
Lasota, Marek. *Donos na Wojtyłę. Karol Wojtyła w teczach bezpieki* [Denouncing Wojtyła. Karol Wojtyła in Polish communist secret service records]. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2006, pp. 348. pp.

"The book is not just another Wojtyła biography. His activities are seen from the perspective of secret service officers and through the denunciations of collaborators."

Although 17 years have passed since the fall of communism in Poland, Polish society still has not fully come to terms with its traumatic past. In some cases, Stalinist era judges who sentenced dozens of innocent patriots to death continue to live well out of government pension. High party officials and some secret service officers responsible for the persecution of Catholic church, including the murder of "Solidarity" chaplain, father Jerzy Popiełuszko in 1984, remain unpunished. In 2005, in view of the failure of state institutions to bring those people to justice, a journalist published names of around 120,000 secret police collaborators, triggering national controversy. Days after the death of John Paul II in April 2005 it was revealed that a priest from the pope's surrounding was

a secret collaborator (even though neither his position in Church structure nor influence were significant). Moreover, it became clear that in some periods as many as 10 per cent of the clergy collaborated in some way with the communist regime. As a result of these findings, in February 2006 cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, former secretary of John Paul II and since 2005 archbishop of Cracow, created a committee called „Pamięć i troska” (Remembrance and Care) to investigate the problem in his diocese. Similar committees were created in other dioceses.

It is in the midst of these debates and controversies that Marek Lasota's book *Donos na Wojtyłę. Karol Wojtyła w teczach bezpieki*. [Denouncing Wojtyła. Karol Wojtyła in Polish communist secret service records] appears. Lasota is a historian working at the Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej), an independent unit established by the Polish Parliament in December 1998 (and operating since 2001) in order to investigate and prosecute crimes against Polish nation under nazism and communism. The book is a first comprehensive study of secret service records focusing on Karol Wojtyła, with documents dating from the period between 1946 (when Wojtyła was first mentioned) and his pastoral visits to Poland in 1979 and 1982.

The book is not just another Wojtyła biography. His activities are seen from the perspective of secret service officers and through the denunciations of collaborators. Lasota lets the documents speak for themselves, retaining their crude language and spelling errors. First of all, the author tries to show the extent of communist penetration of the Church. In 1967 two hundred seventeen secret service officers were trying to infiltrate and disintegrate the diocese of Cracow alone. Since 1963 every priest and every parish had its own record on the secret service files. When Wojtyła became bishop at the age of just 38, skillfully managing his diocese and rising to prominence in the universal church during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) he became focus of an intense investigation. A document prepared in 1967 contained a list of over 100 questions of interest to the communists. What time does cardinal Wojtyła get up? How often does he shave? Does he smoke or play cards? Who takes care of

his clothing and cleaning? What does he read? Who is his doctor and dentist? What are his favorite sports? No piece of information seemed irrelevant. Since 1970s Wojtyła's each step and every word were reported daily to communist authorities in Warsaw. Yet, his election as the first non-Italian pope for 455 years came as a shock to both Polish communists and Soviet leaders. On October 16, 1978 the officials in Warsaw tried to explain their failure away: „better Wojtyła as pope over there [in Rome] than as Primate here” (p. 264). However, his first pilgrimage to Poland in June 1979 electrified the nation, bringing hope and sense of unity to the suppressed society. The Kremlin answered mastering a plan to assassinate the Pope in 1981.

The book in review is a well-written scholarly account that significantly contributes to our understanding of the church state relations in communist Poland. It is likely to attract a wide readership and has already been a focus of a robust debate. The Institute of National Remembrance will soon publish an expanded version of the book, which will reveal the names of secret police collaborators including those among the clergy (the present edition names only secret service officers). Lasota's investigation shows both the might and powerlessness of communist secret services towards the Church. Despite huge resources, outward repression and threats they were unable to curb the Church's influence in Polish society and stop the wave of democratization in Central Eastern Europe that continues until today.

Stanisław Burdziej / Nicolas Copernicus University,