouring Czechoslovakia saw the rise of the program "The Decade of the Nation's Spiritual Revival", ahead of the Millennium celebrations for the death of Saint Adalbert. In his message to the Bishops of a number of European countries, Cardinal Tomášek, Archbishop of Prague, enjoined them to make every year, on the eve of Saint Adalbert's festivity, "a European bridge of prayer", that would bring the Nations of Central Europe together, beyond borders, in a common wish for a moral and spiritual revival, for the deeper unity of Europe and the peace and respect of all human rights. "Warsaw, Moscow, Budapest, Berlin, Prague, Sofia and Bucharest, to mention only the capitals, have become the stages of a long pilgrimage towards freedom" – this is what the Holy Pontiff stressed to the Diplomatic Corps accredited at the Holy See on 13 January 1990.

One of the felicitous consequences of the events that took place in the late 1980s was that diplomatic relations were re-established between the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and the Holy See. Today, not only do we have the joy of evoking that historic turning point here in Rome thanks to the Polish Embassy's invitation, but also through the Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin's recent visit to the land of Saint Stanislas. To recall these facts today makes it easier for us not to forget the lesson of history. The experience accumulated at the time of tribulation is proof not only that human happiness can never be based solely on material welfare, but also that the freedom of peoples can never be either complete or stable if it doesn't go hand in hand with a true spiritual revival. Saint Paul reminds us that Christ made us free in order that we should remain free (cf. *Gal* 5, 1). The suffering of the martyrs of those times

spurs Christians on to remain free today, and to commit themselves to defending human life, starting with those who are weaker and more defenceless. In the same way, the history of those Nations who have once again found their freedom, is an appeal to States, single individuals and the Church, to commit themselves, each and every one, and put all powers to the service of good, thus helping to build Europe both now and in the future.



CALENDAR OF THE ANNUS MIRABILIS



1945	Conferences of Yalta and Potsdam – the USSR rules over Central and Eastern Europe	06.02-05.04.1989	'Round Table' negotiations in Poland
		04.06.1989	First free elections in Poland since the second world war
17.06.1953	Workers' uprising against the Government of the German Democratic Republic, crushed by the Group of Soviet Forces – about 300 dead	13.06-18.09.1989	'Triangular Table' negotiations in Hungary
		12.09.1989	Tadeusz Mazowiecki forms new government in Poland
		01.10-9.11.1989	Protests in the GDR end with the fall of the Berlin Wall
		17.11-4.12.1989	The 'Velvet Revolution' in Czechoslovakia
		6-26.12.1989	Mass demonstrations in Bulgaria
28.06.1956	Workers' unrest in Poznań crushed with military tanks – 57 dead	16-25.12.1989	Mass demonstrations in Romania end with the execution of Nicolau Ceaușescu
21.10.1956	The 'Polish October'	29.12.1989	Vaclav Havel is elected President of Czechoslovakia
23.10.1956	Hungarian Uprising violently put down by Soviet troops – 5,000 dead, amongst them Imre Nagy		
		18.03.1990	Free elections in the German Democratic Republic
08.03.1968	'March Uprising' – Student protests and antisemitic purges	25.03.1990	Free elections in Hungary
		20.05.1990	Free elections in Romania
21.08.1968	Armed aggression by Warsaw Pact allies against the "Prague Spring" – more than 100 dead	08-09.06.1990	Free elections in Czechoslovakia
		10.06.1990	Free elections in Bulgaria
14-22.12.1970	The December 'Incidents' in Poland (Gdansk and Gdynia) – 41 dead, 1,164 injured	03.10.1990	Unification of Germany
26-30.06.1976	'Incidents' in Radom – strikes and protests, mass arrests and dismissals from work		
16.10.1978	Cardinal Karol Wojtyła elected Pope		
02-10.06.1979	First pilgrimage of John Paul II to Poland		
14-31.08.1980	Strikes in Gdańsk Shipyard and founding of 'Solidarność'		
13.12.1981	Martial Law is declared in Poland		
16-23.06.1983	Second pilgrimage of John Paul II to Poland		
08-14.06.1987	Third pilgrimage of John Paul II to Poland		



