

Ks. Paweł Kostrzewski

AJD Częstochowa

**The repressions towards Częstochowa diocese in Warthegau
in the times of German occupation 1939-1945
(Summary)**

Chapter I

Social and political situation in Warthegau

The diocese of Czestochowa was set up on the strength of the Pius Eleventh bull „Vixdum Poloniae unitas” in October 28th 1925. The first bishop of this diocese was fr. dr. Teodor Kubina, whose the supporting bishop was Antoni Zimniak since 1936. The day before of the outbreak of the Second World War the area of diocese of Częstochowa was 8524 km² and was inhabited by 877037 the faithful. There were 186 parishes and 17 branches, included in 17decanates. The chancel of Czestochowa Church was 385 priests. During 14 years of diocese existence the most important diocese offices were set up – the curia, bishop court, seminary, bishop gymnasium. The publishing of Wiadomosci Diecezjalne and „Niedziela” was started.

The important role was played by religious- social associations included in Akcja Katolicka. The main factor which influenced the function of diocese was the fact that about 70 km of western Polish border with the Third Reich was the border of Czestochowa diocese. According to the Church administration Częstochowa diocese had a border with Wrocław diocese. The border wasn't far so the phenomenon of seasonal emigration was observed. Poles who came back from the Third Reich reported about increasing tension and hostility towards Poland.

As a part of „Western” defense plan called Z plan, the defence of Upper Silesia and Dąbrowa region and Częstochowa province was done by Kraków army led by gen Antoni Szylling, when the Wieluń province was protected by Łódź army led by gen. Juliusz Rómml. On the other side of border there were units of eight armies gen. Johannes von Blaskowitz (near Sycow and Kluczborg) and 10 armies of gen. Walter von Reichenau (Opole Silesia). The bomb attack on Wieluń, the city in Częstochowa diocese, on September 1st 1939 at 4.40

was the beginning of the Second World War. As the consequence of at least few raids 1 200 residents of Wieluń died and the city was destroyed in 70%. The Germans bombed other towns of Częstochowa diocese as well - Działoszyn, Felinów, Krzepice, Praszkę i Wieruszów.

Wermacht's unit came into Poland which in only 4 days took the area of Częstochowa diocese. It is worth to notice that in the area of Częstochowa diocese the biggest battle of September Campaign took place- the battle in Mokra on September 1-2nd 1939. Germans terrorized Polish towns and villages, burnt houses and farm buildings, and shot to people they came across, including children and women. The first priests who were killed by Germans were fr. Bonawentura Metler and fr. Józef Danecki from Parzymiechy and fr. Ignacy Chartliński from Działoszyn.

These priests were murdered on September 2nd in 1939, without any reason, only because they were Poles and priests. In the other cases priests were beaten, robbed of breviaries, rosaries and cassocks and kept as the hostages. It happened that the priests were ordered to claim the superiority of Hitler over God. After 55 days of governing army in Poland, new administrative division was introduced. On October 26th 1939 decrees of Hitler „About the structure and management eastern area” western and north Polish area were joined to the Reich. According to the decree „About the administration of occupied Polish area” land taken by the German army when not joined to the Reich, became a part of General-Gouvernement. The line between the area joined to the Reich and left in the area of General-Gouvernement crossed the Częstochowa Diocese. The consequence of administrative reform was the fact that Częstochowa diocese was on the area of three separated administrative units. They were Wielun province, the part of Radomsko province (parishes – Brzeźnica, Pajęczno, Rzaśnia, Sulmierzyce) and Piotrków province (parishes – Kleszczów, Łękińsko, part of Bogdanów parish) were included to Reichsgau Poznań. This district on the base of Furer decree from January 29th 1940 was given the name of Wartagau (62 parishes). The rest of Częstochowa diocese was included to the Third Reich (77 parishes) and was in Silesia Province. In the General- Government there were 66 parishes of Częstochowa diocese. Wartagau was the biggest administrative unit created from the parts of Polish area included in the Reich. It was 43 942, 49 km² big and inhabited by 4 693 722 residents. The highest civil power in Wartagau from the order of Hitler had governor Artur Greiser, who was the leader of NSDAP in Wartagau as well. On the strength of decision from October 25th 1939 the head of Wielun province was Oldwig von Natzmer. On 14th December this year A. Greiser nominated Natzmer as a manager of Provincial National – Socialist Party. After Natzmer was

nominated as an officer to the service in Wehrmacht and directed to the eastern front, he was replaced in Wieluń province by dr Pohl. Since 1943 to the end of Hitler occupation this position was taken by Hesse.

The priority of Artur Greiser in Wartagau was the total Germanization. It had to be done by extermination of Polish people by mass executions, arresting and sending to concentration camps in The Third Reich. The following table shows the results of exterminate politics of Germans in reflection to Wieluń province. According to the Hitler doctrine dividing people on the base of supermen and subhumans, the Poles were included to the second category. They had to be cheap labor force, kept on the low intellectual level, what led to the eradication of all stages of Polish education. In few Polish public schools there were children who the time of education had to devote to physical work. The Poles weren't allowed to use their mother tongue and show the Polish emblems. They mustn't have entered cinemas, theaters, parks, public toilets, to some beaches and playgrounds.

Chapter II

Religious politics of German occupant

Adolf Hitler and other leaders of NSDAP indifferent in the respect of religion. In public they used the word „God” or „Providence” but they did not understand it in the Christian way but as a transcendental force directing the German tribes. Because of this fact Germans started to treat their leader as a god. Nazism leaders were under impression of the way of organization Polish catholic Church. They organized SS in the same way taking the Catholic Church as a example to follow. What is more they took some elements of Catholic liturgy to the national- socialist ceremonies. They rejected Christian morality called it as a characteristic feature for slaves. It was planned to use Christian religions in order to controlling all aspects of life. When they realized that they couldn't do it with the Catholic church, they decided about marginalizing it. However in the time of fighting over the power, the attitude of NSDAP towards Catholic church was positive. 24th point of NSDAP program from February 24th 1920 claimed that Nazism view was based on „positive Christianity” without any explanations connected with slogan. However in „Mein Kampf” Hitler wrote that Catholicism and Protestantism were the support for German nation. It was in order to take the votes of Catholic electorate sympathizing with Central party. In the same time the racism and antisemitic slogans were claimed, what made Church leaders to rejecting the Nazism point of view, but NSDAP won the parliament election on March 5th 1933. After taking the control

positive politics towards the Church was continued, which the consequence was the signature of concordat with the Holy See on July 20th 1933.

Very quickly the concordat wasn't the guarantee of free practicing of faith. In 1934 after the death of president Paul von Hindenburg, probably on the base of forged Last Will, Hitler had the power of leader, chancellor and the highest leader of armed forces. Since this moment the fight with the Church began, which after the dissolution of political parties was the last obstacle to control all aspects of life. .

Germans wanted to marginalize the role of Church in political life all Catholic associations and organizations were dissolved. There was a ban of printing the Catholic press and books. There was propaganda in order to public discriminating of priests. There were a lot of trials of clergy charged with social and financial crimes. Priest weren't allowed to preach. In order to decrease the influence the Church on the children and youth, Catholic schools were transformed into national- socialist schools. Religious education lessons were replaced with the lessons about Nazism. It is said that 8021 priests out of over 25 000 ones, were victimized, 418 were in concentration camps where 110 were murdered, 1509 were arrested and put in prison, 28 were killed because of the order of Volksgerichtshof sentence and 488 were punished for help for foreigners and 108 for help for Judges. In the time of Second world war the persecution of Catholic Church in Germany decreased. Finally the solution of faith problem was postponed to the time of finishing the war. The monasteries were taken after the monks had been thrown away. After night air- aid warning ringing the bells and organizing services to 10 a.m. were forbidden. The Catholic Church kept the distance towards public speeches about victimizing the Judges, but by the association of st. Ralph and German Caritas helped them by sending them to another countries. Because of the protests against the sterilization of mentally ill people and euthanasia of untreatable patients made these practices less popular. In 1933-1939 the Holy See sent over 55 diplomatic letters to the Foreign minister of Third Reich protesting against the victimizing of Church in Germany. On March 14th 1937 the Pope Eleventh published the encyclical „Mit brennende Sorge” condemning the mistakes of National Nazism. The Greiser's actions towards the Church in Warthegau were the expamples to follow in the fight with Church in the rest of area included to the Reich, and in the Old Reich after the Second World war. The deciding in the description of legal status of Catholic Church in Warthegau was the directive A. Greisera about the associations and religious relations from September 13th 1941, which deprived Catholic Church of legal public identity.

