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**LOOKING THE DEVIL IN THE EYES:  
TOTALITARIANISM AND CARDINAL STEFAN  
WYSZYŃSKI'S HUMANITARIAN-PERSONALIST  
CONCEPT OF SOCIO-POLITICAL LIFE**

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*PATRZĄC DIABŁU W OCZY: TOTALITARYZM  
I HUMANITARNO-PERSONALISTYCZNA KONCEPCJA  
ŻYCIA SPOŁECZNO-POLITYCZNEGO  
KARDYNAŁA STEFANA WYSZYŃSKIEGO*

**Streszczenie**

Zasadniczym celem niniejszego artykułu jest ukazanie specyfiki teorii totalitaryzmu w kontekście humanitarno-personalistycznej koncepcji życia społeczno-politycznego kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego. Pozwala to na wyjątkowy wgląd w naturę systemów totalitarnych, zarówno w istotę niemieckiego nazistowskiego hitleryzmu, jak też komunizmu. Niniejsze analizy podjęto w celu reinterpretacji powyższych koncepcji z punktu widzenia chrześcijańskiej prakseologii personalistycznej, z uwzględnieniem fundamentalnych założeń absolutnie antyludzkiej i antychrześcijańskiej specyfiki stojącego za nimi paradygmatu, który nie tylko określał, ale także legitymizował, a nawet uwierzytelniał najstraszniejsze i najbardziej zwyrodniałe formy totalitarnych systemów XX wieku. Jest to szczególnie istotne, zwłaszcza dzisiaj, gdy pojawiające się tendencje często banalizują zbrodniczy charakter tych systemów, a nawet traktują „model totalitarny” – szczególnie w kontekście komunizmu – jako „specyficzne zjawisko historyczne”, mające na celu rozwiązanie wielu skomplikowanych zjawisk natury społeczno-politycznej, kulturowej, czy też gospodarczej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** *totalitaryzm, Stefan Wyszyński, faszizm, nazizm, komunizm, personalizizm*

### Abstract

The key aim of this article is to expose the specificity of the theory of totalitarianism in the context of Cardinal Wyszyński's humanitarian-personalist concept of socio-political life. Hence, it provides a unique insight into the nature of totalitarian systems, both German Nazi Hitlerism and Communism. Analyses were performed to reinterpret the above systems from the perspective of Christian personalist praxeology, taking into account the fundamental assumptions of the absolutely anti-human and anti-Christian paradigm that not only defined but also legitimized and even authenticated the most terrible and degenerated forms of totalitarian systems of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, it is crucial, especially today, when emerging tendencies often trivialize the criminal nature of that systems and even treat the "totalitarian model" – particularly in the context of Communism – as a "specific historical phenomenon" aimed at resolving many complicated socio-political, cultural, and economic issues.

**Keywords:** *totalitarianism, Stefan Wyszyński, fascism, Nazism, communism, personalism*

Along with the systemic transformation of post-war People's Poland and the shift in the paradigm of power, the ideological offensive aimed at changing the standards and principles of social and political life and "remodeling" the worldview and mentality of Poles based on the concept of a "new socialist morality" rooted in the ideals of Marxist-Leninist materialist ideology began to gain traction. Moreover, official propaganda emphasized the importance of pluralism and democracy but understood only in terms specific to communist ideology, typical of the so-called "People's democracy," entirely subordinated to a totalitarian system of power. Therefore, the interdependence of the "people's democracy" and socialism was a central dimension of efforts to implement the political assumptions of the People's Republic of Poland.

Thus, the analyzes presented here show that the personalistic and community concept of the state offered by Stefan Wyszyński was against both the absolutization of the state and its depreciation. According to Wyszyński, a properly functioning state should not be a welfare state nor neutral in terms of world views. Therefore, the state's primary task is to care for the fate of its citizens, especially those in difficult life situations. In other words, personalism adopts the concept of a subsidiary state that respects citizens' subjectivity and supports their multi-faceted commitment to the "common good".

Nevertheless, severe threats to social life, resulting from geopolitical conditions and numerous systemic shortcomings of the communist totalitarian state and dangerous addictions and moral defects, required strong resistance from all social structures. As Cardinal Wyszyński emphasized, it was not only about overcoming some “Polish national defects” but about a comprehensive and multidimensional moral change. This kind of process may become a religious and social program of the rebirth of the Polish Nation in a broader context. “The life of a nation or state is so complex and demanding that it requires the joining of hands, hearts, and brains of all children of the Nation, all citizens of the state, without distinguishing between their social and professional backgrounds. Then, it is possible to steer the boat of our common homeland, for which we all have to take care of”<sup>1</sup>.

The pastoral service and the spiritual leadership of Primate Wyszyński fell during the post-war period of Polish history, a country whose existence had been seriously threatened by the most immoral totalitarian systems of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Nazi National Socialism and the Marxist-Leninist system of real socialism. Thus, the complicated socio-political context, as well as the conditions of the international situation, required the Catholic Church to be very prudent but also to act decisively<sup>2</sup>.

Therefore, Primate Wyszyński, as the leader of the Catholic Church in Poland, realized the need to change the structures of public life in the country, but he did not consider it the primary and most urgent task of the Church. He also did not feel that he had been called to change the entire political system. His criticism primarily concerned the anthropological and moral dimensions of social life. Wyszyński, however, was aware that the critical elements of the state’s political system would have to change if a proper moral order were to exist. In this context, he repeatedly spoke of a “social disposition” that would just favor social change. However, the social disposition – in his opinion – should be based on the canvas of the Christian religion, the aim of which is to change the human heart (metanoia). In this way, transformed people (*homo Dei*) will become the right subjects and a foundation for the proper shaping of the common good<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Przywódca ludu rolniczego. Poświęcenie tablicy ku czci Wincentego Witosa. Warszawa 28.12.1975*, in: idem, „Nie rzucim ziemi...” *Z przemówień do rolników*, Warszawa 1984, p. 23–24.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. idem, *Czas to miłość. Podczas uroczystości Wniebowzięcia Matki Bożej (Jasna Góra, 15.08.1979)*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 889–891.

### 1. TOTALITARIANISM: ORIGINS, AGENDA, AND PRACTICALITIES

Nowadays, totalitarianism is understood primarily as a government or political system concept that prohibits opposition parties, limits individual disapproval to the state and its claims, and exercises an extremely high degree of control over public and private life. In this sense, totalitarianism is considered the most extreme and wide-ranging form of authoritarianism. In totalitarian states, however, political power is often exercised by autocrats. They conduct multi-level and autocratic political campaigns in which propaganda is broadcast through state-controlled media<sup>4</sup>.

Moreover, totalitarian regimes are often characterized by extensive political repression, dictatorship, and highly undemocratic government structures, widespread individual worship, absolute control of the economy, censorship, mass surveillance, restricted freedom of movement, widespread intimidation, and – not infrequently – state terrorism. Other aspects of a totalitarian regime may include internment camps, secret police, religious persecution, theocracy or state atheism, the widespread practice of execution (death penalty), rigged elections, possible possession of weapons of mass destruction, the possibility of state-sponsored mass murder or genocide, and the possibility of engaging in war, annexation or colonial occupation against other countries. In this context, Robert Conquest defines a totalitarian state as one that recognizes no restrictions on its power in any sphere of public or private life and extends it to every possible area of human life<sup>5</sup>.

As a political ideology, totalitarianism's genesis was shaped in the context of historical circumstances. The historian and philosopher Karl Popper sought the roots of totalitarianism in the ancient philosophy of Plato, the concept of the state of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and the political philosophy of Karl Marx<sup>6</sup>. The above statement remains controversial to this day, meeting with severe criticism of the academic community<sup>7</sup>. Other experts on the subject, such as Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, see the beginnings of totalitarian doctrines in the Age of Enlightenment, especially in the idea of human empowerment as an autonomous and ontically independent being<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. E. Traverso, *Le Totalitarisme: Le XXe siècle en débat*, Paris 2001, p. 173–186.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. R. Conquest, *Reflections on a Ravaged Century*, New York-London 2001, p. 74.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Princeton 2013.

<sup>7</sup> As John Wild put it: “Popper is committing a serious historical error in attributing the organic theory of the state to Plato and accusing him of all the fallacies of post-Hegelian and Marxist historicism – the theory that history is controlled by the inexorable laws governing the behavior of super-individual social entities of which human beings and their free choices are merely subordinate manifestations (J. Wild, *Plato's Modern Enemies and the Theory of Natural Law*, Chicago 1964, p. 23).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. M. Horkheimer, T. W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Stanford 2002.

From the very beginning of its existence, the term “totalitarianism” had negative connotations. The above term was first used by Giovanni Amendola in May 1923 to denounce fascist efforts to monopolize state power and impose on Italian society a new political mentality with the hallmarks of a secular religion<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless, a positive sense was given to the above idea by Benito Mussolini. He expressed the essence of totalitarianism, among other things, in the words: “For a fascist, everything is a state, and there is nothing – human or spiritual – nothing of value except the State. In this sense, fascism is totalitarian”<sup>10</sup>.

On the other hand, the first “philosopher of totalitarianism” was Giovanni Gentile. Using terminology borrowed from Hegelianism, Gentile not only justified the political concepts of Italian fascists but also constructed an image of a totalitarian state that resembled the demonic visions of Hannah Arendt and George Orwell in the late 1940s<sup>11</sup>. As early as in the 1920s, Carl Schmitt developed a framework of a theoretical doctrine enabling the transition of Germany from the formula of a republican to a totalitarian state. As a National Socialist state theorist, Schmitt rejected the liberal and individualist tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in favor of a state dominated by a new “Allgemeiner Wille” (General Will), reflecting the unified uniformity of a modern industrial society<sup>12</sup>.

The communist version of totalitarianism, referring to the idea of Russian social democracy, presented a slightly different specificity. In this context, the beliefs of the “Bolsheviks” were characterized by extreme radicalism, unlike their opponents,

<sup>9</sup> In this context, the term fascism (*il fascismo*) is of Italian origin. It was taken from the word *il fascio*, which means union. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the socialist peasant group in Sicily was defined as *fasci*. In 1915, the “Fasci di azione rivoluzionaria” was founded, demanding Italy’s participation in the war. The first Veterans’ Associations (Fasci di Combattimento), founded in Milan on March 23, 1919, by Benito Mussolini, referred to the tradition of ancient Rome, using the gesture of greeting by raising the right hand and the symbol of judiciary power – lictors’ rods (*fascio littorio*). They later became the state emblem (*il Fascio Littorio*). The “Veterans’ Unions” was the nucleus of a mass fascist political movement (*il movimento fascista*), which then transformed (in 1921) into the National Fascist Party (*Il Partito Nazionale Fascista, PNF*). The “black shirts” (*camicie nere*) worn by fascists symbolized the movement and the party. Psychologically common attitudes dominated the heterogeneous social composition of the fascist movement, resulting, above all, from the frustration caused by the profound post-war political, social and economic crisis. Cf. W. Kozub-Ciembroniewicz, *Doktryna i system władzy Włoch faszystowskich na tle porównawczym*, Kraków 2016, p. 15–17; E. Gentile, *Fascismo: Storia e interpretazione*, Roma–Bari 2008, p. 9–11.

<sup>10</sup> Mussolini’s best-known sentence characterizing totalitarianism was pronounced on October 28, 1925, in Milan: „La nostra formula è questa: tutto nello stato, niente al di fuori dello stato, nulla contro lo stato” (N. Bobbio, *Dal fascismo alla democrazia*, Mediolan 2008, p. 51).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. G. Gentile, *Źródła i doktryna faszyzmu*, tł. H. Mirecka, Warszawa 1933.

<sup>12</sup> In his major early works that explored the nature of guilt, the foundations of jurisprudence, and the relationship between the individual and the state, Carl Schmitt laid the foundations for his subsequent work and the law of a totalitarian state. Cf. P. Bookbinder, *Roots of Totalitarian Law: The Early Works of Carl Schmitt*, “Social Science” 56: 1981 (3), p. 133–145.

the Mensheviks. They sought to make the Russian workers' movement similar to the Western European, liberalized model of the socialist movement. At the root of the ideological sources of Bolshevism is, above all, radical Marxism in its Leninist version, which emphasizes the fundamental role of the party. According to Lenin, the Bolshevik party (anti-democratic, highly disciplined, hierarchical, and centralized) brings together determined revolutionists, leads the working-class masses, and makes them politically aware. It constitutes the political elite to which the working class owes its achievement of "proletarian and revolutionary consciousness" since the labor movement, without the creative role of the elite, reaches only the organizational level of the trade unions. Thus, without the inspiring part of the Bolshevik Party, the working class, the potential leader of the socialist revolution, cannot carry it out victoriously. However, it is evidently an anti-Marxist view<sup>13</sup>.

Therefore, taking into account the specificity of totalitarian systems that influenced the Polish reality, it should be noted that the above ideological concepts – rooted in the horror of the events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the nightmare of two modern world wars, the Bolshevik revolution, terror, genocide, and from 1945 also the threat of total nuclear annihilation – are a conglomerate of very ambiguous and controversial issues in the entire field of political science, sociology, and political theology. Simply put, the above ideas suggest that despite fascist/Nazi "particularism" (the central place of a nation or "master race") and Bolshevik "universalism" (the pursuit of classless, international communal "comradeship"), both regimes shared common characteristics. It does not mean, however, that they were completely alike.

Nevertheless, totalitarianism – regardless of its regional and ideological specificity – can be characterized as a specific form of the state, based on the domination of one political formation, concentrating power not only over public institutions or politics – in the broadest, traditional sense of the word – but also economics, social and cultural institutions and the personal life of individuals. The aim of such a state was not only the traditional control of society but also to undertake wide-ranging, gigantic reform projects, following the ideological idea of a totalitarian center, whose aim was to create a "new man." In a totalitarian state, there were no institutions independent of the state. Putting his idea into practice required an undertaking of gigantic social engineering. However, because of the active or passive resistance of the society, carrying out such a task made it necessary to develop the apparatus of terror, coupled with the structures of political

<sup>13</sup> Cf. W. Kozub-Ciembroniewicz, *Doktryna i system władzy Włoch faszystowskich na tle porównawczym*, Kraków 2016, p. 20; А. А. Ивина, *Марксизм-ленинизм, Философия: Энциклопедический словарь*, Москва 2004; M. Albert, R. Hahnel, *Socialism Today and Tomorrow*. Boston, Massachusetts, USA 1981, p. 24–25.

control, with the simultaneous façade of the officially existing systemic institutions, the corruption of public language and omnipresent lies<sup>14</sup>.

To mobilize enormous masses of people to implement their projects, the totalitarian state usually created ideological images of a mythical “enemy,” which had to be exterminated or permanently neutralized. Hence, these countries made genocide a part of their policy. In Germany, Jews became the enemy, and also people who were “superfluous”, in the meaning of the Nazis: the mentally ill and incurable. Therefore, polemicizing with that concept, Wyszyński states: “The greatest disgrace to man – would be any relationship with God, especially in the Christian sense. Man, God’s creation? This wording is enough to draw all the hatred that is exercised towards God. There is widespread contempt for the image of God in man, even easier to perpetuate because people do everything not to remind God of anything. A man stripped of the remnants of a relationship with God is considered directly as a fertilizer for future generations. He lives purely animal life; he feeds himself to live and have the strength to work, work for the masses, wastes its strength, and when he becomes less and less useful – he should go away, not to stand in the way of the young. His highest value is race and pure-blood, which he should pass to the coming generations. The entire value of a man is confirmed by belonging to a chosen race. If there is no specific blood group in it, he is not a human being; he has no right to life. He is a parasite! It is a merit to remove the parasite so that the people could live and develop without hindrance”<sup>15</sup>.

On the other hand, in the Soviet Union, the public enemy was “elements alien to the class” or “hostile elements” that hindered the building of a communist society, arbitrarily defined and destroyed by the administrative will of the communist apparatus. In both totalitarianisms of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the category of the enemy was defined *a priori* and independent of the individual’s choice. Breaking free from the stigma of race or class was not possible. Both systems ruled out the emergence of an ethnic or class civic community. The inclusion criterion would be not stigmatization of racial origin or “flaw,” but personal merit. Therefore, Cardinal Wyszyński’s reflection on the criticism of Marxism-Leninism and, especially, the communist vision of socio-political life is, of course, based on Christian anthropology and the experience of the Church. Referring to the teaching of the popes, he states that the fundamental error of socialism is an anthropological one<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. L. Fritze, *Anatomie des totalitären Denkens. Kommunistische und nationalsozialistische Weltanschauung im Vergleich*, München 2012.

<sup>15</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość społeczna. Rozważania społeczne*, Poznań 1993, p. 47.

<sup>16</sup> Analyzing the concepts of supporters of collectivism in Marxist-Leninist understanding, Wyszyński points out: “Man does not have any personal value in their eyes. Not only is it not the center of the world, it is simply nothing. It takes its entire value from giving the state through social co-existence. Therefore, firstly, people are denied the rights of a person: freedom, thinking and acting. Man is subject to unconditional obedience to the supreme power: people must be listened

In their political praxis, totalitarian ideologies repeatedly referred to the so-called “culture war” that required the total dedication of advocates for shaping the new world. The myth of rebirth was significant here. It meant the creation of a new nation or world without classes and the formation of a fair-minded “New Man,” untainted by decadent cultural habits referring to traditional philosophical and theological systems of the old world. The strategy of the coup d’état, the constant struggle to defeat the “enemies of the people,” and the constant emphasis on the need to intensify the class struggle favored the formation of a similar mentality among the political leaders of totalitarian regimes<sup>17</sup>.

Contrary to democratic states, the sacralization of politics implemented by totalitarian regimes, along with its liturgies, holidays, and cults, is marked by the leader’s deification. Moreover, it is characterized by the idolatrous cult of the state, which gives itself the exclusive right to determine good and evil; the marginalization or destruction of traditional religion; orgiastic mass rallies and demonstrations, emphasizing the leading role of a political party assigned the role of a “political demiurge”; a call to sacrifice and a death cult. In this sense, a modern interpretation of totalitarianism that emphasizes political religion has one important implication. It suggests that totalitarianism should be understood not as

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to rather than God. The human person is subjected to complete contempt, the inexorable hardness of the system of government, the inhumanity of boundless lawlessness, despotism, and terror. In practice, citizens are enslaved to the community. Secondly, people are denied the freedom to believe in and worship God. For in man the eternal principle is not recognized, nor any other destiny other than temporal. Hence the organized, official struggle against religion – as a new task of the contemporary state. Hatred organized! Communism wants to build a world without God. Man wants to be brought up without the commandments of God and religious morality, only based on the morality of the mass. So you have to destroy all religion. Man is a new god of man. The highest happiness – proletarian equality. In this way man, created in the image and likeness of God, detached from his Creator, is thrown into the depths of godlessness and mortality. Thirdly, one’s own destiny and human goals are rejected. He has no soul and no destiny. And no one can measure man’s goal of pursuing happiness in God. Man is obliged to pursue these goals which the state will show him. He must be socialized – all over his body and soul. He has a duty to sacrifice all, fulfill all community orders. Finally, fourthly, a new goal is imposed on man, indicated by collective life. Because spiritual values have no meaning, hence the goal of the highest human life will be the good of the state, society, nation, class, party or economic good, organized atheistically, temporal, material happiness, earthly or capitalist paradise – through self-profit or also through communist profit. In a word – deification of matter, profit, production, technology“ (S. Wyszyński, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość*, p. 46–47).

<sup>17</sup> Such experts on the subject as Raymond Aron, Albert Camus, Ernst Cassirer, Norman Cohn, Waldemar Gurian, Jacob Talmon, and Eric Voegelin emphasize the mythological component of totalitarianism. Thus, they mention “substitute religions”, “political religions”, “myth of the state”, “sacralization of politics”. In their opinion, political religion is an essential element of totalitarianism as well as a dangerous and lethal weapon in the ideological arsenal of totalitarian systems. Cf. R. Ficek, *Christians in Socio-Political Life: An Applied Analysis of the Theological Anthropology of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński*, Toruń 2020, p. 44–51.



a specific political system but as a historical “eventuality” that also carries particular threats to the modern world<sup>18</sup>.

No wonder Cardinal Wyszyński was opposed to the totalitarian concept of German Nazism and the Marxist-Leninist materialist ideology as well. In this sense, he considered both systemic forms of the state as political deviations and the greatest threat to Christianity. Especially Communism, as an ideology proclaiming an atheistic and materialistic vision of the human person and social life, was considered particularly hostile to Christian aspirations, promoting respect for human dignity and shaping the Christian social order in the dimension of peaceful coexistence, justice, and mutual respect. Moreover, dialectical materialism, as an idea deeply rooted in totalitarian systems, denied the existence of Christian spirituality. So it is another progressive deviation degenerating the supernatural, spiritual, and religious sphere of human life. Moreover, atheistic materialism only recognizes and approves material reality, which can only be understood through sensual experience. However, this is for blind people and thus kills the metaphysical sphere and spiritual aspirations aimed at the supernatural dimension.

## 2. TOTALITARIAN IDEOLOGY VERSUS CHRISTIAN PERCEPTIVENESS

The teaching and pastoral activity of Stefan Wyszyński fell during an undoubtedly thorny period in the history of the Polish Nation, which was threatened both by unfavorable geopolitical conditions and exposed to various forms of moral deprivation and poverty. Nevertheless, Cardinal Wyszyński's opposition to totalitarian ideology, especially atheistic Communism, was based mainly on Christian tradition and personalism. In this context, as Wyszyński states: “Man does not have any personal value in their eyes. He is merely nothing. [...] Therefore, firstly, people are denied the rights of a person: freedom, thinking, and acting. Man is subject to unconditional obedience to the supreme power. [...] The human person is subjected to complete contempt, the government system's inexorable hardness, and the inhumanity of great lawlessness, despotism, and terror. In practice, citizens are enslaved to the community. Secondly, people are denied the freedom to believe in and worship God. For in man, the eternal principle is not recognized, nor any other destiny other than temporal. Hence the organized, official struggle against religion is a new task of the current state. Hatred organized!”<sup>19</sup>.

Additionally, reducing man to his material and naturalistic needs only undermines the legitimacy of all religions. In other words, totalitarian ideology abolishes eternal truths; it abolishes all religion and is directly opposed to the practice of

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 147–150.

<sup>19</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość społeczna*, p. 46–47.

authentic faith<sup>20</sup>. “Man wants to be brought up without God’s commandments and religious morality, only based on the mass’s morality. So you have to destroy all religion. Man is the new God of a man. The highest happiness: proletarian equality. In this way, man, created in God’s image and likeness, detached from his Creator, is thrown into the depths of godlessness and mortality. Thirdly, one’s destiny and individual goals are rejected. He has no soul and no destiny”<sup>21</sup>.

Moreover, “no one can measure man’s goal of pursuing happiness in God. Man is obliged to pursue these goals, which the state will show him. He must be socialized, all over his body and soul. He must sacrifice all, fulfill all community orders. Finally, fourthly, a new goal is imposed on man, indicated by collective life. Because spiritual values have no meaning, the purpose of the highest human life will be the good of the state, society, Nation, class, party, or economic goal, organized atheistically, temporal, material happiness, an earthly paradise: self-profit or also through communist profit. In other words, the deification of matter, profit, production, technology<sup>22</sup>. Beyond the human being – emphasizes the Cardinal – there is no personality, no rationality, and freedom”<sup>23</sup>.

Totalitarianism as a political system representing an extreme rejection of freedom expressed a radical ambition to subordinate the entire reality of public life to a single center of power. In other words, the overriding goal of the totalitarian political elite was power without legal and moral restrictions, without civic pluralism and party rivalry. The main point was to transform human nature itself “into the image and likeness” of false anthropology based on the ideological premises of erroneous axiology. Therefore, the main priority was to utterly subordinate man to the then political concept of the state.

However, speaking of the so-called “erroneous” systemic concepts, Cardinal Wyszyński, first of all, pointed towards totalitarian systems. According to him, totalitarian systems – both socialism in the Nazi version and political and economic collectivism – turned out to be a catastrophe in various dimensions. In other words, neither one nor the different socio-political and economical conceptions have met society’s hopes and expectations. “This is their original sin. For both systems stem from the same materialistic philosophy, both practically proclaim the priority of things over the person – and both do not effectively defend man

<sup>20</sup> Cf. E. Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations, and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism*, „Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions” 1: 2000 (1), p. 48–50.

<sup>21</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość społeczna*, p. 47.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 47–48.

<sup>23</sup> *Idem*, *Spoleczność przyrodzona i nadprzyrodzona. II Konferencja Akademicka. Warszawa – kościół św. Anny 16.02.1957*, in: *Kazania i przemowienia autoryzowane 1956–1981*, vol. II, Archiwum Instytutu Prymasowskiego w Warszawie, p. 61.

against the demon of technocratism who has put himself at the service of economics against the rights of the human person”<sup>24</sup>.

So, totalitarianism is a form of a socio-political system, whose main feature is the quest for strict subordination and complete control of all areas of social and individual life in all its dimensions. Therefore, it can be concluded that totalitarian systems seem to be a specific type of political gnosis consisting in dividing reality into two dimensions: good and evil. This first dimension – understood as “positive” – consists of the supporters of a given system. The second is “negative” and involves enemies of the regime. Moreover, totalitarianism is often associated with dictatorship, a significant restriction of civil and personal freedoms, the abolition of the freedom of speech and religion, the rule of the inviolability of private property, and the persecution of individuals opposing the totalitarian profile of the government<sup>25</sup>.

In other words, totalitarian ideologies always tend to turn into a kind of universal creed (a kind of “Communist Manifesto”). As a result, it is a tendency completely lacking in liberal political systems, where the rational dimension of human nature is a unifying force, assuming that humanity is the sum of individual rational beings. Thus, liberal political systems distance themselves from the totalitarian understanding of “unity” and the universality of human values, thus representing a specific form of pragmatism.

Unfortunately, in the post-war history of Poland, the revolutionary, exclusive, and totalitarian ideology of real socialism advocated the destruction of the entire old order – according to communist ideologues – corrupt and discredited by social injustice. At the same time, the birth of a radically new – cleansed by Marxist-Leninist dialecticism, and therefore full of fresh hope – communist reality was proclaimed. In this context, the anti-liberal, anti-conservative, and anti-pluralist totalitarian ideology created various myths, catechisms, cults, ceremonies, and rituals to commemorate the fate of the elect. The cellular, fluid, network-like political party structure handed the political power to “local fighters” for a new world order. As recruits and fellow believers were won over, the Communist Party increasingly became a mass populist. It was headed by a charismatic leader who demanded recognition of his omniscience and infallibility as well as unconditional personal devotion to the people (the cult of the charismatic leader)<sup>26</sup>.

The primary dimension of the false vision of man presented by totalitarian ideologies is the negation of the idea that man is created in the image and likeness of God. So, he is responsible for his actions and, therefore, can direct his life in

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. idem, *Nasze dezyderaty. Do profesorów katolickiej nauki społecznej, Jasna Góra 22 I 1963*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 196

<sup>25</sup> Cf. J.M. Bochenski, G. Niemeyer, *Handbuch des Weltkommunismus*, Freiburg – München 1958, p. 633.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. R. Ficek, *Christians in Socio-Political Life*, p. 159–162.

such a way as to discover his destiny and dignity as a child of God. Yes, economics and technologies would both seem to be not only very useful but also necessary. The most important question, however, is whether they serve the higher spiritual needs of man. Otherwise, even the most significant achievements of science and technology can be dangerous and even harmful. Especially when they are used without moderation and, as such, appear to be an end in themselves<sup>27</sup>.

According to the Primate, such an attitude is often expressed in the cult of corporeality, exaggerated lust for prosperity, and lack of simplicity. Moreover, “false ideologies” emphasize the uncontrolled quest for the immediate gratification of all kinds of pleasure, selfishness, and social lack of justice. In other words, it is expressed in a dangerous concept of life that is universally accepted and views human fulfillment only in terms of material well-being and down-to-earth complacency. “Although man in his actions and hardships of controlling the land is limited, (...) nevertheless he should remember that he has a primacy before the created world. In the end, he was shaped in all his being by God Himself, the Creator who made in His nature the mark of His greatness. This greatness does not come from human giving, but it is established by the creative act of God’s love. Therefore, every human person is related to others in God alone”<sup>28</sup>.

Therefore, in a situation where very influential and at the same time hostile forces of totalitarian systems sought to degenerate and corrupt the moral tissue of the Nation, Wyszyński saw it as an absolute obligation to awaken the nation’s conscience in order to prepare it to fight the harmful effects of social demoralization. “Today, the world is transforming into a sort of stable, where the alchemy of life is limited to the process of eating, and people are left without perspectives, without imaginings and ideals, without emotional tensions, with some strange distrust to the human mind, as if it was not worthy to touch God. Man is deprived of trust in the power of human will, which overcomes itself. It raises distrust of the human heart, which is so important not only in sociology and pedagogy but even in politics”<sup>29</sup>.

Therefore, the large-scale struggle against religion and the Church resulted also from the specificity of the “cultural war” – an essential factor in the political strategy of totalitarian power – which was aimed at depriving man of dignity, independent thinking, and, consequently, of freedom itself. Analyzing the harmful effects of totalitarian propaganda, Cardinal Wyszyński emphasized: “This spiritual

<sup>27</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Najważniejszą wartością na świecie jest człowiek. Warszawa – Miodowa 19.10.1980*, in: idem, *Stefan Kardynał Wyszyński prymas Polski, Kościół w służbie Narodu*, Rzym 1981, p. 90–91.

<sup>28</sup> Idem, *O katolickiej woli życia. List pasterski na Wielkanoc 1947*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 34–36.

<sup>29</sup> Idem, *Zwycięstwo wiary naszej. Do duchowieństwa Warszawy 24 XII 1973*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 570.

deflation, moral and cultural minimalism led to impudence, which implies determined crackdown on the religious aspirations, needs, feelings, and ambitions of the human person”.<sup>30</sup> Thus, Christian humanism, which proclaims the dignity and authentic freedom of man in terms of “*imago Dei*,” by its very nature contradicts the spirit of totalitarianism.

Therefore, a personalistic vision of social life as understood by Stefan Wyszyński requires a firm opposition to concepts referring to dialectical materialism and breaking with the false idea of man and the world, dehumanizing and degenerating social life in all its dimensions. Otherwise, the atheistic-materialistic vision of life, entailing various forms of desacralization and dehumanization of human activity, will become not only an expression of a false ideology but also a real threat to both man and the whole world. By rejecting his relation to God concerning the world, not fully recognizing the laws governing this world, man radically turns against the world, leading to the destruction of the human person<sup>31</sup>.

Therefore, the modern world requires the rehabilitation of man, which means giving him his rightful place in the whole socio-political life. The need to heal social life and restore its proper hierarchy of values means that our socio-political thinking may permanently preserve man’s primacy<sup>32</sup>. “This is possible only when the entire complex structure of social life has its roots in God who created man in His likeness and called him to the dignity of God’s child”<sup>33</sup>. It is crucial in the face of the threats posed by totalitarian systems that fight God in the name of man. Only an integral vision of man and society, rooted in God who is Love, can save man and give meaning to his life and actions. When a man loses his relationship with God when he is no longer the son of God, he ceases to be a human being<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Idem, *Nowoczesny program ślubowań akademickich. Jasna Góra 4 V 1974*, in: idem, *Kazania i przemówienia autoryzowane 1956–1981*, vol. XLVI, Archiwum Instytutu Prymasowskiego w Warszawie, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> Such experts on the subject as Raymond Aron, Albert Camus, Ernst Cassirer, Norman Cohn, Waldemar Gurian, Jacob Talmon, and Eric Voegelin emphasize the mythological component of totalitarianism. Thus, they mention “substitute religions”, “political religions”, “myth of the state”, “sacralization of politics”. In their opinion, political religion is an essential element of totalitarianism as well as a dangerous and lethal weapon in the ideological arsenal of totalitarian systems. Cf. R. Ficek, *Christians in Socio-Political Life*, p. 44–51.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Matka-Syn-rodzina. Warszawa – kościół św. Krzyża 11.01.1976*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 679–680.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p. 681.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. idem, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość społeczna*, p. 48.

### 3. ARRANGED ATHEIZATION AND SECULARIZATION AS ORGANIZED EXERTIONS THREATENING THE MORAL EXISTENCE OF THE NATION

Although a significant part of the modern world has been secularized, nevertheless the Catholic Church, both during World War II and in the post-war reality of People's Poland, underwent a harrowing experience of atheization and a quest to remove manifestations of religiosity from the social consciousness of Poles led by the communist regime. Historical changes – especially in post-war Poland – were marked by a desire to weaken as well as marginalize religion and the Church. The above idea was fueled by the systemically imposed and conducted process of transformation of the identity of the Polish nation, where atheistic education and upbringing played a significant role, as well as attempts to subordinate the broadly understood cultural life of the godless ideology of communist totalitarianism. Virtually all structures of public life were to serve the atheistic concept of a state without God.

In such a socio-political climate, religion was suppressed and treated as a form of human alienation. This kind of ideological orientation represented the desire of the official socialist establishment to create, in line with its views on religion, a social environment that embodied the Marxist understanding of religion as “opium for the people.” In line with the regime’s official attitude to religion, cooperation between various religious communities was deliberately impeded, and the cultivation of inter-religious culture and dialogue was almost absent. Some liberalization of the regime’s relationship to religion did not begin until the early 1980s, with the gradual bankruptcy of the ideology of real socialism.

No wonder that Wyszyński and the Polish Episcopate strongly emphasized that “[...] imposed laicization aims to form a man who would be convinced of the validity of the materialistic philosophy and everything that it proclaims. Ultimately, then, it is about spreading a specific type of atheism”<sup>35</sup>. In this sense, the programmed process of secularization and atheization, carried out by various means and methods, posed a huge threat both to native cultures and to the religious and moral life of the Nation. Aware of the seriousness of the situation, Primate Wyszyński warned: “The Church warns the Nation against the consequences of forced atheization, against the collapse of the religious and moral unity of society, against the inevitable nihilism that creates ideological emptiness and the negation of all spiritual values”<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> *List Episkopatu Polski o laicyzacji. Warszawa 22 III 1968*, in: *Listy Pastorskie Episkopatu Polski 1945–1974*, Paris 1975, p. 522.

<sup>36</sup> *List Episkopatu Polski do duchowieństwa o moralnym zagrożeniu narodu. Warszawa 25 I 1968*, in: *Listy Pastorskie Episkopatu Polski 1945–1974*, Paris 1975, p. 619–626; S. Wyszyński,

The adverse effects of secularization and atheization of moral life exerted a particularly destructive influence on the Christian model of marriage and family, causing their demoralization and, consequently, their decay. At the root of this phenomenon lies a distortion of the very understanding of marriage and family, which leads them to “institutions of use, liberation from ethical norms, from responsibility, and burdens”<sup>37</sup>. It is expressed not only in a false vision of love – reduced only to shallow affection or only to the satisfaction of the sex drive – but is also a severe and stern distortion of the truth about man and his fundamental call to responsible love.

A very significant danger, posing a direct threat to the biological survival of the Nation’s structures, was related to the anti-population policy of the state. Thanks to the law permitting the termination of pregnancy and large-scale anti-natalist propaganda, a terrible manipulation of Polish society was carried out. Among its significant parts, as Prymas Wyszyński emphasized: “There is a mistaken belief that a child in the womb is not yet a human being and, as such, is deprived of all rights”<sup>38</sup>. Moreover, the anti-population policy of the state also made negative changes in the social mentality. Society has been infected with an unprecedented fear of reproduction. Childhood was considered almost anti-social. The spouses began to renounce more offspring not only because of difficult living conditions but more often for fear of condemning the public. Therefore, in the common crimes of infanticide committed in Poland “in the majesty of the law,” Wyszyński saw the causes of biological and moral degradation that threatened the Polish Nation<sup>39</sup>.

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*Problemy życia społecznego w Polsce. Do duszpasterzy młodzieży męskiej 29 XII 1975*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 669–672.

<sup>37</sup> *Orędzie Episkopatu Polski w sprawie małżeńskiej. Jasna Góra, 7.12.1945*, in: *Listy Pasterskie Episkopatu Polski 1945–1974*, Paris 1975, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> *Głos biskupów polskich w obronie zagrożonego bytu Narodu. 4 IX 1970*, in: *Listy Pasterskie Episkopatu Polski 1945–1974*, Paris 1975, p. 625.

<sup>39</sup> For this reason, he consistently demanded the introduction of a total ban on the murder of unborn children who have the same right to life and development as those born. Therefore, they should enjoy absolute legal protection from the moment of their conception. In a memorial addressed to the Polish People’s Republic government in 1970, together with the entire Episcopate, he sharply stigmatized existing legislation and practices in the field of protecting unborn children. Referring to international law, he denotes to the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted unanimously on November 20, 1959, by the UN General Assembly and to the “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights” adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 16, 1966, which clearly state that every human being has the inherent right to life. This right should be protected by law, and no one can be arbitrarily deprived of life. Cf S. Wyszyński, *Apel Synodu w obronie praw człowieka. Po powrocie z Synodu Biskupów, Warszawa 26 I 1975*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 619–626; idem, *Problemy życia społecznego w Polsce. Do duszpasterzy młodzieży męskiej 29 XII 1975*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 669–672.

Questioning all traditional authorities and undermining basic moral principles posed a severe and austere risk of demoralizing society, especially the young generation. The tangible manifestation of this process is the popularization of such attitudes as agreeableness towards evil, mockery of fundamental values and authorities, selfishness and comfort, consumerist attitude to life, sexual debauchery, fornication, drunkenness, and drug addiction<sup>40</sup>. In this sense, the above aberrations cause a deep and widespread moral crisis related to the weakening of faith, contributing directly to the progressive degeneration of the system of fundamental moral values and thus undermining the biological and cultural foundations of the nation's existence<sup>41</sup>.

The above facts are particularly evident in the social scourge of alcoholism and the preference for a hedonistic lifestyle. They affect specific people – degenerating them both biologically and spiritually – and destructively disturb the family, nation, and other social life structures. Disturbing so many people, alcohol abuse damages both the economic and socio-political spheres and also degrades the mental and spiritual dimensions of Polish social life. The disappearance of the attitude of responsibility, the degeneration of family, professional and national consciousness is the basis for the development of various types of social pathologies: sexual promiscuity, related diseases, increased crime, acts of vandalism and hooliganism, road accidents under the influence of alcohol and other pathologies of social life. In this context, dishonesty, jealousy, and alcoholism appear as a severe threat to the moral and spiritual life of a society that requires a special kind of stigmatization and constructive defense response<sup>42</sup>.

Describing the moral situation of Polish society, Stefan Wyszyński stated: “Our moral weakness and instability, despite our strong faith, our moral relativism, willing to succumb to bad examples and currents, paying attention to various errors, sometimes absurd, the collapse of marital morality, infidelity, promiscuity, and drunkenness. All of these make the social division so shaky. We can last for hours in temples, stand on Jasna Góra square, like old oak wood, but we easily succumb

<sup>40</sup> Cf. idem, *To jest nasz program prymasowski. Do wiernych w bazylice prymasowskiej w Gnieźnie 2 II 1957*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 75–76; idem, *Nasze dezyderaty. Do profesorów katolickiej nauki społecznej, Jasna Góra 22 I 1963*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 198–200; idem, *O zagrożeniu moralności narodu. List pasterski na wielki post 1968*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 343–348.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. R. Ficek, *Christians in Socio-Political Life*, p. 309–312.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Jakiej chcecie Polski? Do młodzieży akademickiej w Warszawie 22 III 1972*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 491–492; idem, *Ratujmy życie w rodzinie. List pasterski na XXXIV Tydzień Miłosierdzia 26 VII 1978*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 843–844.



to even the weakest excitement to all sins and vices. We are spiritually split, mentally broken, and, therefore, deprived of a lifestyle and national character”<sup>43</sup>.

Additionally, many destructive threats to social life were stimulated by a programmed process of inciting and fueling selfishness and social hatred<sup>44</sup>. “It is significant – expresses Wyszynski – that in the aspirations for the proletariat’s liberation, a lot of room is occupied by religious and moral matters or the fight against the Christian religious worldview”<sup>45</sup>. As a false assumption of a totalitarian ideology, hatred is recognized as the driving force of communist “progress,” applying the principle of “divide and rule.” The Christian spirit of forgiveness and peace declares war in the name of supposed justice and, above all, in the name of pagan hatred<sup>46</sup>. In this context, the spread of egoism and social hatred appears as an austere distortion of the spiritual and moral culture, harming both the dignity of the human person and the unity of the Nation.

Programmatic hatred, destroying manifestations of justice, loyalty, or merciful love – i.e., fundamental values understood as the basis for shaping unity and social integration – has become a dangerous threat to both the human person and the family, and the Nation, internally divided and whose future prospects are broken. “The illusion that raises many misfortunes for peoples and nations is the belief that one can build on unbelief, atheism, and class struggle, while – in reality – our world can be created only through brotherly mutual love. If today’s world needs something, it is faith that we come from God who is Love and does everything in love: from God who first loved each of us”<sup>47</sup>.

As a result, emphasizing the fundamental threats to social life and promoting basic religious and moral values becomes an essential dimension of the teaching of the Primate of Poland. Its goal, however, was not the theoretical analysis of attitudes and problems but shaping the moral awareness of Polish society. Therefore, the pastoral teaching of Stefan Wyszyński becomes a unique and still relevant expression of the prophetic mission of the Church and – also in our modern times – is a call to conversion and moral renewal of both an individual and the entire nation.

<sup>43</sup> *List Episkopatu Polski do duchowieństwa o moralnym zagrożeniu narodu*, 508; cf. R. Ficek, *Collectivism, Individualism, and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński’s Personalist Concept of Man*, “Roczniki Nauk Społecznych” 12: 2020 (1), p. 5–32.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. R. Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism*, Grand Rapids 2004, p. 48–59.

<sup>45</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość społeczna*, p. 103.

<sup>46</sup> *List Episkopatu Polski do duchowieństwa o moralnym zagrożeniu narodu*, p. 507.

<sup>47</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Dobrzy bracia*, p. 748.

#### 4. A NEW MAN IN CHRIST: TOWARD THE SOCIO-MORAL RENEWAL

Primate Wyszyński implements the broad-based idea of healing the entire reality of social life in his concept of moral and spiritual renewal, which is expressed primarily in the program of the “Vows of Jasna Góra Shrine” preceding the “Great Novena.” This program was to prepare the Nation for the “Millennium Jubilee of the Baptism of Poland.” The very fact of taking the vows at Jasna Góra was a massive event in the life of the Church and the Nation. Based on faith in God’s Providence and commitment to work on the moral and spiritual transformations of individuals, families, and society – despite their religious nature – they defended man and the entire Nation<sup>48</sup>.

Nevertheless, the essence of this program was to show the anthropological truth about man as a person created in the image and likeness of God, receiving an explicit command from the Creator authorizing him to change the hitherto reality of the temporal world. By this fact, the human person becomes God’s partner-collaborator in His creation. In turn, the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption of the Son of God emphasizes this aspect of human life even more, making it an essential dimension of the relationship with God, bearing the mark of immortality (*homo Dei*). Participation in God’s creative work leads to discovering man occupying a high position in the entire created world. As a person who is the subject, purpose, and meaning of all social life, he has an absolute priority in the whole reality of the temporal world, through which he carries out the work of creation. Therefore, the personalistic nature of his activities requires responsibility not only for his individual and social development but also for the proper shape of man’s relationship to the world and the world to man.

The above aspect had a significant impact on the polemic with the “false vision of man” presented by the so-called “real socialism.” In other words, the anthropological and theological analysis of human life conducted by Cardinal Wyszyński, placing the human person at the center of his considerations, emphasized that it is precisely man who is the most critical and vital link in the entire economic process: its subject, creator and goal. It is a man, the center and purpose of the temporal world that must always be associated with the moral criteria that go beyond economic pragmatism. Thus, presenting the anthropological and theological foundations of socio-economic life becomes one of the most important ways of humanizing this area of human activity and overcoming its perception only

<sup>48</sup> Cf. R. Ficek, *Mariological Dimension of the Theological and Pastoral Concepts of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Primate of Poland*, „*Studia Sandomierskie*” 27: 2020, p. 239–242; M. Wójcik, *Religijna odnowa Narodu w Jasnogórskich Ślubach Ks. Prymasa Stefana Kardynała Wyszyńskiego*, „*Studia nad Rodziną*” (2006), 10, 1–2: p. 259–278.

through the prism of pragmatic economic rationality<sup>49</sup>. Therefore, the creative commitment to socio-economic life “(...) is an instrument of salvation for every human being, and the worker’s labor is connected with the joy of victory over matter and himself”<sup>50</sup>.

Nonetheless, creative involvement in socio-political and economic life is not only about the self-realization of the human person. Still, it is aimed at creating a kind of social energy, serving all humankind. In addition, this type of activity activates all gifts rooted in human nature. Moreover, it develops appropriate dispositions: reason, will, feelings, and acquires the necessary moral skills, such as patience, perseverance, solidarity, conscientiousness, etc. Therefore, human creative activity requires effort and a sense of responsibility. However, it gives the freedom to mold “oneself” as well as enables spiritual growth, ennoblement, and sanctification of one’s personality<sup>51</sup>.

Thus, according to the Cardinal, the economy and concern for its development prospects require immediate and constructive solutions, the primary expression of which is the moral order conditioned by the universal conversion process<sup>52</sup>. In this sense, the homocentric vision of the Primate’s socio-political and economic life requires the appreciation and maintenance of the order of the material world, which – devoted to man – becomes an essential element of socio-economic life, subject to the dynamics of development and progress<sup>53</sup>. However, personal dignity,

<sup>49</sup> The undisputed primacy of the human person in the entire socio-economic life means that every “(...) man, both an entrepreneur and organizer of the work workshop, as well as a worker – become God’s collaborators in the work of governing the earth. God equips man with appropriate abilities, makes him a collaborator, and what’s more – he makes him the superior of creation. Man is, as it were, “the priest of creation” and hence his whole worthiness in economic life stems from it. Through his work, a man cooperating with God raises and offers everything to God” (S. Wyszyński, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość*, p. 319).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 366.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *idem*, *Duch pracy*, p. 107–109; C. Bartnik, *Teologia pracy ludzkiej*, p. 125–126; J. Mariański, *Postęp społeczny a postęp moralny*, „Życie Katolickie” 6: 1987 (6), p. 81–97.

<sup>52</sup> „One must confront God and acknowledge his rule. (...) Every healthy reform of the world should start with this refreshing confession. First and foremost, with faith in the “Creator of heaven and earth”. Out of it only do the order and harmony flow, between heaven and earth and on the earth itself” (S. Wyszyński, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość*, p. 401).

<sup>53</sup> In this sense, “(...) not only man is to be changed, but the entire created material world. It is distorted by the misfortune of man’s sin, but it awaits renewal, change, sanctification and some form of salvation proper to itself (*idem*, *Uświęcenie doczesności. Do duchowieństwa Warszawy 3.08.1962*, in: *idem*, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 189). For this reason, it is necessary to renew the world, (...) so that the social relations of life and co-existence should be closer to the program which the heavenly Father has appointed for Christ. By sending His Son to the circle of the earth, God wanted Him to renew the face of the earth, in the spirit of evangelical peace, love and social justice” (*idem*, *Niech miłość idzie przez Polskę. Na zakończenie jubileuszu świętego Franciszka w Warszawie 6.12.1976*, in: *idem*, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 753).

natural predispositions, and the calling that God gives to man in the act of creation and redemption oblige the human person not only to be responsible for his own individual and social development but also to express concern for the complex reality of the world that is to be subordinated to him. In the name of his own development, by participating in “the work of creation,” man is obliged to act comprehensively to improve “social mechanisms” and create living conditions worthy of man. It is expressed primarily in the responsibility for the socio-economic shape of human life and functioning<sup>54</sup>.

In this respect, man – both individually and socially – is a path both for the renewal of the Church and for a personal process of moral metanoia. The religious and moral order rooted in the human person is a condition for the individual renewal of man. In this context, however, the reform of all structures of social life is also being implemented<sup>55</sup>. Therefore, the concept of moral renewal in the teaching of Primate Wyszyński is not individualistic but takes place in the space of family and national life. Thus, the family order must be related to the order of the heart of every inhabitant of Poland because social order is built in the family. A whole national organism is formed there because the Nation consists of families<sup>56</sup>. Also, “[...] state life must be conditioned by the order and calmness of national life, which depends on the peace and order of family life, which in turn depends on the order of the heart”<sup>57</sup>.

Nevertheless, the question of Christian morality extends to all areas of human life. In the context of the mutual conditions of the complex structures of human life, one can also speak of the social dimension of moral renewal, which becomes the opposite of the social dimension of sin. On the other hand, moral renewal takes place “[...] in the community of the Church, in which the responsibility for the accepted faith and the experience of love is born. It is where the responsibility for faith and love for others is also assumed. Through faith and love, we become able to confess Christ and social love to people”<sup>58</sup>.

Thus, the basis for the moral renewal of social life is the awakening in Christ, realized through metanoia and reconciliation with God. However, this requires a radical turn towards God, which results in a change of conscience and a deeper-

<sup>54</sup> Idem, *Obowiązek i prawo ludzkiej pracy*, Warszawa 1.05.1971, in: idem, „*Idzie nowych ludzi plemię...*”, Poznań 2001, p. 138.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. idem, *Nie dać sobie wyrzec ziemi! Do Solidarności wiejskiej rolników indywidualnych. Warszawa-Miodowa 2.04.1981*, in: idem, *Kościół w służbie narodu*, Rome 1981, p. 269–230; Cf. R. Ficek, *Moral Renewal as a Socio-Religious Imperative and the Destructive Actions of an Oppressive Totalitarian State: In The Context Of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński's Personalistic Concept Of Social Life*, „*Roczniki Teologiczne*” 67: 2020 (5), p. 44–52.

<sup>56</sup> Idem, *Patron Polski i mąż stanu. Podczas uroczystości świętego Stanisława w Krakowie 14 V 1978*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 830.

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>58</sup> Idem, *Jakiej chcecie Polski?*, p. 490.

ning of the awareness and moral sensitivity of the human person, family, and nation. Changing the way of thinking and appreciating Christian values results in a change of attitudes that leads to holiness and Christian perfection in Christ<sup>59</sup>. In this sense, “the Church is an ally of the nation and proclaims the principles of the Gospel and healthy Christian morality, when it awakens love for God and social love, when it constantly maintains moral sensitivity, awakens a sense of social, professional and cultural responsibility, and constantly reminds us all of that the life and development of a nation are not possible without a spirit of sacrifice and fraternal service”<sup>60</sup>.

However, the condition for the moral transformation of the whole social reality is the integral renewal of man, not a single act. Still, a permanent attitude focused on breaking with evil and sin, practicing Christian virtues, and cultivating supernatural life. Referring to the moral renewal of the Nation, Primate Wyszyński states: “The most important thing is to restore man”<sup>61</sup>. Therefore, it is impossible to shape moral virtues and values, both individually and as a community, without a fundamental change in the way of thinking and values – that is, the proper shaping of the conscience of the human person and, consequently, all social reality in the spirit of the authentically biblical truth of Christ. Hence, tragic past experiences require a vigilant attitude. Especially since “[...] nobody in the world is sure of the future. No nation can be guaranteed a “golden age.” And we also have no guarantee that Poland will not have to make severe sacrifices!”<sup>62</sup> The seriousness of the threats is added by the fact that the post-war situation in Poland was not conducive to the moral renewal of either the family or the nation<sup>63</sup>.

In this context, it can be said that the ideological and socio-political conditions that arose after the war contributed to an increase in moral threats to the nation’s life. That is why Primate Wyszyński, emphasizing this problem, considers it necessary and even decisive for the proper shaping of the Christian society. “It is easy to pour all the wealth of a nation into the depths, but the great challenge is to lead the boat during a storm to save everything in it”<sup>64</sup>. According to Stefan Wyszyński, the processes of uprooting the nation from its cultural heritage are

<sup>59</sup> Cf. R. Ficek, *Christians in Socio-Political Life*, p. 315–317.

<sup>60</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Kościół nie walczy z władzą, tylko z jej nadużyciami. Podczas uroczystości Świętego Stanisława w Krakowie 11 V 1975*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 646.

<sup>61</sup> Idem, *O moralną odnowę Narodu. Do wiernych w bazylice gnieźnieńskiej 2 II 1981*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 1007.

<sup>62</sup> Idem, *Bez ofiar i wyrzeczeń nie ma zwycięstwa*, p. 102.

<sup>63</sup> R. Ficek, *Patriotism as Love of the Homeland or another Form of Nationalism? Devotedness, Allegiance, and Loyalty to the Native Country in the Thought of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński*, “*Collectanea Theologica*”, 91: 2021 (2), p. 77–117.

<sup>64</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Sursum corda. Z kazania do górali tatrzańskich. Zakopane 1957*, in: idem, *Wszystko postawiłem na Maryję*, Paris 1980, p. 145.

dangerous threats that undermine the essence of social life. They are expressed in strenuous attempts to break with the historical past and create their own false and deceitful vision of history, culture, and morality, in line with the Marxist-materialist model. Conscious and deliberate falsification of the historical past of the nation, reducing its value for the current generation, resulted in the inevitable cultural uprooting of the country. The loss of identity on a cultural level has, of course, very destructive consequences that could lead to a complete disintegration of the nation<sup>65</sup>.

Man redeemed in the Paschal Mystery by Jesus Christ requires in his actual existence further acts of liberation from the present state of sin and slavery. Work, from the perspective of freedom, takes place at the level of conscience. That is why a free person decides for himself the value of his commitment, freeing it from destructive systems of depersonalization and enslavement. Responsibility for evil and sin, having a personal character, also expresses the social aspect. In this sense, it becomes collective complicity in the misappropriation of moral values and principles that flow from God's law. However, Primate Wyszyński warns against shifting the burden of responsibility beyond the conscience of individual people. Although human moral awareness has been severely deformed due to the relativization of concepts and values and by blunting the moral sensitivity of society, any form of degradation, deformation of feelings, or social demoralization requires active cooperation and involvement of specific people<sup>66</sup>.

Therefore, the necessary condition for moral renewal is "awakening of conscience," which – for a Christian – is the most sacred center and sanctuary in which he can be alone with God. "In every person, in every family, in every word of truth, in the life of the Nation and State, personal, social and professional conscience, as well as economic and political conscience, must awaken"<sup>67</sup>. Only a man of an "awakened conscience" – that is, one in whom the most profound and most complete work of spiritual liberation was accomplished, is the foundation for building the renewed reality of the temporal world. The realization of this desire is possible only through conversion to God in a spirit of faith, realizing one's own sinfulness, and making efforts to fulfill the call to holiness<sup>68</sup>.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. R. Ficek, *Moral Renewal as a Socio-Religious Imperative*, p. 54–56; J.B. Metz, *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity*, New York 2008, p. 36–49.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Apel Prymasa Polski ze stolicy do wszystkich Dzieci wspólnej Ojczyzny*. Warszawa, 25 XII 1970, in: idem, *Prymat człowieka w ładzie społecznym*, Londyn 1976, 17–18; idem, *Sumienie w pełnieniu obowiązków społecznych*. Nadarzyn, 21 IX 1980, in: idem, *Praca a godność człowieka*, Częstochowa 1983, p. 67–73.

<sup>67</sup> Idem, *W godzinie wielkiego rachunku sumienia*. Oltarzew 2 X 1980, in: idem, *Kościół w służbie narodu*, p. 73.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. R. Ficek, *Moral Renewal as a Socio-Religious Imperative*, p. 44–48.

The fruit of the integral moral renewal of the entire reality of social life is, therefore, a mature approach to threats to moral life. However, it requires a firm opposition not only to the dangers that resulted from geopolitical conditions and the systematic degeneration of the socio-political system of post-war Poland. The challenge addressed to the entire nation is all the more important in the fight against moral defects destabilizing social life, destroying its basic structures, leading to general anarchy and, consequently, to the destruction of the state. “Therefore, in defense of moral freedom against the slavery of addictions, we want to use all religious, social, and cultural forces that can serve our vigor and spiritual freedom, which in turn depends on any other freedom – political or economic. There will be no change for the better in our hearts, social and state life if we do not open the door to Christ”<sup>69</sup>.

Therefore, return to Christ becomes the basis for the moral renewal of the entire reality of social life. It occurs through constant transformation, conversion of hearts and attitudes of individuals and the community as a whole, and through sacramental reconciliation with God in the Church. No less critical dimension of moral renewal, as understood by Primate Wyszyński, is an apparent Marian trait. Emphasizing the role of Mary in the work of moral renewal has some theological, psychological and sociological justification<sup>70</sup>. “It is true that ‘I have put everything on Mary,’ and I am faithful to it. It is born of a deep conviction that in our homeland, the creation and maintenance of a religious community must be done in a dimension to which people are most sensitive. With us, this is done through the mediation of the Holy Mother of God”<sup>71</sup>.

### SUMMARY

One of the typical features of totalitarian ideology was the fascination with the “pagan” quasi-ritual, often referring to Christianity. Much of it involved an inversion of meanings, mimicking and distorting authentic Christian meaning. In other words, totalitarian systems (i.e., fascist dictatorships, National Socialism, or Marxism-Leninism in the Bolshevik version) displayed – at least officially – aspects of a highly amalgamated and coherent religion that sought to resolve the vital dilemmas of human life. The above totalitarianism even wished to influence those spheres of life that were beyond their “prophetic interest.” Both Marxist-Leninist

<sup>69</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Nawróćcie się do Pana*, in: *Nauczanie społeczne*, p. 488;

<sup>70</sup> Cf. R. Ficek, *Mariological Dimension of the Theological and Pastoral Concepts of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Primate of Poland*, „*Studia Sandomierskie*” 27: 2020, p. 229–249.

<sup>71</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Z przemówienia do duchowieństwa diecezjalnego i zakonnego zgromadzonego, aby złożyć życzenia imiennowe ks. kard. Stefanowi Wyszyńskiemu. Warszawa 2 VIII 1980*, in: idem, *Prymas Tysiąclecia*, p. 105.

ideology and Hitler's "Nazism" often used peculiar quasi-religious rhetoric, repeatedly expressed in various political, economic, scientific, and philosophical statements, seemingly distant from the religious dimension. By denying humanism, individualism, and democracy in the name of universal liberation, either the "Aryan Übermensch" or the "New Communist Man," the totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century became the orientation of the new spirit shaping the "New World Order." Nevertheless, it was a revelation of caricature "spirit" "completely distorting his Christian understanding. Similarly, it was a harmful attempt to apply the "new Middle Ages" to establish a new ontical order of unity between "spirit and matter." However, this kind of totalitarian ideology seems to be exceedingly dangerous.

Therefore, the need to defend the foundations of Christian civilization required an unprecedented and effective response. A significant response to the considerable threats resulting from the emergence of totalitarian ideologies was the personalistic concept of man presented by Stefan Wyszyński. Its main feature was a concern for the good of man in his whole personal dimension. The teaching of Cardinal Wyszyński was also expressed in a clear emphasis on the need for the active involvement of Christians in worldly reality in all its dimensions. It was necessary because the challenging period of domination of totalitarian ideologies posed a particular challenge for Christians, the implementation of which became a patriotic duty, an expression of the attitude of love for the homeland and add-on to the essential values constituting national identity. Various kinds of threats, caused both by geopolitical conditions, the destructive influence of regimes based on totalitarian ideology, as well as the progressive moral degradation of society, called for constructive actions to heal those threats that degenerate the socio-moral life of Poles. An expression of opposition to pathological manifestations of social life is found in the numerous initiatives aimed primarily at the moral renewal of the nation, conditioning the positive character of all changes in Poland. Being aware of the complex socio-political situation, Cardinal Wyszyński stated: "The minimum that we can make as a postulate in this reality is included in the fact that the state should act '*ad bonum commune totius universi.*' [...] That is why we expect the state community to serve the universal good of the entire diverse population of citizens of our homeland"<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> Idem, *Naród-Kościół-Państwo. Kazanie świętokrzyskie 25 I 1976*, in: idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 711.



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