

*Grzegorz Kudlak*

Deviation Psychology Department of the Institute of Social Prevention and Resocialisation, Faculty of Applied Social Sciences and Resocialisation, University of Warsaw

*Mateusz Zimny*

Faculty of History and Cultural Heritage of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Cracow

## **AID ORGANISATIONS AND PRISON MINISTRY IN COMMUNIST POLAND AND THEIR ROLE IN THE RESOCIALISATION OF PRISONERS AFTER 1980**

### **Abstract**

This article traces the history of penitentiary and post-penitentiary practices by churches (primarily Catholic) and social aid organizations in Poland. The involvement of churches and social organizations in prisoner assistance began, partly underground, during the period of the Polish partitions, and took on formal roles and structures during the Second Republic of Poland (1918–39). However, beginning with the Second World War and until the year 1980 the earlier practice of ministry in prisons was significantly limited. The Nazi and Soviet hostile attitude towards religion was continued and in some ways exacerbated during the period of communist governments in Poland, when the function of prison chaplain as well as prison chapels themselves were liquidated, and all that officially remained of the conduct of religious services in prisons was the administration of last sacraments to prisoners about to be executed or terminally ill. During this period the church's support for prisoners was mostly limited to that offered by clergymen who were themselves inmates. The role of prison ministry and social aid organizations in both penitentiary and post-penitentiary work was revived following the strikes, and consequent mass arrests, which took place in August 1980. The new scope and dimension of prison ministry began with the re-instatement of the function of prison chaplain and has evolved in recent decades to the point where today prison chaplains and church ministries, working alongside non-governmental aid organizations, have become an indispensable part of both the administration of prisons as well as post-penitentiary supervision and assistance.

**Keywords:** prison ministry, prison chaplain, resocialization, aid organizations, post-penitentiary assistance

## I INTRODUCTION

Contemporary penitentiary practice shows that Catholic ministers and non-governmental social aid organisations supported by the Catholic Church significantly contribute to the process of resocialisation of persons held in custody. The impact of activities taken by the clergy and social aid organisations is manifested during the development phase of the social fabric and corrective actions taken in cooperation with public safety authorities, especially in the area of prisoner reintegration and assistance in their re-entry into society following release from prison. However, this has not always been possible. This kind of understanding of the role of the ministry and social organisations in the penitentiary and post-penitentiary work developed only following strikes in August 1980.

The system of spiritual and patronage care which evolved during the Second Polish Republic was shattered at the onset of the Second World War, and as a result pastoral ministry in prisons became significantly limited for many years. Firstly, during the Nazi and Soviet occupation the authorities made it very difficult, if not impossible, for the ministers to have unimpeded access to the prisoners. It was also prohibited to perform worship services in prison chapels. This hostile attitude toward pastoral ministry continued during the communist regime. It was a time of limited pastoral services across many spheres of social life. One of the areas where the Church was prevented, in principle, from providing spiritual and charity services were correctional facilities and remand prisons. For many years, access to these places was highly limited, if not impossible. Chaplaincy was eliminated, prison chapels were closed down, and pastoral ministry was limited to the administration of sacraments to prisoners sentenced to death or terminally ill. The ministers who usually dispensed the sacraments were military chaplains. Apart from the foregoing circumstances, the ministers were prevented from having any contact with prisoners. The reason behind such an attitude was a rather peculiarly understood freedom of conscience and religion. This type of approach to resocialisation carried with it the prisoners' isolation from any external stimuli, including social organisations.

The changes that accompanied the August 1980' events which, in the end, resulted in Poland regaining its independence, also concerned

the organisation of work in correctional facilities and remand prisons. The presence of chaplains and supporting laity, and the possibility to attend worship services, became something normal and obvious, in accordance with Article 53 of the Polish Constitution:

Freedom of conscience and religion shall be ensured to everyone. Freedom of religion shall include the freedom to profess or to accept a religion by personal choice as well as to manifest such religion, either individually or collectively, publicly or privately, by worshipping, praying, participating in ceremonies, performing of rites or teaching. Freedom of religion shall also include possession of sanctuaries and other places of worship for the satisfaction of the needs of believers as well as the right of individuals, wherever they may be, to benefit from religious services.<sup>1</sup>

Existing studies have so far focused on prison ministry from a historical perspective. This study presents chaplaincy and pastoral ministry in the context of aid, patronage, and penitentiary organisations. Of particular importance for the re-emerging prison ministry structures were the legal regulations developed and implemented in Poland after it regained its independence in 1918. These had a huge impact on the penitentiary system in practice, whereas the pre-1939 experiences of prison ministry and prisoner support became the basis for social activities of penitentiary organisations after 1981, serving as a model for the organisation of the penitentiary care system after 1989. It is therefore apparent that discussion about the structures of chaplaincy and prisoner-focused aid organisations in the Second Polish Republic is necessary in order to understand the re-emerging prison ministry and aid organisations in Poland after 1980.

## II

### RELIGIOUS AND MORAL SUPPORT ON THE POLISH TERRITORY DURING THE PARTITIONS PERIOD

In the nineteenth-century prisons across all three zones of partitioned Poland, religious support involved the provision of pastoral ministry by a clergyman. For example, in the second half of the nineteenth century, in a majority of prisons in Congress Poland the presence of a chaplain was permanent – both Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and

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<sup>1</sup> *The Constitution of the Republic of Poland*, Article 53, item 1 and 2.

Protestant clergymen were employed. From 1845 pastoral ministry was also offered to prisoners of the Mosaic faith.<sup>2</sup> In other zones of partitioned Poland, spiritual care was regulated by laws which were still in force after 1918, until new legislation was adopted (although under the Prussian Partition it was the Prison Ordinance of 21 December 1898).<sup>3</sup> In principle, the ministry was limited to conducting worship services.

During the partitions, in the prisons of former Poland – and particularly after 1863 – there were thousands of people held in custody for political reasons. As Zofia Zbyszewska wrote, the word ‘prison’ became “a symbol of national martyrdom, a symbol of harm caused by the enemy.”<sup>4</sup> In addition to clergy services, which were governed by the state, many new organisations were established and managed (initially mainly by women) with the aim of helping and supporting persons held in custody by providing food, clothes, and shoes for those sentenced to Siberian deportations. For example, in 1863 at Włocławek a secret women’s organisation called the Prisoner Aid Patronage (*Patronat Opieki nad Więźniami*) was established, and a similar organisation was run in Warsaw, under the name Enthusiasts (*Entuzjastki*). Other aid organisations included: the Women’s Patriotic Philanthropy Union (*Związek Dobroczynności Patriotycznej Kobiet*), established in 1831 by Mrs. General Sowińska; the Patriotic Polish Women’s Alliance (*Patriotyczny Związek Polek*) (1831, Klementyna Hoffmanowa and Amelia Wulfers); the Committee Caring for Wives and Children of Knighthood (*Komitet Opiekujący się Żonami i Dziećmi Rycerstwa*) (1832, Anna Nakwaska); the Common Misfortune Union (*Związek Wspólnego Nieszczęścia*) (1839, Narcyza Żmichowska); and the Friday Association (*Stowarzyszenie Piątek*) (1863).<sup>5</sup> Support activities were also assisted by patriotic organisations.

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<sup>2</sup> Krystian Bedyński, *Duszpasterstwo więzienne w Polsce. Zarys historyczny* (Warszawa, 1994), 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ordynacja więzienna z dnia 21 grudnia 1898 r. oraz dodatkowe rozporządzenia* (Warszawa, 1922), III, <http://www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra/plain-content?id=320259> [Accessed: 14 April 2018].

<sup>4</sup> Zofia Zbyszewska, *Ministerstwo polskiej biedy: z dziejów Towarzystwa Opieki nad Więźniami „Patronat” w Warszawie 1909–1944* (Warszawa, 1983), 20.

<sup>5</sup> Marcin Bryła, ‘Bractwa więzienne w Polsce – pomoc, dobroczynność, wolontariat na rzecz osób pozbawionych wolności’, *Гілея: науковий вісник*, 113 (2016), 155, [http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/gileya\\_2016\\_113\\_40](http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/gileya_2016_113_40) [Accessed: 14 April 2018].

In 1909, an organisation called the 'Patronage' Prisoners' Aid Society (*Towarzystwo Opieki nad Więźniami 'Patronat'*) was formally established in Warsaw, although at that point in time it had already been assisting prisoners for many years and its members included many Warsaw intellectuals, particularly lawyers. From the very beginning clergy members<sup>6</sup> were involved in the works of the 'Patronage'. As of 1 January 1912, the Society's members included one of its founders, Fr. Zygmunt Chelmiński. Other members included Fr. Karol Bliziński in the Błonie district, Fr. Kazimierz Sobolewski in the Mińsk Mazowiecki district, and Fr. Zygmunt Kaczyński<sup>7</sup> from the Mokotów borough in the Warsaw district.

'Patronage' addressed its activities both to prisoners and persons released from prison. They were offered medical and social care, educational activities, and economic assistance and activation. Care was also provided to the prisoners' children by opening community centres, organising summer camps, and offering meal sponsorship programmes.<sup>8</sup>

The tradition of prison patronages, i.e. social organisations providing religious, moral, and social support to prisoners, dates back to the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> These activities ran in parallel to the chaplaincy services and often overlapped with respect to the support provided.

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<sup>6</sup> Zbyszewska, *Ministerstwo*, 279.

<sup>7</sup> Fr. Zygmunt Kaczyński (1894–1953) – papal chamberlain, social and political activist, an MP with the Legislative Sejm and Sejm of the first term of the Second Polish Republic, director of the Catholic Press Agency, Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment in the Polish government-in-exile, parish priest of the All Saints' Church in Warsaw. In 1951 he was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment and was probably murdered on 13 May 1953 in the Mokotów prison.

<sup>8</sup> Karol Pawlak, 'Patronat w Polsce. Krótki zarys dziejów', in Ewa Saganowska (ed.), *Polskie Towarzystwo Penitencjarne wczoraj i dziś: X lat działalności 1991–2001* (Kalisz, 2002), 12–13.

<sup>9</sup> A detailed description of these organisations, together with a discussion of the legal basis of their operations, is presented in: Michał Porowski, 'O idei pomocy więźniom i działalności Patronatu (do czasu rozwiązania po II wojnie światowej)', in Teodor Szymanowski (ed.), *O pomocy w powrocie do społeczeństwa. W 100-lecie powstania Patronatu* (Białystok, 2010), 41–70.

III  
LEGAL ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL CARE IN POLISH PRISONS  
IN 1918–39

The regulations in force during the Second Polish Republic were primarily based on the *Decree of the Chief of State on temporary prison regulations of 8 February 1919*.<sup>10</sup> The Decree stipulated that “no prisoner can be refused to seek moral guidance and religious comfort from a clergyman of his denomination. In facilities and wards intended for juvenile prisoners all adolescents, without exceptions, must participate in religion and secular classes, so far as applicable for folk schools.”<sup>11</sup> This provision became, in fact, a cornerstone for the entire body of national law of the Second Polish Republic with respect to spiritual care and prisoner support. The decree left the specific implementation of the provision to the Minister of Justice, as demonstrated by the regulation of 1926.<sup>12</sup> Prisoners’ spiritual needs were clearly noted by the legislator. Each prisoner was granted “the right to have contact with clergy of his denomination and to meet his religious needs”.<sup>13</sup>

Participation in worship services was guaranteed to all prisoners – including, albeit with some conditions, those subject to a disciplinary penalty and under police custody. The prisoners enjoyed full freedom of conscience and prison administration was prohibited from forcing compulsory participation in worship services.<sup>14</sup> This right was also granted to prisoners of the Mosaic faith – they could “pray together on Saturdays and holy days of their denomination in a room intended for that purpose”.<sup>15</sup> Jews were allowed to grow a beard and they were excused from work on Saturdays.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Dekret Naczelnika Państwa w sprawie czasowych przepisów więziennych z dnia 8 lutego 1919 roku, <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19190150202/O/D19190202.pdf> [Accessed: 12 April 2018].

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, Article 11.

<sup>12</sup> Rozporządzenie Ministra Sprawiedliwości, *Dziennik Urzędowy Ministerstwa Sprawiedliwości*, no. 10, 127, <http://pbc.biaman.pl/dlibra/publication?id=24853> [Accessed: 16 April 2018].

<sup>13</sup> Dekret Naczelnika, Article 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, Article 9.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> Edward Neymark, ‘Opieka duchowna’, in Zygmunt Bugajski *et al.* (eds.), *Księga Jubileuszowa Więziennictwa Polskiego 1918–1928* (Warszawa, 1929), 129.

Chaplaincy was perceived by the legislator as an element of resocialisation that was to serve the moral good of society. For example, Article 13 of the Decree, which regulated the nature of sermons, stipulated that on Saturdays and Sundays the homilies should focus on moral and religious aspects.

The Justice Minister's regulation constituted the first legal regulation in the Second Polish Republic that listed the clergy's responsibilities. The scope of pastoral duties and authorities was broad.<sup>17</sup> In addition to conducting worship services on Sundays and on religious and national holidays, the chaplains were to visit prisoners in their cells, conduct regular spiritual chatty lectures, organise religion classes as part of the education process, and perform religious practices according to the principles of a given denomination. On Easter day the chaplains were required – in agreement with the prison head – to organise prison retreats and confessions. The opportunity to visit prisoners in their cells was additionally included in Article 11.

It is apparent from the very detailed provisions that they stem from the earlier experience of the prison system. For example, Article 16 provided for the possibility to conduct “relevant services” (christening or circumcision) in the event of a child's birth in the prison.

The Regulation of the President of Poland of 1928<sup>18</sup> once again dealt with the issues of spiritual care in Section V, entitled ‘Spiritual care, school and out-of-school education’. Even though the Presidential regulation was less detailed than the regulation of 1926, it reiterated many of the provisions of the previous text.

New prison regulations were issued by the Minister of Justice in 1931.<sup>19</sup> Under this document, spiritual care became a basic tool for reform and correction, which involved providing the prisoners with an opportunity to receive moral guidance and religious comfort within the framework of their denomination.<sup>20</sup> The chaplain's tasks included conducting worship services and preaching sermons on Sundays and holy days; visiting prisoners in their cells to offer help and spiritual

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<sup>17</sup> Rozporządzenie Ministra Sprawiedliwości, Article 7.

<sup>18</sup> Rozporządzenie Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej z dnia 7 marca 1928 r. w sprawie organizacji więziennictwa, *Dziennik Ustaw* (Official Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland, hereinafter: Dz.U.), item 272, no. 29, 556–63.

<sup>19</sup> Rozporządzenie Ministra Sprawiedliwości z dnia 20 czerwca 1931 r. w sprawie regulaminu więziennego.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, Part III.



support; teaching religion classes in the prison school; organising spiritual chatty lectures, as well as performing any religious practices according to the principles of a given denomination.

The new regulations sustained the previous rights of prisoners to participate in worship services. It reiterated the provisions about participating in annual prison retreats and Easter confession, and it also imposed an obligation on the prison head to personally look after the order and appropriate level of seriousness when the services were being conducted. The principles set out in the regulations became the foundation for some institutions of the penitentiary law, and the provisions on prisoners' rights have remained fully functional until today.<sup>21</sup>

The last legal act adopted before the Second World War was the Act of 26 July 1939 on the organisation of the prison system.<sup>22</sup> However, it was made public only a couple of weeks before the onset of the war and never came into force, and thus has a purely theoretical value.<sup>23</sup> Chapter 5 of the Act focused on spiritual care. It practically reiterated the provisions of previous normative acts. It also enabled the clergy, in agreement with the prison head, to conduct the correspondence of an illiterate prisoner.<sup>24</sup>

The provisions discussed above took into account the religious plurality of Polish citizens, who were Catholics, Protestants, Eastern Orthodox, as well as Jews and Muslims. The place of worship was the prison chapel or another room intended for that purpose.<sup>25</sup> In its letters to prison heads, the Ministry of Justice recommended that they issue a relevant ordinance to allow Jews to conduct worship services on their holy days in accordance with the Jewish calendar.<sup>26</sup> Some prisons also accommodated Orthodox churches and synagogues next to Catholic places of worship; for example there was an Orthodox church with iconostasis in the Łukiszki prison in Vilnius<sup>27</sup>, as was the

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<sup>21</sup> Stanisław Paweła, *Prawo karne wykonawcze: Zarys wykładu* (Kraków, 2003), 35.

<sup>22</sup> Ustawa z 26 lipca 1939 r. o organizacji więziennictwa, Dz.U., no. 68, item 457.

<sup>23</sup> Paweła, *Prawo karne*, 35.

<sup>24</sup> Ustawa z 26 lipca 1939 r., Article 149.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, Article 8.

<sup>26</sup> Marcin Bryła, 'Praktyki religijne w środowisku osadzonych oraz osób związanych z więziennictwem w II Rzeczypospolitej w aspekcie historycznym', *Гілея: науковий вісник*, 115 (2016), 37, [http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/gileya\\_2016\\_115\\_10](http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/gileya_2016_115_10) [Accessed: 14 April 2018].

<sup>27</sup> Neymark, *Opieka duchowna*, 125.



case for many other prisons in the Polish eastern borderlands).<sup>28</sup> The prison at Długa Street in Warsaw had an active synagogue.

The prison ministry in the Second Polish Republic developed gradually: in 1923 chapels were operating in 117 major prisons and 105 priests served as chaplains.<sup>29</sup> Five years later, in 1928, the number of chaplains grew to 140.<sup>30</sup>

#### IV THE ROLE OF AID ORGANISATIONS IN THE SECOND POLISH REPUBLIC

As stated by Krystian Bedyński, towards the end of the Second Polish Republic “spiritual care in Polish prisons constituted a component of the penitentiary system .... with clearly defined objectives and practices, qualified full-time and substitute pastoral personnel, a base in the form of churches and chapels as well as tested forms of work with prisoners.”<sup>31</sup> Chaplains were supported by social aid organisations, which played a significant role in the resocialisation of prisoners. The prisoners were often themselves involved in the work of these organisations. Many priests headed the work of welfare sections of field branches of the Prison Patronage. This type of commitment on the part of chaplains helped the clergy to not be identified with prison administration, which surely translated into increased trust and efficiency in their work with prisoners.<sup>32</sup>

In 1923 the ‘Patronage’ Association for the Support of Prisoners, Ex-Prisoners and their Families (*Towarzystwo Opieki nad Więźniami, Uwolnionymi z Więzień i ich Rodzinami ‘Patronat’*), was re-established in Warsaw, as a successor of the ‘Patronage’ Prisoners’ Aid Society of 1909. The objective of the new Patronage was to cooperate with prison authorities to promote the moral and material welfare of prisoners, improve their wellbeing and education, as well as support their social adaptation following release from prison. An important aspect was also the moral and material support they offered to prisoners’

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, 129.

<sup>29</sup> Jan Zakrzewski, ‘Pierwsze pięćolecie więziennictwa polskiego’, in Bugajski *et al.* (eds.), *Księga Jubileuszowa*, 53.

<sup>30</sup> Neymark, *Opieka duchowna*, 125.

<sup>31</sup> Bedyński, *Duszpasterstwo*, 33.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, 35.

families.<sup>33</sup> The constitution of the Association was adopted by branches established outside Warsaw – by 1939 there were around 80 branches.<sup>34</sup>

There was also the Juvenile Patronage Association (*Towarzystwo Patronatu nad Nieletnimi*), operating in Warsaw since 1922 and involved in caring for adolescent prisoners and running a welfare and education facility in Studzieniec.<sup>35</sup>

A Jewish association operating in Warsaw and aimed at offering material and moral support to prisoners was the Prisoners' Aid Committee (*Heb. Tomchaj Assurim*), co-founded by, among others, Guterman Aaron Menachem Mendel from Radzymin. The association fostered the religious life of prisoners, organised worship services in prisons on a permanent basis (helping, for example, in the organisation of wedding ceremonies<sup>36</sup>), and provided prisoners with kosher food. During the Passover (Pesach) holiday in 1931, as many as 1,200 kosher meals were distributed.<sup>37</sup>

The Prison Regulations introduced by the Minister of Justice in 1931 governed, among other things, the activities of patronage organisations. An important provision was to allow “teaching, chatty lectures and lectures to be conducted by other persons from patronage associations and educational institutions, with the consent of the Minister of Justice or the prison head.”<sup>38</sup> It is worth mentioning that the Regulation of 1931 provided the legal framework for the work of prison patronages within the territory of a prison.<sup>39</sup> It also entitled members of the Prison Patronage Association to visit prisoners “after presenting a written consent of the Minister of Justice, on days and times previously agreed with the prison head”.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Porowski, ‘O idei’, 61.

<sup>34</sup> Karol Pędowski, ‘Patronat - historia i program działania w przyszłości’, *Palestra*, xxvi, 6–7 (1982), 59.

<sup>35</sup> Edward Neymark, ‘Współpraca społeczeństwa z administracją penitencjarną’, in Bugajski *et al.* (eds.), *Księga Jubileuszowa*, 161.

<sup>36</sup> *Unzer Express*, 9 March 1938.

<sup>37</sup> *Nasz Przegląd*, 11 May 1931, 9.

<sup>38</sup> Rozporządzenie Ministra Sprawiedliwości z dnia 20 czerwca 1931 r., Article 33.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, Article 64.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, Article 142.

V  
PRISON MINISTRY AND AID ORGANISATIONS  
IN THE TERRITORY OF POLAND  
DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The situation of prison ministry changed dramatically with the onset of German and Soviet occupation in 1939. In the initial period of the occupation, Germans permitted Sunday worship services to be conducted in prison chapels. The services were performed by pre-war chaplains (Fr. Leon Pawlin in the Pawiak prison and Fr. Henryk Kołczyński in the Mokotów borough).<sup>41</sup> They were, however, not allowed to have any direct contact with the prisoners, which meant a ban on sacramental confessions.

The organisational structure of the 'prison security police' was based on an ordinance issued by Himmler (*Polizeigefängnisordnung*), which went into effect on 1 January 1940.<sup>42</sup> This ordinance was introduced in the form of regulations which excluded the possibility to exercise any form of religious practices: all churches and chapels were closed down in prisons located in the territory occupied by Germans, and it was prohibited to have or use any items of worship, not to mention the carrying out of regular services provided by chaplains.<sup>43</sup> In some prisons (for example, in Warsaw, at Rakowiecka Street) the chapels were retained but prisoners had no contact with the chaplain.<sup>44</sup> Only some prisons permitted a chaplain's assistance during executions. At the same time, Catholic Church hierarchy was being informed of the huge spiritual needs of prisoners. The Bishop of Pińsk (Pinsk), Kazimierz Bukraba, gave his consent for lay ministers to bring Holy Communion to prisons and to distribute it to the prisoners.<sup>45</sup>

Given the Germans' disapproval of any direct contacts between chaplains and prisoners, in a majority of cases the only way for prisoners to receive sacraments was through the ministry of those priests who were themselves held in captivity. In his memoirs, Fr. Mystkowski wrote that he used exercise periods, when he could walk in pairs, to hear the inmates' confessions.<sup>46</sup> Generally, Polish

<sup>41</sup> Zbyszewska, *Ministerstwo*, 260.

<sup>42</sup> Wincenty Hein and Czesława Jakubiec, *Montelupich* (Kraków, 1985), 78.

<sup>43</sup> Bedyński, *Duszpasterstwo*, 44.

<sup>44</sup> Zbyszewska, *Ministerstwo*, 260.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, 261.

<sup>46</sup> Zbyszewska, *Ministerstwo*, 260.

prison guards and *kapos* (work supervisors) approved of prisoners' confessions whenever possible, but this changed following the arrival of German guards.

Following the onset of the Second World War, the 'Patronage' Association, with the consent of German authorities, operated in the territory of General Government. In autumn of 1941 it became part of the Central Welfare Council (*Rada Główna Opiekuńcza*).<sup>47</sup> The year 1945 marked the end of the operations of 'Patronage', as it was closed down by communist authorities. After the war, in 1946, attempts were made to enter the organisation into the registry of associations, but a decision rejecting the application was taken in 1949.<sup>48</sup>

Under German occupation, 'Patronage' played a crucial role in supporting the arrested clergy. In order for them to avoid being harassed by Germans, who were particularly hostile towards clerical clothing, 'Patronage' provided everyday clothes.<sup>49</sup> The prisoners were often given various religious items, such as rosaries, holy medals, or holy cards.

In the territory occupied by the Soviet Union, the pastoral ministry was practically eliminated. The Soviet system not only excluded any forms of religious services, but it was also hostile toward any manifestations of devotion and spiritual support. Places of worship, such as prison chapels, were closed down and holding religious services was banned.<sup>50</sup> The only source of spiritual support were clerical inmates.

## VI

### THE PRISON MINISTRY IN POLAND IN 1944–56

After 1944, chaplains were allowed to perform pastoral services in some prisons in the territory occupied by the Red Army. Memo no. 1 from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, dated 4 October 1944, directed that the organisation of prison life be based on pre-war regulations, which in theory guaranteed the prisoners the freedom to practice a particular religion and allowed the chaplains to offer spiritual support in prison.<sup>51</sup> The fact that the prisoners' religious

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<sup>47</sup> Pędowski, 'Patronat', 69.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>50</sup> Bedyński, *Duszpasterstwo*, 56.

<sup>51</sup> Zbigniew Lasocik, *Praktyki religijne więźniów* (Warszawa, 1993), 89.

life was not addressed in the prison regulations issued on 11 June 1945 shows that the issue was fully bypassed by the prison system after 1944.<sup>52</sup> In fact, the regulations of 11 July duplicated the 1931 prison rules, but fully omitted the chapters that concerned, *inter alia*, pastoral services. This evidences a deliberate intent to deprive prisoners of spiritual care.

On 12 September 1945 the Provisional Government of National Unity terminated the concordat signed with the Holy See of the Catholic Church in 1925. A couple of months in advance the chaplains were removed from the composition of prison authorities.<sup>53</sup> On 15 February 1946, during the second nationwide congress of prison heads and camp commandants at Potulice, it was ordered to “close down prison chapels, stop conducting worship services, and allow the clergy to enter the prison only in the event of a seriously sick prisoner or execution”.<sup>54</sup>

In the Cracow province, however, a consent to conduct worship services was each time granted by the Corrections Department of the Provincial Office of Public Security (*Wojewódzki Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, WUBP).<sup>55</sup> Files of the Institute of National Remembrance show that the Bishop Curia in Cracow submitted a request to celebrate holy mass in the prisons of the Cracow province during Christmas of 1946.<sup>56</sup> Marcin Witkowski states that “individual meetings required a separate consent of security authorities, and entrance to prison was granted only to those clergymen who signed an agreement to provide chaplaincy services”.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, 89.

<sup>53</sup> Natalia Niwa, ‘Kwestia dostępu do książek i gazet na podstawie wspomnień księży-więźniów politycznych w okresie stalinizmu w Polsce’, *Annales Universitatis Pedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia ad Bibliothecatam Scientiam Pertinentia*, x, Folia 125 (2012), 79.

<sup>54</sup> Letter of the Prison Head in Ostrów Wlkp. to the Director of the Department of Corrections and Camps of 4 March 1946, 33, in Jan Sikorski, ‘Duszpasterstwo więzienne’, *Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego*, 8 (1994), 19.

<sup>55</sup> Marcin Witkowski, ‘Rudolf Höss w wadowickim więzieniu: ostatnie dni byłego komendanta Auschwitz’, *Wadoviana. Przegląd Historyczno-Kulturalny*, 18 (2015), 128.

<sup>56</sup> Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej [Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, thereafter AIPN] Kr. 467/63 Letter of the acting head of the Corrections Department of the Provincial Office of Public Security in Cracow to prison heads in the Cracow Province of 23 December 1946, 5.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, 19.

The application of the above documents was different depending on a given prison. There were facilities where chaplains were permitted to provide pastoral ministry, mainly at the discretion of the prison head. For example, in 1945–52 in Poznań, the chaplain of the prison at Młyńska Street was Fr. Hieronim Lewandowski.<sup>58</sup> In turn, the director of the Department of Corrections and Camps reactivated the position of prison chaplain at Rawicz, Wronki and Poznań.<sup>59</sup>

Sometimes the Security Police allowed chaplains to be present during executions; therefore they were the only witnesses to the atrocities.<sup>60</sup> In Poznań, Fr. Hieronim Lewandowski, a prison chaplain in Poznań between 1945–56, witnessed thirty executions.<sup>61</sup> A similar function was played by Fr. Tadeusz Cieślak, a Konin dean.<sup>62</sup> However political prisoners, due to their isolation, were deprived of any right to benefit from the spiritual support of a chaplain.<sup>63</sup>

Another key issue is the pastoral ministry offered to prisoners by clerical inmates. In 1948 alone, over 400 clerics were arrested in Poland.<sup>64</sup> In mid-1952, there were around a thousand Catholic priests and nuns in prisons.<sup>65</sup> Even after the amnesty of 22 July, almost 400 priests still remained in the biggest political prison at Wronki at the turn of 1953.<sup>66</sup> Regardless of permits and restrictions, the priests held in custody provided secret ministry and administered sacraments, for which they were often punished.<sup>67</sup> This was the case, for example,

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<sup>58</sup> Tadeusz Łypaczewski, *Działalność Armii podziemnej w Wielkopolsce Wschodniej w latach 1945–1950* (Konin, 1994), 34–7, in Waldemar Woźniak, 'Duszpasterstwo więzienne a resocjalizacja', *Studia Teologiczne – Białystok – Drohiczyn Łomża*, xx (2002), 227.

<sup>59</sup> Letter of the director of the Department of Corrections and Camps to prison heads in Poznań, Rawicz and Wronki of 24 April 1946, 71, Archives of Central Board of Correctional Facilities (*Centralny Zarząd Zakładów Karnych, CZZK*), in Sikorski, 'Duszpasterstwo więzienne', 20.

<sup>60</sup> Katarzyna Kaczorowska, 'Bardzo płytki grób', *Polska Gazeta Wrocławska Magazyn*, 2 Nov. 2007.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>62</sup> G. Geras, 'Ustna relacja o księdzu Cieślaku złożona dnia 8 maja 1998 r. w Warszawie' in Woźniak, 'Duszpasterstwo więzienne', 228.

<sup>63</sup> Piotr Nowak, 'Ks. Piotr Stróżyński (1907–1971)', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 26 Feb. 2010.

<sup>64</sup> Niwa, *Kwestia dostępu do ksiązek*, 79.

<sup>65</sup> Jan Żaryn, *Kościół w PRL* (Warszawa, 2004), 27.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, 30.

<sup>67</sup> Tadeusz Kostewicz, 'Wykonywanie kary pozbawienia wolności wobec więźniów politycznych w latach 1944–1956', *Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego*, 1 (1991), 85.

in the Wronki prison, where “moral support to prisoners was offered by clerical inmates. In secret, they held worship services, conducted prison retreats, prayed the rosary and offered other forms of spiritual support.”<sup>68</sup> The communion bread was handed out, through trusted prison guards, to imprisoned clergymen by Fr. Piotr Stróżyński. Despite being unable to offer direct help,<sup>69</sup> he kept a secret book of deceased political prisoners buried in the Wronki cemetery.

## VII

### THE SITUATION OF PRISON MINISTRY IN 1956–80

On 22 May 1956, sensing the changing political climate following the death of Stalin, Bishop Zygmunt Choromański, secretary of the Polish Episcopate (Primate Wyszyński was still kept in custody), sent a letter to the secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR), Franciszek Mazur, in which he presented the state with “the most important and the most urgent” postulates of the Church. In addition to the chief postulate – to release the Primate – the letter also requested that soldiers, prisoners and hospital patients be provided with ongoing religious care.<sup>70</sup>

The discussions with the authorities bore fruit in the form of a communication of the Joint Committee, dated 2 December and published on 8 December 1956.<sup>71</sup> Section 4 stipulated “appointment of prison chaplains and establishment of rules for the provision of pastoral ministry to prisoners”. Over the next months, acts of law were adopted to implement the agreements reached. Pastoral ministry was defined in the Ordinance of the Minister of Justice of 19 December 1956.<sup>72</sup> A majority of the changes were tactical in nature, and a significant portion of arrangements were withheld.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>68</sup> The account of Henryk Czarnecki, <http://hczarnecki.republika.pl/wronki.htm> [Accessed: 16 April 2018].

<sup>69</sup> Nowak, ‘Ks. Piotr Stróżyński’.

<sup>70</sup> ‘List biskupa Z. Choromańskiego do F. Mazura z 22 maja 1956’, PO, no. 7/90, 23–6, in Antoni Dudek, ‘Kościół katolicki w Polsce w 1956 roku’, *Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i Materiały*, iii (1997), 105.

<sup>71</sup> Stanisław Markiewicz, *Stosunki między państwem a Kościołem Rzymskokatolickim w Polsce Ludowej (1944–10981)*, Part 2: *Dokumenty* (Warszawa, 1982), 16–17.

<sup>72</sup> Dudek, *Kościół katolicki w Polsce*, 111.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*, 117.



The Ordinance of the Minister of Justice, No. 80/56/CZW of 14 December 1956, regulated pastoral services, but in practice only 32 prisons were able to organise spiritual care, and then only in a very limited scope.<sup>74</sup> The provision of chaplaincy services depended on the decision of the prison head, so in fact the arrangements between the government and the Episcopate were not put into practice.<sup>75</sup>

As stated by Józef Lasocik, the legal solutions adopted in 1955–81 were characterised by a lack of precision and their limited nature, which significantly hindered any pastoral ministry.<sup>76</sup> For example, the prison regulations amended in 1963 hardly took into consideration the Ordinance of the Minister of Justice of 1956, and as a result the legal changes of 1956 had a very limited actual effect. What's more, over the years the number of correctional facilities that officially provided chaplaincy services actually decreased – in 1963 there were only 22 such prisons due to facilities being closed down and a decreasing number of working chaplains. As the elderly ministers retired, no agreements were signed with their successors.<sup>77</sup> Chaplaincy services met with opposition on the part of both the prison authorities and administration. In principle, religiousness in prison was reduced to the private sphere, which meant that there was no basis for the activities of chaplains and clergy.

## VIII

### THE PRISON MINISTRY IN 1980–9

The legal situation of prison ministry changed beginning in 1981. One of the consequences of the August 1980 events was Ordinance No. 33 of the Ministry of Justice of 17 September 1981,<sup>78</sup> which formed the basis for many changes in prison ministry. The Ordinance ceased to apply only in 1998, upon issuance of the Regulation of the Minister of Justice<sup>79</sup> on specific rules for conducting worship services

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<sup>74</sup> Woźniak, 'Duszpasterstwo więzienne', 228.

<sup>75</sup> Bedyński, *Duszpasterstwo*, 38.

<sup>76</sup> Lasocik, 'Praktyki', 96.

<sup>77</sup> Bedyński, *Duszpasterstwo*, 85.

<sup>78</sup> Zarządzenie nr 33 Ministerstwa Sprawiedliwości z 17 września 1981, *Dziennik Urzędowy Ministerstwa Sprawiedliwości*, 1981, no. 5, item 27.

<sup>79</sup> Rozporządzenie Ministra Sprawiedliwości z dnia 5 listopada 1998, Dz.U. 98.139.904.

and participating in religious activities in correctional facilities.<sup>80</sup> The substantial changes included a provision which, for the first time since the end of the Second World War, entitled prisoners to participate in holy mass on Sundays and selected holy days. The prisoners could also receive sacraments and listen to transmissions of Sunday mass on the Polish Radio. The clergy staff was notably increased: in addition to military chaplains, any priest appointed by the bishop of the diocese could become a prison chaplain. Thus in a short time, thanks to the cooperation with prison parish priests, a spiritual ministry was organised in over 130 prisons, i.e. in almost all the prison facilities in the country.

For the first time since the end of the war in 1945, a national congress of prison chaplains was held on 28 October 1981 in Warsaw. A subsequent meeting was held on 17 February 1983, whereas from 27 to 29 February 1984, a training was conducted for priests interested in spiritual ministry addressed to prisoners. These meetings were continued in Lublin in 1985, and in Warsaw in 1988. In 1987, Fr. Jan Sikorski from Warsaw became the National Prison Chaplain (*Krajowy Duszpasterz Więziennictwa*). In 1987 he participated, on behalf of Poland, in a congress of the International Commission of Catholic Prison Pastoral Care (ICPPC) in Vienna. The new contacts bore fruit in the form of an international symposium of chaplains and laypersons working in prisons, which was organised in Warsaw on 21–23 September 1989.<sup>81</sup>

In 1981–2, the pastoral ministry targeted many internees retained in places of isolation as well as many political prisoners held in custody between 1982 and 1986.<sup>82</sup> The first holy mass in a Bydgoszcz prison was celebrated by Fr. Grzegorz Leśniewski on Christmas 1981. The imprisoned oppositionists included Andrzej Gwiazda, Anna Walentynowicz, and Bronisław Geremek.<sup>83</sup>

The already-mentioned research of Jan Malec of 1987 enables us to assess the efficiency of prisoner support five years after issuing the ordinance of 17 September 1981.<sup>84</sup> The research shows that the

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<sup>80</sup> Sikorski, 'Duszpasterstwo więzienne', 22.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*, 22.

<sup>82</sup> Woźniak, 'Duszpasterstwo więzienne', 228.

<sup>83</sup> Henryk Wilk, *Zakład karny*, [http://www.mikolaj.bydgoszcz.pl/czytelnia/zaklad\\_karny\\_fordon.pdf](http://www.mikolaj.bydgoszcz.pl/czytelnia/zaklad_karny_fordon.pdf) [Accessed: 12 April 2018].

<sup>84</sup> Jan Malec, 'Realizacja konstytucyjnego prawa skazanych do wolności sumienia i wyznania', in Andrzej Marek (ed.), *Księga Jubileuszowa Więziennictwa Polskiego 1918–1988* (Warszawa, 1990), 19.

prisoners did not always have the opportunity to participate in holy mass, which in some prisons was celebrated irregularly, on Saturdays rather than on Sundays, or not at all. On one hand, when comparing this data with the 22 prisons serviced by the chaplains almost 20 years earlier, it can be concluded that the ministry was being conducted on an unprecedented scale.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, the pastoral needs were huge, whereas the limited personnel capabilities reduced the ministry to just the provision of sacraments, without leaving enough time for personal contacts between chaplains and the prisoners. The conducted surveys showed that every sixth prison had no chaplain.<sup>86</sup> Holy masses were celebrated mainly on Sundays and holidays, and in 11 prisons the mass was celebrated on Saturdays. At the same time, there were significant difficulties in providing access to worship services due to bad faith on the part of the prisons' managing bodies, the limited number of chaplains and/or the lack of appropriate conditions. While it should be noted that the clergymen also performed pastoral activities other than just giving sacraments, i.e. they conducted catechization classes, prepared for confirmation or first communion, and visited prisoners as part of pastoral visits, these activities however were sporadic and limited in their scale.

Research conducted by Zbigniew Lasocik in 1989 makes it possible to document the impact of the post-1980 pastoral ministry on the process of prisoner resocialisation. Pastoral care was long-awaited by prisoners, who were in great need to receive it. As many as 95 per cent of respondents stated that spiritual care for prisoners was needed and required.<sup>87</sup> Some respondents stressed the chaplain's ability to provide spiritual support and help to survive the difficult period of isolation – ministers were described as persons who supported prisoners and helped them when experiencing a breakdown. Prisoners pointed out that chaplains “kept their spirits up and made them feel valuable.” Among the many reasons why pastoral ministry was important at that time, the respondents listed the presence of clergy “as a proof that somebody from outside remembered about us, and visited us as fellow human beings.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibidem*, 21.

<sup>86</sup> Lasocik, ‘Praktyki’, 115.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*, 137.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibidem*.

By the end of the 1980s, the importance of the chaplains' contribution in the resocialisation process began to be acknowledged.<sup>89</sup> In addition, key changes in the Executive Penal Code were postulated and, for the first time, the need to recognise the work of chaplains was noted in the prison regulations.

## IX

### THE ROLE OF PATRONAGE ORGANISATIONS IN THE PROCESS OF PRISONER RESOCIALISATION AFTER 1980

The declaration of martial law on 13 December 1981 fostered the need for material, spiritual, and legal aid to be offered to internees, their families, and anybody subjected to repressions, such as persons dismissed from employment. Aid to prisoners, both in terms of charity and spiritual aid, was offered by members of various social aid organisations, including those established under the patronage of the Church. These organisations included: the Polish Penitentiary Association (*Polskie Stowarzyszenie Penitencjarne*); the 'Patronage' Prisoner and Family Support Association (*Stowarzyszenie Pomocy Osobom Uwięzionym i ich Rodzinom 'Patronat'*) in Warsaw; the Primatial Aid Committee (*Prymasowski Komitet Pomocy Osobom Pozbawionym Wolności i Ich Rodzinom*); and the Internees Aid Committee (*Komitet Pomocy Internowanym*) at the St. Brygida's Church in Gdańsk.

The first of these organisations, the Polish Penitentiary Association, was registered on 29 June 1981. Its founders and members included persons who had academic background or handled issues related to the penitentiary system at a professional level. In December 1981, the Association counted 200 members. It was a lay institution, broadly cooperating with the Church in the development of welfare activities in facilities serviced by clergy. According to its constitution, the Association was to offer comprehensive support to persons held in custody and their families, undertake efforts to humanise the penitentiary system, as well as foster public attitudes to promote reforms of the penitentiary policy.<sup>90</sup> The Association's activities were suspended after the introduction of martial law in 1981.

<sup>89</sup> Malec, 'Realizacja', 429.

<sup>90</sup> Małgorzata Fuszara, 'Zmiany społeczne i zmiany prawne w PRL', *Przegląd Socjologiczny*, 1 (1993), 162.

The 'Patronage' Association was registered on 21 July 1981 with the objective of bringing support to all persons held in custody. It was a nongovernmental organisation, founded in a pro-independence community gathered around Fr. Jan Zieja and Zofia and Zbigniew Romaszewski. By the end of 1981, when this Association was also suspended by the authorities of communist Poland, it had about a hundred active members.<sup>91</sup>

As stated by Krystian Bedyński, clergy undertaking work in prisons after 1980 formed "a bridge between the internees and the spontaneously established lay organisations of persons eager to help the inmates and their families."<sup>92</sup> On 21 January 1982, in Warsaw, the ecclesiastical community formed a Primatial Aid Committee, headed by Bishop Władysław Miziołek, with members including Maja Komorowska, Krystyna Zachwatowicz, and other renowned artists and culture professionals.<sup>93</sup> The Committee's aid was offered within the framework of a complex system of specialised sections.<sup>94</sup>

Despite the fact that the work of a growing number of welfare organisations concentrated on material help, their activities were particularly important for ensuring the internees' right to religious practices and services. Many aid organisations provided worship items to prisons – rosaries and religious literature, including the Bible, catechisms and prayer books.<sup>95</sup>

By the end of March 1982, at the request of Bishop Władysław Miziołek, Tadeusz Szymanowski developed the first programme of the Prisoner and Family Support Section. The programme undertook a wide aid campaign to offer support in the area of spiritual, moral, financial, medical, cultural, and educational needs.<sup>96</sup> Particular support was to be extended to persons convicted of political crimes and repressed, as well as those convicted of other offences who had no family or any other type of support available to them. As a result of these activities, in late June 1982 a free legal aid office was opened to help the convicts,

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<sup>91</sup> Szymanowski, *O pomocy w powrocie*, 72.

<sup>92</sup> Bedyński, *Duszpasterstwo*, 101.

<sup>93</sup> Peter Raina, *Kościół w Polsce* (Londyn, 1985), 71.

<sup>94</sup> Archives of the Primatial Aid Committee (*Prymasowski Komitet Pomocy Osobom Pozbawionym Wolności i Ich Rodzinom*) are located in the Archives of Modern Records (*Archiwum Akt Nowych*) in Warsaw, set number: 2/2300/0.

<sup>95</sup> Bedyński, *Duszpasterstwo*, 102.

<sup>96</sup> Szymanowski, *O pomocy w powrocie*, 77.

detainees, and their families. The office was located at the headquarters of the Metropolitan Ecclesiastical Tribunal at 49 Nowogrodzka Street in Warsaw. Another office, focusing on material aid, was opened at the St. Anna's Church by persons gathered around Tadeusz Kostewicz. This group also made and sent packages to prisons for the persons held in custody.<sup>97</sup>

Owing to organisational difficulties, limited premises and resources, and the lack of adequate information about the legal aid office, the campaign did not bring the expected effects. Thanks to the intervention of Bishop Władysław Miziołek, by the end of September 1982 the sections were offered guest offices at the house of the fathers of the Congregation of the Mission at the Church of the Holy Cross. For several hours a day, the aid section was allowed to use a small room and a waiting room, whereas the church undergrounds were used as a storage area. In his communication issued on 29 September 1982 and read in Warsaw churches on Sunday, 3 October, the Vicar General provided information about the operating aid office, their open hours, and the nature of the services provided. The aid office began operating at the new location on 4 October 1982. It offered legal aid in court proceedings and material aid to persons held in custody and detainees (in the form of food packages, cleaning products, and medications), as well as emergency financial aid to families of the repressed who experienced financial difficulties. Emergency medical aid was also provided. Another area of help involved moral support in the form of counselling for families of the repressed who were facing a variety of difficult life situations. The above activities were coordinated with the activities of the aid office at Piwna Street which, among other things, helped to pay fines imposed by misdemeanour courts. The help provided was recorded and documented on an ongoing basis.<sup>98</sup>

The Committee's activities involved both clergy and laity. In addition to clergy members of the Warsaw Archdiocese, the works were supported by the fathers of the Congregation of the Mission. Many of the Committee's active members were research fellows at Warsaw higher education institutions (such as Warsaw University, Warsaw Theological Academy, and the Polish Academy of Sciences). Over 20 lawyers cooperated with the organisation. From the very beginning,

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibidem*, 78.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibidem*, 89.

the operations were conducted in the evangelical spirit and as part of a voluntary ministry. The Committee's works involved persons who both represented Christian beliefs and were involved in the religious life of Roman Catholic Church. The Committee ended its operations after martial law was lifted.

In 1988, the activists of 'Patronage' and the Penitentiary Aid Association founded the 'Patronage' Penitentiary Association, which continued the traditions of the pre-war 'Patronage'.<sup>99</sup>

## X

### PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC IN THE PROCESS OF EXECUTION OF PRISON SENTENCES AFTER 1989

The most important changes in the scope of religious care in penitentiary facilities were brought about by the systemic transformation of 1989, and specifically the Regulation of the Minister of Justice on the rules of the execution of prison sentences and temporary detentions, dated 2 May 1989.

An important reference in Polish post-1989 law to the pre-1939 model concerned the increased role of society in the process of executing a sentence. Between 1944 and 1989 this element of legislation was practically non-existent. The idea of active citizens' participation was introduced into Polish legislation by the Executive Penal Act of 1997, thanks to which execution proceedings ceased to be the domain of the state and its bodies, but became a common concern.<sup>100</sup> Article 38 § 1 of the Executive Penal Code of 6 June 1997 stipulated that "the execution of penalties ... in particular, those involving imprisonment ... may involve cooperation with associations, foundations, organisations, and institutions, as well as churches and other religious groups and persons of special trust."<sup>101</sup> The participation of society in the process of executing a sentence of imprisonment has a long-standing tradition in Poland, dating back to the nineteenth century, although interrupted during the period of the communist regime between 1944

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>100</sup> Katarzyna Łapińska and Małgorzata Mańczuk, 'Udział społeczeństwa w polskim postępowaniu wykonawczym – z uwzględnieniem wybranych regulacji państw europejskich', *Białostockie Studia Prawnicze*, 21 (2016), 123.

<sup>101</sup> Executive Penal Code of 6 June 1997, Article 38 § 1.



and 1989. The political changes in Poland after 1989 enabled society to take different types of initiatives aimed not to control, but rather to support the resocialisation process of prisoners.<sup>102</sup> Some social aid organisations and penitentiary associations were founded before 1989, and others were formally established later, even though their founders were persons involved in providing services and support to inmates since the 1980s. Members of the laity committed to supporting prison chaplains developed many initiatives, some of which evolved into organisations focused on providing moral, social and religious support.

Certain organisations arose as a response to the needs of the internees, sometimes growing into aid institutions offering support to all held in custody. In Wrocław, in March 1982 the Archbishops' Charity Committee (*Arcybiskupi Komitet Charytatywny*, AKCH) was established with the consent of the Archbishop Henryk Gulbinowicz, the Metropolitan Bishop of Wrocław.<sup>103</sup> Its beginnings are related to the period directly after the introduction of martial law, when young people involved in Wrocław universities and an Academic Ministry group operating in the city began to collect information and offer spontaneous help to the oppressed and their families. On the part of the Church, support was offered by the clergy: Bishop Adam Dyczkowski, Fr. Aleksander Zienkiewicz and Fr. Andrzej Dziełak.<sup>104</sup> The aid activities of the Wrocław Church grew relatively quickly and took the form of an organised and systematic help on the part of AKCH.

As described by Joanna Korczyńska,<sup>105</sup> the organisational structures of AKCH included various areas of activity coordinated by 14 specialised sections covering different areas of aid to persons affected by the communist regime during the martial law period. The two main sections: the Section Supporting Internees and their Families, and the Section Supporting Political Prisoners and their Families were in contact with families, kept records, and provided information on the repressions, mainly to Warsaw. These sections helped families whose

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<sup>102</sup> Jan Dezyderiusz Pol, "Bractwo Więzienne" w Polsce jako forma działania wolontariatu wśród więźniów', *Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego*, 43 (2004), 101.

<sup>103</sup> Zofia Dillenius and Elżbieta Machowczykowa, *Arcybiskupi Komitet Charytatywny we Wrocławiu "Pod Czwórką"* (Wrocław, 1997).

<sup>104</sup> Joanna Korczyńska, *Arcybiskupi Komitet Charytatywny we Wrocławiu w latach 1981 – 1989* (Zielona Góra, 2007), 42–46, <http://zbc.uz.zgora.pl/publication/10237> [Accessed: 14 April 2018].

<sup>105</sup> *Ibidem*.

members were interned or convicted by courts, as well as families of persons killed or injured during demonstrations.

During their daily work shifts, persons working in the On-Call Section established initial contacts with the persons calling the Committee and directed them to the appropriate sections. The Legal Aid Section and Proceedings Section offered legal advice on labour, penal and civil law, participated in and observed political processes and made detailed reports on the proceedings. In addition to the above-mentioned sections, there were also a Medical Aid Section (organisation of work for many specialist doctors who volunteered to join AKCH, conducting medical examinations and helping persons temporarily or fully released from internship, detention, prison or work to obtain medical benefits, as well as distribute medications); a Finance Section (management of funds received from donors and from church sources); a Transport Section (organisation of transport to travel to prisons and internship facilities); a Vacation Section (organisation of summer camps for children from repressed families and the internees); a Section Supporting Persons Out of Work (keeping records of persons out of work for political reasons); a Teaching Section (collecting information on repressions directed against teachers, pupils and students); a Twin Family Section (facilitating contact between families whose members were repressed and guardian families).

All these activities formed a spontaneous response to the wave of arrests and repressions imposed on the Poles engaged in the fight for freedom. These activities were supported, from the very beginning, by the Metropolitan Bishop of Wrocław, Archbishop Henryk Gulbinowicz, who not only named the organisation but also provided premises (at 4 Katedralna Street, therefore the later name 'At Number Four' (*Pod Czwórką*)), supported it financially, and made sure that the Committee had its chaplain.<sup>106</sup>

At the founders' meeting of the Archbishop Charity Committee on 26 June 1989, Cardinal Henryk Gulbinowicz, Metropolitan Bishop of Wrocław, and members of AKCH decided to establish the Wrocław Prisoner Care Fellowship (*Wrocławskie Towarzystwo Opieki nad Więźniami*). In view of the legal possibility to establish associations, the Fellowship was officially registered on 8 August 1989.<sup>107</sup> The

<sup>106</sup> Dillenius and Machowczykowa, *Arcybiskupi Komitet Charytatywny*.

<sup>107</sup> Jolanta Szablicka-Żak, 'Wrocławskie Towarzystwo Opieki nad Więźniami.

experiences of the 1980s formed the basis for the activities undertaken by members of the organisation after 1989. The main objective of the Fellowship was to “offer to the persons held in custody and convicts any spiritual, legal and material support, being guided by the teachings of the Gospel. As far as possible, the Fellowship also offers material support to the families of convicts, in particular multi-child families in difficult life situations.”<sup>108</sup>

In 1996, the Wrocław Prisoner Care Fellowship became one of the co-founders of the Legal Mediation Team (*Zespół do Wprowadzenia Mediacji do Systemu Prawnego*) in Poland. The Fellowship conducted its activities in the area of prisoner support (interviews with the convicts, help in contacting their families, improving family relations, providing legal aid, psychological and academic support, penitentiary support (programs supporting prisoners leaving prisons, material help), educational support (promoting education and supporting prisoners that attended schools affiliated with the prison), charity support (material help for families, Christmas packages, school materials and aid for summer trips) and mediation support.<sup>109</sup>

Another key aid organisation that was founded by prison chaplains was the Prison Brotherhood (*Stowarzyszenie Bractwo Więzienne*), linked to the person of Fr. Jan Sikorski, a Warsaw Archdiocese priest. After the introduction of martial law on 13 December 1981, many members of the ‘Solidarity’ movement were interned by the communist authorities. One of the internship facilities was the remand prison in Warsaw Białoleka. Soon thereafter, Bishop Władysław Miziołek, a Warsaw Suffragan, suggested to Fr. Sikorski to visit the detainees in Białoleka. On Christmas Eve, 24 December 1981, Fr. Jan Sikorski together with Fr. Bronisław Dembowski arrived in Białoleka to receive prisoner confessions and celebrate holy mass with them. This event initiated a series of visits by Fr. Sikorski to this part of Warsaw, where he began conducting masses for the detainees every Sunday and where he met with the internees.<sup>110</sup> These were not merely pastoral visits. Fr. Sikorski became involved in help which was conspiratorial in its

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Dwadzieścia pięć lat działalności’ in Larysa Leszczenko and Jolanta Szablicka-Żak (eds.), *Wybrane problemy ochrony praw człowieka w Polsce* (Wrocław, 2016).

<sup>108</sup> Constitution of the Wrocław Prisoner Care Fellowship, Article 1.

<sup>109</sup> Jolanta Szablicka-Żak, *Wrocławskie Towarzystwo Opieki nad Więźniami*, 18–19.

<sup>110</sup> Sikorski, ‘Duszpasterstwo więzienne’, 21.

nature. i.e. he carried secret messages and letters to and from families and organised material help. Above all, he provided prisoners with a sense of security and hope in a situation where they were not sure of their future.<sup>111</sup> On Christmas Eve in 1982, the internees were released from the prison and a couple of weeks later, in early 1983, they met at a thanksgiving mass at St. Martin's Church in the Warsaw's Old Town. This was the beginning of monthly masses, celebrated at a seminary church at Krakowskie Przedmieście, and then at the parish church of Saint Stanislaus Kostka, where the ministry was headed by Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko.<sup>112</sup>

The Prison Brotherhood was able to engage in official activities only after 1989. In 1990, Fr. Sikorski was appointed a Prison Chaplain Chief. He began to cooperate with Central Board of Correctional Facilities (currently the Central Board of Prison Services) and began setting work conditions for prison chaplains, and later also for laypersons supporting the work of clergy.<sup>113</sup> At that time Fr. Jan Sikorski started to cooperate with Janina Szweycer-Grupińska, who had her own experience in both helping prisoners (during the Second World War) and in being a prisoner (during communism she was arrested on charges of "supporting an underground aid organisation"). Thus began a spontaneous cooperation between laypersons and Fr. Jan Sikorski in the area of prison ministry. Initially, their help was offered at the St. Joseph's church in Warsaw Koło, where Fr. Sikorski was a parish priest and lay volunteers organised material support for prisoners and their families, prepared Christmas packages for children and prisoners, and/or managed their correspondence. An important event was a prison chaplains meeting organised in Popowo (in a training facility for Prison Services) in 1990, attended for the first time by a group of lay volunteers. The next year, in April 1991, the first national convention of laity and clergy supporting prisoners was organised. It was attended by 40 participants from across Poland. This led to a Warsaw congress of Laity Evangelisation Service (*Ewangelizacyjna Służba Świeckich*) organised in 1992, which was attended by around 80 participants.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Mateusz Wyrwich, *Kapelani Solidarności 1980–1989* (Warszawa, 2005).

<sup>112</sup> Iwona Hałgas, 'Duszpasterz wykluczonych', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 49 (2001).

<sup>113</sup> Jan Sikorski, 'Duszpasterstwo więzienne', in Ryszard Kamiński and Bogusław Drózdź (eds.), *Duszpasterstwo specjalne* (Lublin, 1998), 329–31.

<sup>114</sup> Pol, „Bractwo więzienne”, 102.

In 1992, this spontaneous activity on the part of lay volunteers was put into an organisational framework and resulted in the establishment of an association, the Prison Brotherhood, which was entered into the register of associations in October 1993. The Prison Brotherhood became a member of the Prison Fellowship International and a local branch – Prison Fellowship Poland.

In its operations, the Brotherhood refers to the pre-war practices of ‘Patronage’. The 1923 constitution of “Patronage” provided for aid to former prisoners, the provision of work equipment, livelihood and welfare, accommodation at a shelter or work facility, and easing their return home and finding a job.<sup>115</sup> Pre-war institutions made attempts, some of which were successful, to establish work agencies, different types of training and work facilities (Article 6).<sup>116</sup> These objectives were implemented directly by the Prison Brotherhood, established at the initiative of Fr. Jan Sikorski. A key part of the operations of Brotherhood members was the support offered to persons released from prisons. They helped former prisoners find a place to live and work, met for prayers, and supported them along the path of their life transformation. For many years they ran a transitional house in Wrocław for persons released from prisons – the House of the Merciful Father. Through work, education and mutual support, ex-prisoners prepared themselves to fully return to their families and homes.

Another area of aid concerned the prisoners’ families. Also in this case, the organisation referred to the constitution of “Patronage”.<sup>117</sup> Specially delegated volunteers were involved in distributing food packages, providing material help to the prisoners’ families, and organising Christmas meetings and activities on Children’s’ Day. They managed collections of toys and children’s products. In cooperation with charity organisations, they organised summer camps for children from the poorest families of persons held in custody.<sup>118</sup> The Brotherhood was also involved in educational activities by conducting language courses, computer classes, and occupational training. An important aspect of its operations was also mediation between the

<sup>115</sup> *Statut Towarzystwa*, Article 6 (Siedlce, 1929), 5–6.

<sup>116</sup> Porowski, ‘O idei’, 61.

<sup>117</sup> *Statut Towarzystwa*, Article 7.

<sup>118</sup> Łukasz Kasper, *Popelnili zło, ale my widzimy człowieka - wywiad z ks. dr. Pawłem Wojtasem*, Katolicka Agencja Informacyjna, 23 Dec. 2010, <https://ekai.pl/popelnili-zlo-ale-my-widzimy-czlowieka/> [Accessed: 12 April 2018].

convicts and institutions and/or organisations competent to deliver and supervise resocialisation and post-penitentiary help. This involved, among others, vouching for prisoners who were able to leave the prison on a short leave or requested a conditional release, cooperating with probation officers, and assisting in finding relevant AA groups for those addicted to alcohol.<sup>119</sup>

The new legal conditions after 1989 made it possible to increase the presence of associations and aid organisations in prisons. Working with prisoners directly in the prison environment has constituted a key element of support in resocialisation until today. At the initiative of Fr. Roman Zrój, a long-time chaplain of the remand prison in Gdańsk, as well as of employees, officers, and prisoners, it was decided at a meeting on 15 October 1996 to establish the EMAUS Ex-Prisoner Support Association (*Stowarzyszenie Pomocy Osobom Wychodzącym na Wolność 'EMAUS'*). The Association's mission was to help persons leaving penitentiary facilities by preventing their recidivism and social exclusion. The organisation was entered into the court register on 12 September 1996. The objective of the EMAUS Association was to prevent recidivism among former prisoners without any means of support, housing, or a job. The mission was to help persons released from correctional facilities and remand prisons to adapt to their new life conditions – in particular, to help them find decent employment and accommodations, pursue occupational re-qualification, as well as to provide legal advice and resocialisation activities for persons leaving prison isolation who want to change their way of life.

The aim of the caregiving activities was also to help in the social re-adaptation of former prisoners and detainees, e.g. by adaptation to new living conditions, finding employment and housing, as well as to provide minimum living conditions (clothing, food and temporary residence). They focused on providing transitional residence for former prisoners, ensuring minimal social and living conditions, helping to obtain the required documents, providing legal aid to settle administrative or execution issues resulting from previous conflicts with the law, settling health issues, finding permanent employment and/or pursuing possible occupational re-qualification, as well as helping to resolve difficult life situations.

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<sup>119</sup> Cf. Pol, „Bractwo więzienne”, 104; Jan Sikorski, ‘Duszpasterstwo więzienne’, in Kamiński and Drózdź (eds.), *Duszpasterstwo specjalne*, 335.



Resocialisation activities were from the very beginning aimed at halting the process of demoralisation or social inadequacy; 'unteaching' attitudes leading to destructive behaviour or disregard of basic norms and values; teaching how to overcome attitudes of learned helplessness; motivating former prisoners to undertake studies, professional work, and improve their competencies; teaching them the norms of living in a group; encouraging them to take responsibility for themselves and others; teaching how to present and use strong personality traits and how to pursue changes and realistically evaluate one's abilities, as well as have realistic aspirations; and motivating former prisoners and helping them establish family situations.

From the very beginning, the aim of the Association was to establish a house for former prisoners. In cooperation with the city authorities, the Association obtained premises for a round-the-clock facility, the Aid House. The President of Gdańsk, with the consent and approval of the municipal council, designated the building and space at 55/57 Sandomierska Street in Gdańsk, which was given to the Association on 13 November 1998 under lease title. Following the adaptation and refurbishing of the building, the first resident came to live at the House on 22 December 1998. The Association, in cooperation with the President of Gdańsk, initiated a full renovation of the premises, intended for the needs of the city and charges of the Association. The arrangement allowed former prisoners to obtain their own apartments.

The House managed by the Association accepts former prisoners who left a correctional facility but have no place to go and stay, and would otherwise increase the group of the unemployed. In its work with the charges, the Association offers individual therapy and group therapy using a Therapeutic Community approach, pastoral services, education and information, individual support and legal assistance, occupational therapy, work therapy, participation in cultural and sporting events in the Tri-city area (Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot), promoting the initiatives and activities of the Emaus House residents, and inspires the charges to participate in education and prophylactic activities in the local community.

Another organisation that focuses its activities on former prisoners is the 'Sławek' Foundation, established in 1998 by the Łagodziński family. Marek Łagodziński, President of the Foundation, encountered the problems faced by convicted persons after 1992, when he visited the remand prison in Warsaw Mokotów, at Rakowiecka Street.



He consulted individual prisoners and launched an aid programme for persons leaving prisons by employing them in his car workshop. The Foundation's first charge was a prisoner named Sławek, which became the inspiration for the organisation's name.<sup>120</sup> The mission of the 'Sławek' Foundation is to assist persons held in prisons, juvenile shelters, and correction facilities to make a safe return to society and their families. The Foundation strives to reconcile and bring together families affected by isolation.

The constitutional goals of the Foundation include offering help to persons in difficult material, family, and life situations; assisting juveniles leaving orphanages or Youth Correction Houses, particularly those who have no home or work; offering help to those leaving correction facilities or shelters for the underaged, particularly those who may not be able to count on the help of family members or relatives; and assisting youth and adults leaving correctional facilities or remand prisons and their families in difficult material or life situations which may cause their quick return to criminal activity; as well as supporting addicts and their families.<sup>121</sup>

In 2000, the Foundation managed to lease a house to be used for resocialisation and social re-adaptation activities. It became a residence for 10 persons who, after leaving prison, had no place to stay. The residents receive accommodation and any necessary help. The ultimate aim, however, is for them to find work, housing, and gain independence. An important aspect of the Foundation's activity is to provide support to those in dire need by offering material help and providing food. Having regard to the importance of post-penitentiary work, the Foundation began lobbying to establish a Polish Penitentiary Help System which, with trans-sectoral cooperation, would enable the most efficient aid activities to be offered to convicts and former prisoners.<sup>122</sup>

The third important organisation established on the tide of the changes after 1989 and operating in the area of support for persons leaving prisons is the 'Barge' Mutual Help Association (*Stowarzyszenie Pomocy Wzajemnej Barka*) in Strzelce Opolskie. Fr. Józef Krawiec, an Opole diocese priest, soon after being ordained in 1996 started to

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<sup>120</sup> <https://www.fundacjaslawek.org/historia> [Accessed: 12 April 2018].

<sup>121</sup> <https://www.fundacjaslawek.org/cele-statutowe> [Accessed: 12 April 2018].

<sup>122</sup> <https://www.fundacjaslawek.org/misja> [Accessed: 12 April 2018].

work as a chaplain in the prison at Strzelce Opolskie.<sup>123</sup> From the very beginning, he was involved in working with convicts and was particularly concerned about the fate of persons leaving prisons who had no place to go. In 1998, with the help of local self-government authorities he founded a house for homeless men, located at a former stud farm at Strzelce Opolskie, and he moved in with his charges. The ‘Doryszów’ House was gradually renovated and adapted to the needs of its residents. This formed the starting point for support activities implemented with the help and involvement of the “Barge” Mutual Help Foundation, established in 1989 and operating among neglected social groups by, among other things, managing support houses for them. The initiatives taken by the Foundation have enabled some of its programmes to become independent activities and grew into several new associations and foundations. One of them was the ‘Barge’ Mutual Help Association at Strzelce Opolskie, which offered help to former prisoners. In the following years, new houses were opened – at Warmatowice–Kaczorownia and a Mother and Child House at Żędowice.<sup>124</sup>

The aim of the Association’s activities was, among others, to facilitate community and professional reintegration of persons socially excluded and at risk of social exclusion, to foster their education as well as promote awareness of any persons and institutions interested in implementing programmes focused on social reintegration, and to provide accommodation, meals and support to those in need, as well as prevent alcoholism. The Association meets its objectives by organising therapeutic and resocialisation support for those in need, providing education, training and vocational courses aimed at enabling persons socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion to obtain and/or improve their qualifications.<sup>125</sup> In consequence, all the activities undertaken by the Association offer not only a roof over their charges’ heads, but also a chance to transition from homelessness to finding

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<sup>123</sup> <http://www.diecezja.opole.pl/index.php/parafie-i-kaplani/kaplani/alfabetycznie> [Accessed 12 April 2018].

<sup>124</sup> <http://www.barka.strzelceop.pl/index.php/historia>, [Accessed: 12 April 2018], Patryk Świątek, *Dotknij Boga. W poszukiwaniu ludzi, którym pozostało tylko szczęście* (Kraków, 2015), 153.

<sup>125</sup> <http://www.barka.strzelceop.pl/index.php/cele-statutowe> [Accessed: 12 April 2018].

a home thanks to having acquired skills and finding employment.<sup>126</sup> This type of support brings about long-lasting effects.

## XI CONCLUSIONS

The prison ministry in Poland, which grew strongly in the period of the Second Polish Republic, suffered significant limitations after 1944. In many cases providing pastoral services was even prohibited.

The transformational changes, which had their roots in the events of August 1980, made it possible to establish various aid organisations, which were critical in shaping the character and tasks of the modern pastoral ministry. Many of them were founded within the church community and cooperated with chaplains and clergy members involved in pastoral care. These organisations became a crucial element of pastoral services addressed to prisoners – they supplemented the work of chaplains, which mainly involved conducting worship services and administering sacraments. This made the presence of chaplains and supporting persons (catechists, nuns and friars, alumni, religious groups, volunteers) an inherent element of the aid programmes offered to prisoners. The services were also extended to include prison officers. Since then, the role of church structures and the cooperating aid organisations has expanded, and they became even more important after the Executive Penal Code came into force in 1997. It led to an increased emphasis on the person-oriented approach in the penitentiary resocialisation of prisoners, who are expected to show their intent to cooperate in developing socially acceptable attitudes. An important element of support in inducing this commitment on the part of prisoners' commitment is offered by non-governmental aid organisations, churches, and religious associations.

All aid and prisoner supporting organisations founded after 1980 – which are focused on aid and support offered to prisoners both while serving their sentence and after their release from prison – have implemented the same goals as the prison brotherhoods and patronages before 1939. In addition to offering help to prisoners, support activities are also addressed to their family members, spouses, and children. The support offered to persons released from prisons is aimed at enabling

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<sup>126</sup> <http://nagrodatischnera.pl/ks-jozef-krawiec/> [Accessed: 12 April 2018].

their return to society. Also, the establishment of new facilities and centres for those persons released from prison who have completed their sentence has been aimed at facilitating their social integration and, in turn, has significantly reduced their homelessness.

The transformational changes which took place after 1989 have enabled many institutions and aid organisations to actively support the process of resocialisation. Non-government aid organisations are addressing the important social aspect of work with the socially excluded. Although delegalized and practically non-existent after 1944, these institutions have become, after 1981, one of the main branches of moral, religious and social support for persons held in custody. These organisations, together with the prison ministry, have become a permanent part of the generally understood 'penitentiary system', as manifested by the Prison Ministry Council for the Director-General of Prison Service, whose members include chaplains of Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Evangelical churches, acting as a council and advisory body to the Director-General. Another body is the Main Council for Social Re-adaptation and Support of Sentenced Persons, established by the Prime Minister, which acts as a council and advisory body to the Minister of Justice. These institutions constitute an example of coordinated activities between government bodies and representatives of society aimed at preventing crime and executing court sentences in order to offer support for social re-adaptation and to evaluate the penitentiary policy in line with Article 40(1) of the Executive Penal Code.

*trans. Sylwia Biczuk*

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**Grzegorz Kudlak** – penitentiary and clinical psychology, psychotherapy, addiction treatment in prison conditions; assistant professor at the Deviation Psychology Department of the Institute of Social Prevention and Resocialisation, Faculty of Applied Social Sciences and Resocialisation, University of Warsaw; e-mail: grzegorz.kudlak@uw.edu.pl

**Mateusz Zimny** – history of the Church in the Middle Ages, iconography, 20th-century history of Poland; PhD student at the Faculty of History and Cultural Heritage of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Cracow; e-mail: matzimny@gmail.com