

**THE SACRAL BUILDING INDUSTRY IN THE LODZ DIOCESE
IN THE PERIOD OF 1945–1989**

Summary

In the period 1945-1989 the Roman Catholic Church in Poland had to face the system of power based on the Marxist-Leninist ideology which fought against any manifestations of religious life. Among them, the biggest “care” was given to its most visible symbols – churches, which number shows the condition of godliness of the local population. However, the struggles between the Bishop’s Curia in Lodz and the state authorities about the development of sacral building industry in Lodz Diocese ended with a success for the ecclesial side - what actually fit into the nationwide situation of Roman Catholic Church at the end of the PRL (Polish People’s Republic). Within 45 years the hierarchs indicated the need to rise 93 sacral objects. Among them, the state authorities agreed to the uprising of 64 new churches and chapels until the end of September 1989 (69%). The Bishop’s Curia indicated the most of the locations in urban areas – 47 projects, from which 25 were approved (53%). The remaining 46 projects referred to new temples in the rural areas – 39 positive decisions (85%). On this basis, it could be thought that the policy of the communist authorities, hostile towards Roman Catholic Church, did not discriminate the believing part of PRL society. Nevertheless, the above information placed in the context of the periodization of history of PRL, clearly show that this image presents completely different.

In the first post-war decade (1945-1956) the authorities gave permission for the rise of four new sacral objects: Sacred Heart in Karsznice, Our Lady of Good Counsel in Zgierz, Sacred Heart and St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in Lodz and St. Theresa of the Child Jesus in Lodz. At that time, 16 churches and chapels had been destructed as a result of the Second World War. Initially favourable policy of the state authorities allowed to reconstruct 15 of these temples. The most hostile policy was led during the 14-year period of Władysław Gomułka in the function of the first secretary of the Communist Party (PZPR). Then, the Department of Religious Matters (UdSW) created the law on the case of sacral building industry (27 III 1957) and developed a number of instructions (1958-1960) about the rules of issuing (or actually not) permits for uprising new churches. For this reason, though the Bishop’s Curia in

Lodz postulated 15 sacral objects in Lodz Diocese, only one investment was approved for realization – the Church dedicated to Our Lady of Good Counsel in Zgierz. The gradual normalization of the authorities' policy began with the so-called Edward Gierek's decade (1970–1980). It was manifested by giving eight permissions for building temples in Lodz Diocese (from 32 applications submitted by the Bishop's Curia): Our Lady of Sorrows in Lodz, St. Maksymilian Maria Kolbe in Baby-Kielczówka, St. Vincent Ferrer in Rogów (now dedicated to Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary), Sacred Heart in Piotrków Trybunalski, St. Waclaw in Tomaszów Mazowiecki (now dedicated to Our Lady Queen of Poland), the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Łask-Kolumna, St. Anna in Wartkowice and the Holy Family in Tomaszów Mazowiecki.

However, the vast majority of permissions for the construction of new sacral objects was given in the 80's, when the function of the first secretary of the Communist Party was held by Stanisław Kania, and then by general Wojciech Jaruzelski. In the period between the rise of NSZZ "Solidarność" (after the August strikes in the 1980) and the introduction of martial law on the 13 December 1981, there was given an approval to seven new sacral objects (in the districts Widzew-Wschód and Dąbrowa in Lodz, in Sokolniki-Las, Bełchatów, Wiskitno, Wola Rakowa, Tuszyn-Las). The next years brought even more chances for the development of sacral building industry, because of the new ordinance on the planning and investments in that field. That meant a completely new chapter in the relationship between the state and the church. In its first years (1982–1985) there were given permissions for seven new temples (three objects in Lodz, one in Pabianice, Piotrków Trybunalski, Rokiciny, Zduńska Wola-Karsznice). In the next years (until 1989) five projects of churches in Lodz, one in Piotrków Trybunalski and one in Pabianice were accepted. Besides these objects, in the years 1982–1989 there were also built 30 chapels. Thus, in total, from the August 1980 until the October 1989 the authorities gave permissions for 51 new sacral objects, what gives 80% of all the positively considered applications. Additionally, on the 1 October 1989, the ordinary of Lodz Diocese erected 22 parishes, only three of which have already had a church or chapel – the remaining 19 cases associated with building next temples.

The church hierarchies' range of efforts depended mostly on the current nationwide tendencies in the religious policy in PRL, which, in its definition, had to be hostile towards any manifestations of godliness. This meant that not every ordinary of Lodz Diocese managed to satisfy the needs of the faithful. The bishop Włodzimierz Jasiński (1934–1946) certainly had to face the difficult task which was not only the lack of new sacral objects but also the

need to reconstruct those damaged during the Second World War. His activity was continued by the next ordinary – bp Michał Klepacz (1946–1967), who contributed to the restoration of the status of sacral architecture before 1939 and led to the start of building next four objects. However, the hard times of Stalinism made it impossible to get more permissions, despite pointing out even 14 places for potential new temples. The next bishop – Józef Rozwadowski (1968–1986) held his function in slightly different political situation, what enabled him to get permissions for 41 sacral objects, and his successor – bp Władysław Ziółek gained 18 further. Comparing the number of submitted postulates with the number of permissions given, the achieved result seems to be quite satisfying.

This dissertation does not cover all the issues related to the matter of sacral building industry. Undoubtedly, a deeper analysis of the problem of financing sacral objects, as well as the participation of the faithful in the building process, is required. This sociological aspect could show the scale of the personal participation of the faithful in the organization of fundraising, in the supply of building materials and in the construction itself – the examples presented in the dissertation merely contribute to more detailed research.

The presented post-war history of the Lodz Diocese, seen through the aspect of sacral building industry, may be some kind of a case study of the activity of the Roman Catholic Church in the system of Communist state. This dissertation shows what circumstances did the clergy and the faithful face while providing new sacral objects in the times of Communistic totalitarianism and also the authorities' methods of their limitation. Moreover, this thesis enriches the historiography describing the history of the Lodz Diocese, as well as the fortunes of nationwide sacral building industry in PRL.

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