

Abstract of the doctoral dissertation

**Denominational policy of the Polish state towards the Catholic Church in Powiśle
in the years 1945-1989**

The dissertation describes the issue of the state's religious policy towards the Catholic Church in the Powiśle region in the years 1945-1989. The timeframe is marked by the end of World War II on the one hand, and the end of the People's Republic of Poland on the other. The territorial scope of the study covered the deaneries of Malbork I, Sztum, Dzierzgoń, Kwidzyn-Śródmieście, Kwidzyn-Zatorze and Prabuty of the Elbląg diocese, as of 1992.

As a result of World War II, Poland entered the orbit of Soviet influence. The policy of the communist authorities toward the Catholic Church, after an initial period of tolerance and cooperation, gradually hardened its course. The Polish Workers' Party, and later the Polish United Workers' Party, played a decisive role in determining religious policy in postwar Poland. It was carried out by means of the denominational administration, initially located in the general administration, and from 1950 in the Office for Religious Affairs, created for this purpose, with its agencies in the seats of provinces and districts. Religious affairs were also handled by separate cells of the security apparatus. Coordination of denominational activities at the provincial and district levels was the responsibility of clergy affairs teams headed by PZPR (Polish United Workers' Party) First Secretaries.

The work has a problem-chronological layout. Its structure consists of eight chapters. The first discusses the demographic changes in Powiśle after World War II and shows the formation and functioning of state bodies responsible for religious policy. The following chapters present the transformation of church administration in Powiśle after the demographic, state and political changes after 1945, as well as the material aspects of the Church's functioning in the area. This is because the decisions made at the state level also

affected the material sphere. This was both the seizure of church property and the levying of permanent parish property, as well as impediments to any construction and adaptation and renovation investments. The following part of the work presents the mutual relations of the state authorities with the local clergy, including the repressions used against them. Both the issue of the persecution of the clergy and the cooperation of some of them with the state regime are addressed. The subject of the analysis is also the functioning of the prison ministry in People's Poland, related to the existence of one of the most important Polish penitentiaries in Powiśle (in Sztum). The issue of the pastoral care of Greek Catholics, settled in Powiśle as a result of the "Vistula" action (Polish: akcja „Wisła”), has not been overlooked.

The next part of the dissertation discusses the attitude of the authorities to religious worship in public space, both in terms of its organization and conduct, as well as its participants. The last chapter is devoted to the repercussions in Powiśle of the conflict between the state and the Church during the period of the Millennium celebrations, i.e. religious ceremonies dedicated to the millennium of the baptism of Poland and the Great Novena of the Polish Nation that preceded it.

The network of pastoral institutions in Powiśle was established immediately after the war, based on the existing Catholic churches and post-evangelical temples. As a result of the research, it was found that the authorities impeded its development and the formation of more parishes as a result. In addition, the Church's properties, with few exceptions, were taken over by the state, charging taxes for its use. The Church regained some of the facilities after 1971, while the liberalization of church building policy did not occur until after 1980.

It was also shown that the state carried out repressive actions against the local clergy. Unsubmissive priests were invigilated and harassed. At the same time, clergy loyal to the regime were promoted and rewarded. Some of them managed to get involved in organizations, bringing together priests committed to the side of the authorities, and forced them to cooperate with the security apparatus. A visible sign of loyalty was the participation of the clergy in the construction of the monument to John XXIII in Wrocław.

The state authorities interfered with the Church's involvement in education and pastoral care. The main goal was the atheization of society. It was intended to achieve this primarily through the secularization of education and the removal of children and young people from religious practice. Efforts were also made to limit the scale of religious worship in public spaces. This was particularly true of the Corpus Christi procession. Both the homilies delivered at the time and the decorations accompanying the ceremonies were subjected to surveillance. Prison chaplaincy was reduced to a minimum, conducted in only

one prison in Sztum. The Ukrainian Greek Catholics resettled in Powiśle in 1947 were deprived of their own pastoral care. A Uniate pastoral point, located in Dzierzgoń, was not established until 1957.

Keywords: denominational policy, People's Poland, Powiśle, Diocese of Warmia, Gdańsk province, Elbląg province