

SOME ASPECTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS IN POLAND TODAY

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Our first intention was to speak on the Marxist theory of education, but we think that it will be more interesting for you to hear about the problems of Catholic education in Poland in confrontation with Marxist education. To better understand our educational problems, one has to know something about the character of Polish Catholicism. It is a Catholicism of the masses of people, a Catholicism primarily of the countryside; the traditional peasant customs are its support. Above all, the priests have great authority in the villages. Before the war, they even fulfilled the role of State officials. Polish Catholics were accustomed to be protected and looked after by the State. The Catholic religion was the state religion, and the Catholics had many privileges. A national tradition and well-founded customs are of great value for society, but must be founded on a living Faith stemming from a true communion of the Mystical Body. But Polish Catholics lacked religious education. The intellectual elite was not only very scarce, but also under the influence of positivism and liberalism. The Polish primate, Cardinal Wyszyński once said: "In Poland there were always many educated people who considered themselves Catholics, but there was never a 'Catholic intelligentsia' ". In the 19th century, there were very few people who called themselves Catholics.

The renaissance of Polish Catholicism began at the end of the 19th century, and is still in progress. One could speak of various aspects of this renaissance, but I shall mention only two Catholic institutions. One is the Catholic University of Lublin, about which I will speak later; the other is an institution for the blind in a place called Łaski near Warsaw. This centre was founded by a group of people who sacrificed not only their strength but also some of their possessions to help not only those blind in body but also blind in soul. This institution is conducted by Franciscan Sisters, by priests and laymen. In addition to schools for the blind, there is also a House of Recollection at Łaski which serves many people from all of Poland. Before the war, there was also a publishing house. This centre is a very interesting and important example of the coordination of social work among the most unfortunate and of a deeply apostolic activity and intellectual work on the most important problems of Catholic culture.

But before the war, these Catholic centres were too few to have a real influence on the Catholic life of Poland. For this reason, after the war, when the Communist party started to govern Poland, one was apprehensive for the future of Polish Catholicism. One even thought that there would be many falling away. One feared this because the

Church had lost its privileged situation and was persecuted. Religious teaching in the schools, the Catholic press and other publications were suppressed. An atheistic offensive was organised; it can be added that it used rationalist arguments of the 18th century, the same arguments that can be found in the Grande Encyclopedie française. The Marxist propaganda took great trouble to point out that there are conflicts between science and Faith. They tried to convince everybody that the Catholic is a superstitious man who struggles against progress and science. They accused the Catholic of defending the interests of the bourgeoisie and of being indifferent to the status of the peasants and workers. They imprisoned many priests and Catholic laymen, accusing them of activities against the State.

At the same time, the forms of social life were changing. Firstly, because of the industrialisation of the country, there was migration to the cities. The development of heavy industry demanded a great number of workers in the cities, and at the same time, forced collectivisation in the countryside caused the flight of many young people to the cities. In new cities or in new sections of cities, lived unmarried people and many separated from their families. There were also sections where only workers' hostels existed. The effect of this situation was quickly evident: immorality and abandonment of religious practices. This is a very characteristic phenomenon for people who were Catholic only in a traditional manner and who were all at once plucked out of their environment.

Economic difficulties and the difficulties of daily life did not encourage the development of a religious and intellectual life. One had to struggle to survive, and therefore could not think of eternal life but only of living from day to day.

In Catholic society, there was a group named "Pax" (not Pax Romana). Members and adherents of this organisation tried to unite Catholic doctrine with socialism, a socialism understood as a social and economic doctrine based on the theories of Karl Marx. Only the Pax organisation could publish Catholic papers, and only it was tolerated by the government. They published many very useful books, but they have done much harm, not only among lay Catholics but also among priests by sowing confusion in their minds. They greatly contributed to the diminution of moral sense in certain priests who were forced to collaborate with the government. Today, the Pax group is completely unveiled not only as fascists but also as the propagators of a false ideology, and as those who supported stalinists at the time of the struggle between the Stalin communists and the partisans of Gomulka. Some time ago the weekly of the Pax group was condemned by the Holy See.

*A Espira e Polónia - Teria sido melhor a H. G. J. ...
V. re. f. de co. p. m. ...
Aplicada na WFDY - Socialismo distorcido ... Paul ...
catol. ...
- 3 - (exame, help, etc. & dual)*

Authentic Catholic intellectual centres had almost no opportunity to influence the Catholic life of Poland. One exception was the Catholic University of Lublin which functioned without interruption during all those difficult years, at the cost of great persecution.



Now I would like to speak a little about our Catholic university. We have there a Faculty of Theology, of Canon Law, of Philosophy and of Humanities. This last Faculty is divided into the following sections: Polish, English, French, German and classic literatures and philologies; History; and History of Art. We hope that the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, and the Faculty of Education will be reestablished. The best-developed faculties (although they received nearly no books nor journals from abroad) are those of Philosophy, and in Humanities, the sections of History and of Polish and English studies.

At the Faculty of Philosophy, there are studies very important to the formation of a solid base for the Catholic culture of the country. We are convinced that Professor Gilson's interpretation of the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas is the ^{best} basis for the development of philosophy as well as ^{for} the entire Catholic culture. Therefore, the study of the Seminars of Metaphysics, and of History of Philosophy, try to advance the research which was inaugurated and developed by Professor Gilson. The studies of the Seminar of History of Philosophy concern the history of Thomism (the interpretation of the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas as understood by his pupils) and the history of Aristotelism. Last year, we were able to reestablish direct contact with Professor Gilson and thanks to him, some of the dissertations of the Faculty will be published in France and Canada. Three of our young doctors in philosophy received fellowships from the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies and will go to study in Toronto in September of this year.

The studies of the history of philosophy concern also the history of Polish philosophy. Here is a very interesting situation. Some of our Bachelors of Philosophy work under the direction of one of our professors at the Polish Academy of Science and Letters. They study the history of Polish philosophy and will publish a bulletin in French and English. One must understand that the Polish Academy of Science and Letters as an official institute is based on Marxist ideology. But our young historians of philosophy, considered as good specialists, can conduct their studies in entire ideological freedom.

*Estud. cat. e comun. D.º ...
principais p.ºs estud. q. este ...
catolico, mas quase libertos ...*

Among the general historians at the Catholic University in Lublin there is great interest in the history of the Church in Poland. They study the history of religious orders and ecclesiastical organisations in Poland. These studies are most important in view of the coming 1000th. anniversary of the baptism of the Polish people which will take place in 1966.

Let us go back to the character of Polish Catholicism. As I already said, one was very apprehensive for the future of Polish Catholicism in confrontation with the post-war changes. The centres (apart from the Catholic University of Lublin) like the group which publishes the Catholic weekly, "Tygodnik Powszechny," or, for example, the publishing house of Librairie St. Adalbert had a great influence on Catholic life in Poland, but their activity was limited and even suppressed.

Even so, the death of Catholicism of the masses did not come about. There were, of course, many who left the Church, but there was no mass abandonment of religion. Why? Of course who cannot penetrate Divine Providence, nor measure the influence of the Holy Spirit, but we have a certainty of being protected in a special way by God and Our Lady during those difficult years. One saw so many sacrifices, so much sincere enthusiasm, so much spiritual development in unfavourable conditions that this was impossible without God's help.

We were wrong in a pessimistic estimation of the Catholicism of the masses in Poland.

(cont.)

atrk. do estado, frente ao partido?
esta é a visão de um capitalista?
Quem é o "comunista"?
Um digno de ser tratado como humano
Utopia relig. - topografia & geografia
triflidade. Afonso de Albuquerque
litert. - e/o como a figura
o escrit. catol. coepta afors a pelli
obra q' escreverão lição



This Catholicism, in spite of its weaknesses, is more authentic and penetrated by a true spiritual life than one had thought. The Faith of the people, although often primitive, was very much alive.

Also, the mistakes made by the Marxists in the education of youth helped a great deal in overcoming the crisis.

In practice, Marxist education was very primitive. They isolated everybody, and above all, the youth by censoring the press and jamming radio programmes from abroad. Many books disappeared from libraries and lecture rooms. Then the Marxists tried to teach everybody their ideology by articles in the press, by radio, posters, and numerous propaganda publications. The / of Elementos Marxistas were taught in nearly all classes of primary and secondary schools, not to mention the universities. Even mathematical exercises concerned problems in socialist economics. The trade unions introduced the teaching of Marxism into all factories and offices. Every artistic and scientific activity was directed by Marxist ideology.

But to realise this educational programme, the Marxists needed well-prepared leaders. Lacking them, activists were formed who, barely educated, lowered excessively the level of Marxist education. That is not all. Everyone knows that education is not only based on science but also on activity. Therefore, the Marxists created a lot of different organisations for children, for youth and even for adults. It was almost obligatory to belong to these organisations. They obligated their members to social work. The aim of Marxist education was to form "brave militants" of socialism. This was important because any ordinary action is judged good if useful for the realisation of socialism at a given stage. One could see posters, for instance, that recommended to care for one's health because a sick man cannot contribute to the realisation of the economic plans. The Marxists tried to influence all the domains of life; for example, it was shocking for party members not only to marry but even to make friends with those outside the party.

Information given by the press and official publications was often false which was only too natural when the sole criterion of good was its usefulness to the establishment of socialism. The worse the economic situation, the more the propaganda tried to glorify it.

What were the effects of such an education? The obligatory teaching of an abased Marxism produced effects completely contrary to those awaited. It produced among the youth and people of all ages a profound apathy and a horror of all ideology. The youth ceased



to think independently. The lying propaganda produced a desperate need for truth or an even more dangerous scepticism. For example, here is a short story which will give you an idea of the situation.

After a lesson in chemistry in a primary school, ^{one} little boy said to another, "You heard what the teacher told us: they make glass from sand. What a lie!" And the other answered, "You don't understand anything. She cannot say anything else because she was told to say that." This is a true story.

But Marxist education, in an unexpected way, furnished favourable elements for Polish Catholicism. The people, tired with the lies of propaganda, sought the Churches to find there some moments of peace. By a spirit of contradiction, even the most indifferent went to services and thus the social influence of the Church was enlarged.

One would not be impartial if one didn't say that in the Communist doctrine there are some theories that are very attractive, especially so for Christians -- attractive in their moral value. I include in these moral values the eternal human desires for equality and justice for everyone. These ideals are striking especially when accompanied by a scientific myth which seems to indicate the method of their realisation. I believe that it is only now that many people realise all men are equal and discrimination of races and classes are tragic and out-of-date. The Truth has already been enunciated by Christianity but at a time when Christian Truths are nearly forgotten or are created by pharisees, it is Communism which provokes among some people a thirst for justice.

Many communists, especially young ones, began to think that the unjust and deceitful method used till now were incompatible with their ideals and, more important, treason to these ideals. These opinion ended in the radical revolution of last October which completely ^{Polish} changed the policy of the/Communist Party. When the Marxists realised the failure of Marxist education and the state of demoralisation among the people, they understood that human conduct must be based on an ethical system deeper than a few slogans. They understood consequently, that it is impossible to save men by methods which worsen and demoralise him.

Marxism does not possess a theory of ethics which can be taken as a worked-out system of norms for human conduct. The Marxists understood that they must elaborate such a system as soon as possible.

Therefore, it is a paradox to see Marxists in this field turning towards non-Marxists to seek aid in elaborating an atheistic theory of ethics. One materialist, non-Marxist philosopher now is carrying on research in the field of atheistic ethics. Naturally,

this is only the beginning. Marxists do not reject Christian ethics understood as a whole; on the contrary, they recognise the value of many of its norms; they maintain only that their philosophical and religious interpretation by Catholics is false. Why is there no ethical theory in Marxism? A philosophical system cannot have a theory of ethics if it doesn't possess a concept of man. And Marxism has no concept of man. In order for a philosophical system to elaborate a well-founded theory of man, long studies are necessary to clarify the principles of the system. We believe that the Marxist thinkers will complete their system, and it is useless to stress what consequences will follow. Evidently it is a task far from being accomplished.

To be able to speak on educational problems of Polish Catholic students, it is necessary to say a few words about Polish students now. The greatest evils which weight upon Polish youth at the present time are: inefficient work, lack of esteem for public property, stealing, alcoholism, saxualism. We have groups of youth called "hooligans" who are plagues on town and country. But we think the cause of their crimes and often their sadism is rebellion against everything and everybody; this is a manifestation of nihilism and not necessarily a thirst for money.

Among university students, the evils seem less grave, but the youth turn frequently towards scepticism, materialism, individualism, and seem to have forgotten the meaning of civic responsibility. Therefore, the decisive events for the nation like the days of October 1956 - when under the pressure execersied by public opinion and by many members of the Party, a change was made in the Central Committee and in the policy of the Party and of the government - these events proved that the youth did have a sense of responsibility and an ardent patriotism. Unfortunately, these virtues are not for everyday use among the students. In the intellectual field, the youth is reprehensive to those who are doctrinaire, dogmatists and grandiloquent. If youth is/sceptical, it wants to have an empirical attitude. It refuses doctrines which are separated from life,

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All this has great consequences for the education of Catholic students. For example, sermons which are said as they were said in the 19th Century, irritate them. It is difficult to explain to students the difference between the dogma of Catholicism and the dogmatism which is an intellectual attitude. A revision of methods of religious teaching, especially of the methods of teaching the social doctrine of the Church, is necessary. Those who were taught it before the war, were a little doctrinaires themselves. They stressed only the problem of propriety and birth regulation. And so in practise the means and aims were confused; the propriety which should be understood as means necessary to create favorable conditions for development of human person was conceived as an aim in itself. And so in practise the concept of the propriety was nearer to the concepts of propriety in individualism and liberalism than in Christianity. And more, there was no difference between principles, general directives and detailed programmes. One did not understand that a realization of reforms demands a profound knowledge of the society and of the economical situation in the country. One did not appreciate the role played by the empirical studies ~~XXXXX~~ of sociology and economics. One did not understand that there is nothing worse than to make an anti-communist propoganda and to remain at the same time passive to the most urgent social problems. *control.*

We think that it is necessary to stress the importance of the following problems: first, the problem of the organic structure of the society; secondly, the problem of the forms which would enable the development of a real culture. In one word, the problem is the humanisation of life in all its aspects. We must have a great fidelity to principles but also a spirit of invention and ~~XXX~~ an ability of adapting the means. But the essential is to find the educational methods adapted to the present situation and capable to create a spiritual formation and social virtues. As yet, we have not elaborated or conceived any mature opinions on this subject. It demands long studies.

What is the future of the Catholic education in Poland! It is difficult to foresee it, as we live in a very special situation. In the domaine of culture, we belong to the West. In the domaine of politics, we belong to the East. Communist Party governs the country, but religion is taught in state schools. During the last elections, some Communists had a majority of votes in a part thanks to the support of Catholics. This may sound strange, but you must understand that the Catholics in Poland realize that they have to support the New Central Committee of the Party, ~~forestall~~ the return of Communism and to evade a Civil War.—Perhaps, a world war also—?

(Falin)
The majority of the Polish people remains faithful to the Catholic Church but at the same time the level of morality declines. But we are optimists, and we think that the humanisation of life, and an amelioration of the economic situation will come.

But, of course, it all depends on Divine Providence and our surrender to the Holy Spirit.

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