

Soviets launch new bid to smash Poland

by Luba George

If the sell-out of Western Europe agreed to by the Reagan administration in signing the "Munich II" INF Treaty is allowed to stick, one of the many horrendous consequences will be the extinction of Catholic Poland as a nation. The ink on the Dec. 8 INF Treaty was not yet dry when Moscow signaled its determination to wipe Poland, the bastion of Western culture in the Slavic world, off the map.

On Dec. 29, the first message to that effect was "telegraphed" to the Polish Pope and the Polish nation. On orders from the Soviet KGB, Polish government spokesman Jerzy Urban suddenly announced that the prison sentences had been heavily reduced for the Polish Secret Police officers, jailed in 1984 for the KGB-ordered murder of Polish Catholic priest Jerzy Popieluszko. Urban revealed that the sentence reductions had been decreed on Dec. 17 by the Polish Supreme Court, in response to a motion by Poland's prosecutor general—nine days after the INF Treaty was signed in Washington.

The actual killer, Grzegorz Piotrowski, had his sentence cut from 25 years to 15, making him eligible for parole in 7 years. The Secret Police colonel responsible for the murder at the operational level, Adam Pietruszka, had his sentence commuted to 10 years, which means he could be freed in 4 years. The sentences of the two other security officers convicted, Leszek Pekala and Waldemar Chmielewski, were reduced to 6 years and 4½ years, respectively. Well-informed Polish sources report that according to Polish law, a prisoner may be eligible for release after serving two-thirds of his sentence; this means that Chmielewski could be released now and Pekala sometime during the next 12 months.

No single act by the Kremlin in Poland's postwar history created such outrage as the KGB-ordered slaying of Popieluszko. Edward Wende, the lawyer who acted on behalf of Popieluszko's parents during the trial in 1985, reacted angrily to the court's decisions and described the amnesty as an "unprecedented act."

The commutation of the sentences was Moscow's way of telling the Poles—and the Church—that Russia will exploit a post-INF situation to "settle," in brutal Russian fashion, the "Polish Question."

The scandal of the commuted sentences was followed almost immediately by another Soviet message of warning—

to the Pope and the Polish Catholic Church. On Dec. 23, the Soviet government newspaper *Izvestia*, using the format of replying to U.S. Sen. Daniel Moynihan's complaints about Soviet penetration of Ukrainian Catholics, came to the point: "Let us start by saying that no 'Ukrainian Catholic Church' exists in our country," only an "association" with such a name, consisting of "emigré clergy" and laymen who "collaborated with Hitlerite occupiers," who "are essentially a splinter-group and adherents of the well-known former Uniate [Greek Catholic] Church. It existed under this name there from 1596 to 1946."

Izvestia declared that the Western Ukraine was Catholic because "Roman Jesuits and the Polish feudal elite . . . foisted the new dogma on the population" through "mass terror, violence, and deception." The Uniate hierarchy "faithfully served the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and Polish gentry" and the exiled leadership of the Uniate Church "supported Hitler" and were "Nazi collaborators." *Izvestia* names Cardinal Lubashivsky, the Rome-based leader of the Ukrainian Uniate Church and a personal friend and ally of Pope John Paul II.

Izvestia thus stopped just short of directly accusing the Pope, and by implication the Polish Catholic Church, of harboring "a band of Nazi war criminals." Because of the strength of the Catholic Church, Poland is the only East bloc country where the Ukrainian Uniate Church officially exists.

Izvestia was also giving the Soviet leadership's answer to the recent letter to Gorbachov by Ukrainian Uniates, appealing for the legalization of the Church. The letter's signatories included the hitherto underground Uniate clergy, who now, in proclaiming their clerical rule, are openly defying the Soviet state to arrest them.

Gromyko praises Stalin

As a result of the Yalta agreement, Josef Stalin seized 40% of Poland's pre-war territory, forcibly deported most of the Poles living there, and, in 1946, dissolved the Ukrainian Catholic Church, which had existed for 350 years. To make sure Poland got the message, the next Soviet signal on the "Polish Question" was a loud praise of Stalin as the "creator" of Poland, in its present colonial form. The speaker was Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet President, Politburo member, and alleged uncle of Raisa Gorbachova, hosting Polish deputy Prime Minister Speaker Mieczyslaw Rakowski in Moscow on Jan. 8.

Gromyko said that Poland owes much to "the great skill showed by Stalin" in the negotiations at the Teheran, Yalta, and Potsdam Conferences. "He fought like a lion, to have Poland become a socialist state allied with the Soviet Union, rather than an appendix of the Western bloc."

The Yalta pact made Poland a Soviet colony. The "New Yalta" will enable Russia to end Poland's existence and dissolve the Polish Church, as the Uniate Church was liquidated in 1946.

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