

"Let Thy Spirit Renew This Earth": The Rhetoric Of Pope John Paul II And The Political Transformation In Poland, 1979-1989

Cezar M. Ornatowski
San Diego State University

Introduction

John Paul II played a critical role in the political transformation in Poland. His visits to Poland between 1979 and 1999 marked the last decade of communism and the first decade of democracy in Poland. The visits not only punctuated one of the most dramatic periods in modern Polish history but also constituted critical events in that history.

In his study of the rhetoric of political transition in South Africa, Philippe-Joseph Salazar points out that the political transition in South Africa was characterized by a "rhetorical conjunction of sacred and secular" which "will long remain a fundamental feature of the South African democratic deliberative modes" (41). This is in contrast, he points out, to "traditional European democracies rooted in eighteenth-century free-thinking," where "the exercise of the public mind and the achievement of reasonable participation in the exercise of power is carefully separated from religion, which is often perceived as a fossilized remnant of a pre-democratic system of deliberation" (41). He suggests that South Africa stands alone "as an example of a Western-style democracy taking shape in the aftermath of the Cold War under the auspices of religious oratory," with the possible exception of Poland.

Salazar is absolutely correct about Poland. John Paul II's rhetoric played a major role in the manner of communism's demise, as well as in the emergence of democracy in Poland. His election to the throne of St. Peter in 1978, and his first visit to Poland in 1979, served as catalysts for the popular mobilization that resulted in the "Solidarity" movement. His portrait hung on the gate of Gdansk shipyard during the ground-breaking strikes of the "Polish August" of

1980. The words he spoke, such as the famous "Let Thy Spirit descend and renew the face of the earth, this earth!" spoken in his very first homily as Pope on Polish soil, became a source of inspiration and symbol of struggle, hope, and ultimately, victory to millions. His subsequent visits in 1983 and 1987 helped Poles endure the hardships of martial law and helped pave the way for, as well as shaped the character of, subsequent political changes. And all through the 1990s, his visits helped shape the new political scene, provided a mirror for the emerging democracy, and exercised profound influence on the perceptions and feelings of the Polish people. According to General Jaruzelski, the last leader of communist Poland and first president [for a brief, largely symbolic, term] of post-communist Poland, "the role of the Pope was enormous in the transformations that occurred in Poland and, following in Poland's footsteps, in the whole [communist] block" (quoted in Szulc 388).

An adequate analysis of the scope of that influence and of the rhetorical resources John Paul II employed to exercise it, would be beyond the scope of an article. Altogether, John Paul II visited Poland seven times as Pope: first visit – June 2-10, 1979; second visit – June 16-22, 1983; third visit – June 8-14, 1987; fourth visit – June 1-9 and 13-16, 1991; fifth (unofficial) visit – May 22, 1995; sixth visit – June 4-10, 1997; and seventh visit – June 5-17, 1999. The following discussion will focus only on John Paul II's communist-era visits to Poland. While analyzing the rhetoric of the papal visits, I will focus especially closely on the "conjunction of the sacred and secular" – on the complex relationship between religion and socio-political reality as that relationship was mediated in John Paul's oratory, performance, and other, less apparent aspects of his visits. It is John Paul II's astonishingly adroit manipulation of this conjunction that accounted for his rhetorical appeal and his enormous influence on the unfolding of events in Poland through the critical decade of the 1980s.

Context for the Analysis of Papal Rhetoric in Poland

An analysis of John Paul II's rhetoric must take under consideration at least four complementary, and often overlapping, contexts.

First, John Paul II's messages in Poland may be seen as an aspect of his more general message as head of the Catholic Church. As a Polish observer noted, "his teaching in Poland is part of the cathexis he has spread in all parts of the world, on all continents. This general, catholic cathexis is the context to which we must refer in our efforts to understand and explore [his] thought communicated to the Poles" (Czekanski 8). From this perspective, John Paul II's performances in Poland may also be regarded in an aspect of what Margaret Melady referred to as the "rhetorical papacy," that is, the increasing reliance of the modern papacy on persuasive discourse to lead the church and make the church relevant to the affairs of the contemporary world and to people's lives (Melady 17).

The second context is the internal, socio-political situation in Poland, to which the Pope responded, which he addressed, and in which he intervened. Papal visits anywhere always represent an adjustment of the more general message of the Church to the demands of a specific locale, audience, situation, and problematic. As Melady has observed, the overseas visits of John Paul II "represent movement toward the local churches" and are "specifically designed to communicate the universality or all-embracing nature of the church from the point of view of geography and cultures" (Melady 32). This adjustment includes a specific theme for each visit, a theme that represents a deliberate engagement with the specificity and problematic of the locale, often an adjustment of the dominant scriptural message; the use of symbols comprehensible to the audience and appropriate to conveying the papal message; and moments of spontaneity that represent both a response to, and an orientation toward, the specificity of particular settings, audiences, and times.

In the case of the Pope's visits to Poland, however, this adjustment takes on a uniquely particular and deliberate character. The efficacy of the Pope's rhetorical intervention in the Polish context was due not only to the fact that he was head of the Roman Catholic Church, but also to the fact that he was a Pole, a very patriotic one, who, in view of his age and functions, shared and participated in most of the significant events that had shaped Poland since World War II. From this perspective, the Pope's visits to Poland and his messages to the Polish people must be considered not only in light of the changing social, political, historical, and cultural situation, but also of John Paul II's own biography and his unique relationship to Poland. To put it bluntly, while his performances in, for example, the United States or Mexico may be regarded more readily in terms of the adjustment of the general message of the Church to local contexts, his appearances in Poland cannot but be regarded as, at least in part, a calculated intervention in the concrete socio-political and cultural situation by a figure whose stature left no doubt, to him or to anyone else, that whatever he did would have an enormous, potentially history-changing impact on that situation. The transcripts of government-Polish Episcopate negotiations concerning the papal visits (of which more will be said below) leave no doubt that such was the case.

The third context critical to the analysis of the papal visits, at least during the communist period, were the complex and delicate negotiations that preceded his visits. These negotiations, concerned, and to an extent determined the places he visited, where and to whom he spoke, and how his messages were interpreted. The preparatory negotiations - the deals and arrangements worked out there, as well as the assumptions, premises, anxieties, expectations, and hopes they revealed - help us to better understand and interpret what John Paul II said and did.

Finally, the fourth context was the international situation. As the tran-

scripts of the preparatory negotiations make clear, what was said and done during the papal visits and how it was interpreted, especially by those at the highest levels of the regime and the Church, was shaped not only by the specific internal socio-political situation (which changed with each visit), but also by the changing international situation. For each visit, the Polish government had an agenda that depended both on the internal and external political situation, and so did the Church.

Preparatory Negotiations

Each of the Papal visits to Poland during the communist period (1979, 1983, 1987) was meticulously prepared through protracted, delicate, and secret negotiations between the regime, the Polish Episcopate, and the Vatican. These negotiations begun before the official invitation to visit Poland was even issued.

This is how the process worked. The Polish Episcopate, through internal discussions and in communication with the Vatican, would arrive at a general plan for a Papal visit to Poland for an ostensibly religious occasion. The Episcopate would then begin to "feel out" the government's position and attempt, in so far as possible, to force the government's hand by presenting it with a *fait accompli*, that is, by hinting of the Pope's intended visit in such a way that the government's prestige, both internally and in the international arena, became connected to the expectation of the visit. The Episcopate's strategy is summarized briefly but explicitly in an internal memorandum preceding the 1987 visit, under the significant heading "Moulding opinion":

1. Moulding opinion.

- a. The Primate Cardinal Jozef Glemp, in occasional public speeches, informed the Polish people and the world that the Holy Father will come to Poland in 1987 on the occasion of the 2nd Eucharistic Congress.
- b. The Secretary of the Episcopate, basing on these statements, informed the state authorities about the intentions of the Episcopate and about the invitations sent to the Holy Father by specific bishops." (quoted in Raina 260).

It is important to bear in mind that the invitations by the bishops were non-binding (the Pope always had invitations from more dioceses than he could visit), and that they were largely instigated by the Episcopate. Technically, neither could the Episcopate on its own invite the Pope to come without the

government's concurrence. Announcing that the Pope was "invited", was a ploy to stir up public expectation and put the government in a position where seeming to have "refused" to receive the Pope at the last minute would be more embarrassing than taking all the political risks attendant on receiving him. After the government finally agreed to the visit, the authorities would be asked to issue an official invitation together with the Polish Episcopate (the invitations were typically issued in the name of both) and to officially "announce" the Papal visit to the expectant nation and the world, in tandem with a announcement by the Vatican). The simultaneous announcement was calculated to put further subtle pressure on the communist authorities; the bishops hinted several times during the negotiations that the Vatican might just slip up and announce the visit on its own, which would put the Polish authorities in the extremely uncomfortable position of having to play diplomatic "catch up" and thus appear incompetent, or worse, out of control. Thus, the negotiations began as soon as the Episcopate requested that the Pope be invited, and continued to cover every aspect of the visit, ending with a final debriefing only after the Pope had gone. Of course, the Vatican was consulted at every step. The vehicle for the negotiations was the Joint Government-Episcopate Commission, created during the preparations for the first visit in 1979.

The negotiations consisted of a painstaking working out of every aspect of the visit, from the general conception (that is, occasion, timing, and the related message) of the visit and its possible ideological ramifications and implications, to the itinerary and its potential symbolism, and technical matters such as media coverage and financial arrangements. In reading preparatory documents and transcripts of preparatory talks for the Papal visits, one appreciates at once the extreme delicacy of the negotiations, their unprecedented character (as well as the unprecedented character of the events which they helped prepare), and the unrelenting pressure the Polish Church, and the Pope indirectly, applied in their dealings with the communist regime.

It is important to note that during the preparatory negotiations, the Church never asked the authorities for "permission" for the Pope to visit, or for permission for anything else; that word was never used, since one of the major assumptions appears to have been that the Pope was an autonomous agent and did not need anyone's permission for anything. In fact, many times during the negotiations the government side would propose conditions or make suggestions that sounded as if they were not going to "permit" something or other connected with the visit (for instance, they refused to "permit" John Paul II to visit Gdansk in 1983 or to meet with Lech Walesa), and the Church side would invariably counter that any implication that the Pope's moves or words were subject to anyone's "permission" or control was out of the question. The matter would subsequently be negotiated in a manner that suggested other kinds of considerations at play than "permission." Yet, reading the transcripts of the

Joint Commission negotiations in tandem with the Pope's pronouncements and with the scripts for his visits, leaves little doubt as to the extent of the influence of these negotiations on what the Pope said and did. In fact, it becomes a measure of John Paul's rhetorical prowess to observe how skillfully he would go around, bend, re-interpret, incorporate, or even occasionally openly defy (sometimes with devastating yet always containable and "deniable" effect), the various conditions negotiated in regard to his visits. In this respect, the preparatory negotiations – the expectations, interpretations, assumptions, and arrangements they articulate – help us appreciate even more the complexities of the rhetorical situation to which John Paul II responded during each visit.

An example will illustrate this. In mid-1980, the authorities imposed a ban on Church construction in Gdansk as a way of trying to force the Church to dismiss the Prelate of St. Brigida's Church in Gdansk, the notorious Father Henryk Jankowski. St. Brigida's Church was located next door to the Gdansk shipyard and Father Jankowski was Walesa's priest and confidante, known for his fiery anti-communism, pro- "Solidarity" sympathies, and his general support of political opposition. During the negotiations preceding the Pope's 3rd visit in 1987, the government demanded the removal of Father Jankowski as a precondition for letting the Pope visit Gdansk. The Episcopate rejected any possibility of "removing" anyone and of such blanket conditions in general, but had to give in on other fronts. For example, the Bishops had to agree to additional Papal visits – not planned by the Episcopate – to the World War 2 monument at Westerplatte near Gdansk and to the Majdanek concentration camp in Lublin, as the price for including Gdansk on the Pope's itinerary, and of keeping Father Jankowski.

From a rhetorical point of view, including Gdansk on the itinerary provided the Pope the setting and occasion to say things that he would either not be able to say elsewhere or that he would have to say otherwise, without the symbolic props and interpretive aura (including the pre-interpretive aura of expectation and speculation), provided by Gdansk as the forum. On the other hand, having to visit and speak at Westerplatte or in Majdanek or Auschwitz, sites imposed upon him as a result of negotiations ("The Pope cannot come to Krakow and not notice Auschwitz," a government negotiator irresistibly suggested), disrupted his original design for the visit, forced adjustments in the theme or at least its execution, introduced new symbolic material that had to be worked with, and provided opportunities to say other things, in other ways.

Each papal visit to Poland during the communist period took place in a different socio-political situation; in fact, the visits mark out a certain pattern of development and evolution of that situation – an evolution that the visits not merely punctuated but increasingly, as time passed, helped along and shaped. The transcripts of the Joint Commission negotiations show that each visit took place not only in a different context of actual events, but in a different context

of changing interpretations of events. The transcripts show the changes in the assumptions, issues, expectations, and concerns that constituted these interpretations over time. The Papal visits, and especially the preparatory negotiations for them, became, by 1983 and even more so by 1987, rhetorical occasions for working out interpretations of current events. In this fashion, the Papal visits became (not just in themselves as rhetorical events, but through and along with the mediating deliberations of the Joint Commission) a major factor in shaping their own socio-political context and influencing unfolding events. Beyond the inevitable bombast, posturing, and gamesmanship, both parties to the negotiations were increasingly aware of the literally, “history-making” nature of their deliberations and decisions.

The events, as they began to unfold – especially in the mid and late 1980s – did so at a speed that surpassed not only anybody’s ability to control them but also to their ability to force them into pre-existing interpretive frameworks. The Joint Government-Church Commission, hammering out the agendas and arrangements for the papal visits, became in a very real sense the *de facto* (although strictly behind-the-scenes) governing body of Poland, the forum at which decisions were made on issues (such as where the Pope would visit, who he would meet with, what he would say, and how it would be reported) that had the potential to influence events and their interpretations, and thus the future of the country.

After the political transition of 1989, the Joint Commission ceased to exist. The preparations for the papal visits were made primarily by the Polish Episcopate and the Vatican, with mainly instrumental assistance from the government and local authorities. There were no ideological negotiations. The Episcopate and the Vatican decided what would be done and worked to organize the necessary resources. A comparison of the published transcripts of the preparatory negotiations and official documents connected with the papal visits in Poland, illustrates the difference well. The preparations for the 1979 visit take up 116 pages, for the 1983 visit – 98 pages, and for the 1987 visit – 72 pages, while the preparatory documents for the 1991 visit take up only four.

Papal Visits as Rhetorical Events

John Paul II’s visits to Poland derived their “rhetorical power” partly from the Pope’s masterful oratory, but also partly from the complex nature of the visits as religious ceremonies, historical and political events, and public performances. Their unique (and history-making) persuasive power and emotional impact thus came from the combined power of oratory and the complex intersections of the contexts, associations, and experiences this multiple nature brought together and awakened.

In spite of their almost frenetic pace and varying itinerary, John Paul II’s visits to Poland had a formulaic and predictable character.

Each papal visit to Poland, officially referred to as a "pilgrimage" by the "pilgrim Pope" was attached to a specific (always ostensibly religious) occasion. The occasions, however, were so selected, or, if need be, stretched, that, besides the official religious messages, they contained also significant historic and political messages (examples will be given below, in discussions of each visit). Each visit also had a theme (again, always ostensibly a religious one and, like the theme of the homilies, taken from Scripture). But the themes were also double-edged (religious-political) and suited to the tenor and needs of the historical moment. They complemented the "message" of the occasion in such a way that the entire package added a strong implicature – a potential for ambiguity in a specific direction – to all that was said and done. Each visit also had what I call a leitmotif, the general sentiment or leading thought (for instance, "renewal" for the 1979 visit, "hope" for 1983 and 1987) which was also related to the occasion, message, and theme.

Each visit consisted of a peregrination to selected cities, towns, or sites (again always ostensibly religious ones and/or with strong religious associations with the occasion for the visit, although most happened also to be loaded with other symbolism, incidentally also fitting the historical moment). At most places he visited, the Pope celebrated (typically public) Mass and delivered a homily as part of it. On some occasions (such as meetings with government officials, university professors, members of religious orders, or members of the Episcopate) he delivered a short speech. The subjects were again always ostensibly religious, and in keeping with the conventions of the genre: homilies were based on a theme supported by two readings, from the Old and New Testaments, fittingly amplified; speeches were topical to the audience and occasion. Yet the themes, although presumably selected according to the liturgical calendar, also happened to have profound implications for the historical moment and socio-political situation, while the amplification masterfully exploited all the available resources of place, occasion, situation, and spectacle to deliver a ringing and poignant political statement.

The papal visits to Poland thus constituted a specific kind of ritual spectacle; their "unofficial" character (that is, not communist) automatically made them into "counter-rituals" in relation to the usual communist-era rituals of party rallies, official celebrations, or First Secretary of the Communist Party peregrinations around the country. The Mass, celebrated publicly, openly, and typically out of doors, in the middle of a communist country, constituted the heart of this (counter)political counter-ritual.

The full rhetorical impact of the papal visits was a function of their ritualized character, the cultural and historical symbolism of the visited sites (which any Pole would be sensitive to and which was especially significant in a situation where certain things could not be said in so many words), the symbolism of the occasions for the visits (including the specific occasions for visiting

particular places), the elements of spectacle "framing" each papal appearance (altars, set-ups, costumes, pageantry), and, in the centre of it all (and masterfully drawing on all of these elements), the masterful oratory of John Paul II. The fiction (enthusiastically promulgated both by the authorities and the Polish Episcopate, but for radically different reasons) that the Pope's pilgrimages to Poland were purely religious events, amplified, rather than concealed, their political impact. One must remember that this was happening in a political context where a major source of satisfaction was to publicly engage in, or see someone else engage in, and get away with, ambiguous or downright forbidden activities or discourse under a transparent, but effective cover (the more transparent but effective the cover, the greater the thrill). That is exactly what John Paul II did, with deadly accuracy, unflinching dignity, and devastating effectiveness, always walking the very edge of the possible, to the glee and delirious applause of most of his compatriots.

Analysis of John Paul II's Communist Era Visits to Poland

The First Visit: June 2-10, 1979

John Paul II was elected Pope at a critical time in Polish post-war history. In the mid 1970s opposition to the prevailing political-economic system and ideological dogma began to gain energy and take new forms. It was broader, and cut across a wider social spectrum than previous social protests of 1956 (local workers in Poznan), 1968 (students), or 1970 (workers on the coast). In 1976, a protest by workers at the Ursus tractor plant in Radom ignited the entire city and forced the government of the heretofore all-powerful Edward Gierek to rescind the announced price hikes. The protest was crushed with a brutality and on a scale that shook Poland and provided the direct impetus for the creation of the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR), the first country-wide, grassroots, civic self-help organization that united intellectuals, students, and workers. Through 1977 and 1978, the worsening economic situation led to the first widespread shortages of basic foodstuffs and progressive rationing. By 1979 it was clear that the country - and the system - were in a deepening and permanent crisis. The activity of KOR and other groups began to provide seeds for the emergence of large-scale organized opposition. *That* emergence needed a direction, focus, a source of energy, a unifying symbol, and the language to articulate the people's disaffections and aspirations. John Paul II's first visit to Poland as Pope in 1979, provided all of these elements.

The occasion for the visit was the 900-year anniversary of the martyrdom of St Stanislaw, patron saint of Poland, who died at the hands of his king after he opposed the king's immoral and corrupt rule. The implicit message of the occasion was the relationship between morality and authority, and resistance to

secular authority in the name of higher values. This message was so clear that the communist authorities balked at the timing and what they called "the slogan" of the visit, and it was only after prolonged negotiations through the Joint Government-Episcopate Commission that the visit came to pass at all - although at a time different than originally proposed and with other conditions attached, one of which was to de-emphasize St Stanislaw's figure and symbolism.

At this point, it is instructive to observe the summation of the government's position offered during the final round of the preparatory negotiations for the visit by the leader of the government's negotiating team and member of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, Stanislaw Kania (later, in the early 1980s, elected First Secretary of the party). Kania's remarks give a sense and flavour of the negotiations as well as of the close relationship between religion and politics, liturgy and policy, in the pressure cooker of a communist state under siege. They also illustrate the careful attention paid to the international situation and the broadest implications of everything the Pope could say and do. In his statement, Kania said:

Concerning our attitude toward St. Stanislaw, it is not a matter of our attitude toward one of the important Polish saints, but of social meaning. Nobody today gets very excited about the essence of the quarrel between the king and the bishop. We will not raise the issue of interpretation of Anonym's text [the anonymous medieval author of the chronicle that contains the story of St. Stanislaw] concerning what today cannot be proven, whether he was a rebel or a traitor. Even if the majority of scholars had agreed that he (St. Stanislaw) was a traitor, today, that has a different meaning, in any case such matters cannot be decided through a vote. The material point is that it was the most significant quarrel between the State and the Church in our history. It has a different meaning on the scale of a diocese, and quite a different one if it were connected to the first in history visit of a Pope to Poland. In essence, the date, May 8, 13, or June 2 [for the papal visit] is not important; what's at stake is the impulse for further coexistence between the state and the Church. We have difficulties, exacerbated by the [severe] winter. The international situation is heavy with threats, China has invaded Vietnam, and against this background evil forces have awakened in West Germany. (Quoted in Raina 28-9)

During the visit, the Pope did not let the authorities off the hook. He poignantly

mentioned St. Stanislaw and the occasion for the visit at every step, emphasizing the fact that this was the patron saint of the nation.

The scriptural theme for the 1979 visit were the words of Christ: "Do not be afraid." The leitmotif was renewal, expressed most emphatically in John Paul's dramatic call: "Let Thy Spirit descend and renew the earth, this earth!" The words, spoken on Warsaw's Victory Square at the conclusion of John Paul's first homily on Polish soil, galvanized the demoralized nation and became the most famous quote of this visit, and, arguably, of all his words ever spoken on Polish soil (a quote he himself returned to again and again subsequently).

In his homilies and speeches, John Paul II employed a range of rhetorical strategies.

One of his main strategies was to recontextualize Poland and the Polish situation politically, geographically, historically, and temporally. Everywhere he went, the Pope emphasized the thousand-year history of the Polish Church, of the country, of the surrounding churches, castles, and towns, and of the institutions and traditions they represented. He never tired of repeating the number of 35 years, the duration of post-war Poland, while, for instance, standing next to the 1000-year old Gniezno Cathedral. Even his positive statements about the regime, had meaningful undertones, such as when he thanked the government for building the new but already patently dilapidated housing projects for workers standing nearby. He spoke in terms of the sweep of centuries and of the broad panorama of European history, as well as the geographical panorama of the continent. He spoke of that which changed and that which did not. He transformed the very time in which he spoke into "sacred" or "mythic" time, the time that partook of Christ and the apostles, of saints and kings and bishops, and mythical conflicts between good and evil, God and Satan. The ancient cathedrals, castles, and oaks amid which he spoke bore witness to that other time and to the sweep of centuries, in the context of which the present moment became puny and fleeting, a mere mosquito bite on the canvas of history. In these terms, the 35 years of communism, the Iron Curtain, the Soviet block, food lines, and the drabness of daily existence shrunk to insignificant proportions, mere shadows on the vast stage of history, mere incidents in the proud history of the nation and of Christianity (the Pope always placed the two side by side) that he invoked.

In this way, John Paul pulled Poles out of their isolation and made them feel part of the larger international community and of European culture and heritage: made them feel like important players on the arena of history (even in their present plight), restored a sense of dignity and pride, bridged artificial divisions and borders (East-West), and revealed the working of a Providence (or at least of historical processes, for the less religious) vaster by far than the puny and futile machinations of the 35-year-old regime of former grocery clerks and party hacks. This was a complete contrast to the usual propaganda of the

regime, which stressed the historical inevitability of communism, the permanence of the East-West division, the cultural and geostrategic distance from the alien West, and the history-changing importance of the system. The overall effect of the papal strategy, combined with the symbolism of the places visited and the rituals enacted (the gorgeously appointed papal train, the ancient symbolism of the Mass, attendants dressed in knightly armour and historical costumes - ostensibly passed off as patriotic manifestations) made the communist regime seem marginal (historically and substantively) and alien to Poland, its traditions, its culture, and its people.

In his vast historical recollections of Polish history (under the guise of talking ostensibly only about the history of the Church), the Pope also made explicit and public many aspects of the "collective counter-memory" silenced by the regime, as well as de-falsified history. He said things such as, "We cannot forget the sacrifices of so many Polish men and women," ostensibly speaking about World War II but skillfully including the post-war period in the context. In this way, he spoke in the same breath also about the victims of communism, thus paying them public homage and including them in the litany of martyrs for the country. Nobody could object to that except at the cost of seeming to denigrate the official heroes of the great patriotic war so cherished by the communist regime, which vested a large part of its legitimacy in the cult of World War II and the memory of the "victims of fascism." This rhetorical strategy also incidentally and implicitly put communism and fascism on one plane.

Another strategy for undermining the legitimacy of the communist regime was through enthymemes, such as the one he used in the very face of the regime, in his welcoming speech to the authorities: "That the *raison d'être* of a state is the sovereignty of the people, the nation, the Fatherland, we, Poles, have always felt deeply. We have learnt that through our entire history, and especially through the hard experiences of the last few centuries" (16). Since all Poles, even committed communists, knew that communist Poland had, at best, very limited sovereignty, the words implied that this Poland, in fact, has no reason to exist (but nobody would dare say it, because the entire edifice of falsifications and mystifications on which the system was built would collapse).

The Pope also de-falsified language. One of his strategies for that was "turning" the meanings of words, recuperating and rescuing the meanings that had been encrusted through official ritual discourse and rendered no better than slogans. For example, in his speech to the authorities, the Pope said: "Peace and rapprochement between nations can only be built on the principle of respect for the objective rights of every people, such as the right to existence, to freedom, to social and political agency, to the creation of their own culture and civilization" (17). Again, since there was obviously no such respect for "agency" in communist Poland, and especially not at that historical moment, all talk of

"peace" (a word the President of the Council of State used repeatedly, in his welcoming speech to the Pope, in the official communist sense of something presumably endangered by the designs of American and capitalist "imperialism" and desired and defended by communist countries) was shown to be merely an artifact of propaganda. Another strategy used for rescuing language was always appending such modifiers as "authentic," "real," "actual" and "true" to words that have been appropriated by official ideology and made into little more than slogans ("peace" "freedom," "democracy," "progress," "work," "sovereignty," "human relations," "society," "the people," and so on). The adjectives made one look twice at words that had been rendered virtually useless and meaningless by years of official use in purely ritual and propagandistic contexts. While skillfully avoiding openly antagonizing the Communist authorities and calling for civil disobedience (which would have provided ammunition for official propaganda and strengthened repression against the budding opposition), John Paul II systematically de-falsified major aspects of national, social, and political life and exposed the fabric of mystifications, lies or half-truths, unspoken assumptions, empty slogans, and false language on which the entire edifice stood. He also provided the discontented with a language they could use to talk about their experiences and to challenge official dogma without immediately overstepping the boundaries of the "sayable" – a language of human dignity, of authenticity and of individualism drawn from the Scriptures or rescued from official propaganda.

The Pope's first visit to Poland was a national awakening, a festival of reality, "nine days of freedom" (Czekanski 16) that prepared the ground for everything that happened over the next twenty years. The crowds that attended the papal Masses went beyond anyone's expectations; the first public Mass in Warsaw's Victory Square was attended by 300 000 faithful (Czekanski 15). The Church spilled out of the buildings to which it had been confined for forty years and spread out over the country wherever there were people singing, carrying pictures of the Pope, papal flags, crosses, and other symbols that normally would have been unthinkable in the streets of Polish cities. The Polish people began to see their strength in numbers and spirit. In spite of the communist facade, Poles discovered that most of them thought and felt alike; it was an awakening of national pride and a renewal of a sense of collective identity, an identity quite different from that fostered by four decades of communism, centered around different values, a different history, and a different time. On his departure, John Paul II asked the Poles "to accept this entire spiritual heritage that is called Poland with faith, hope, and love. . ." (205).

The Second Visit: June 16-22, 1983

By 1983, in the wake of the brutal imposition of martial law in 1981, there was a political stand-off. Although many of the most drastic provisions of martial

law had been relaxed, many of the interned were still in captivity. The ruled and the rulers were tired and wary; underground political activity was building steam, but there was no visible solution or end to the economic and political crisis. Neither the opposition nor the government had any clear sense of the future, nor significant ability to control events. In the trigger-happy, tense atmosphere, Poland seemed to be ruled by accidents. In May 1983, Grzygorz Przemek, a high school student and son of an opposition activist, was beaten to death at a Warsaw police station. In July, martial law was formally repealed, but the reality of most people's lives changed little. In August, there was a confrontational meeting of Lech Walesa and shipyard workers with Vice-Premier Mieczyslaw Rakowski in Gdansk shipyard. In October, Lech Walesa got the Nobel Peace Prize, but was not allowed to leave the country to receive it.

This is how General Jaruzelski, at the time the virtual dictator of Poland, saw John Paul's rhetorical position as he arrived in Poland:

[He was] in a very difficult position, under pressure from the crowds that almost expected him to lead them to the barricades. I appreciated that. On the other hand, as our guest, he did not wish to do anything that might have disturbed peace and stability. He did not want to awaken any premature hopes. On the other hand, he was convinced inside that he must support this movement ["Solidarity"] and all these national and social aspirations, that he must keep them alive, and reinforce this hope in some fashion, but without crossing certain frontiers. (quoted in Szulc 395)

The occasion for the visit was the 600-year anniversary of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa. The image of the Black Madonna, housed in the Jasna Gora monastery, is an icon of religious patriotism. The monastery, and the image of the Madonna, are connected with perhaps the most famous siege in Polish history, when overwhelming Swedish forces which had overrun the entire country, were defeated in 1655 by a small crew of defenders after a prolonged siege of the monastery - an event popularly considered to have been a miracle attributed to the Madonna, patroness of Poland. The message of the visit was unity (implicit: solidarity, but the very word was illegal). The scriptural theme was, "I was sick, and you visited me; I was imprisoned, and you came to me." The leitmotif was hope; the 1983 visit was frequently referred to as "the pilgrimage of hope" (Czekanski 29).

On his arrival, John Paul II said: "Peace be with you, Poland! My Homeland! Peace be with you!" (214). To General Jaruzelski and other members of the government, he announced: "I come to be with my countrymen in this especially

difficult period of Polish post-World War II history. At the same time, I continue to hope that this difficult moment can pave the way to social renewal, the beginning of which is constituted by the agreements made between the authorities and the representatives of labour" (223). (The reference is to the Gdansk accords of August 1980, signed between "Solidarity" and the government – the accords the government broke when it delegatized "Solidarity" and declared Martial Law.) In the rest of his speech, John Paul declared that the only way out of the political and economic crisis was to respect the demands of the people as represented by "Solidarity." Through masterful use of historical enthymemes whose final implications remained unspoken but obvious, John Paul also chided the present government – as well as the entire communist period – for ineptitude, incompetence, and ruining the country economically, politically, and morally. In his homily in Warsaw, the "major" homily of every visit, John Paul II built on his 1979 call for renewal to emphasize individual and national, spiritual "inner" renewal. By building a series of analogies and enthymemes beginning with Christ's suffering and eventual victory over death, he suggested that, just as individual inner renewal leads to victory, so collective spiritual renewal leads to national victory, a victory of spirit over the forces of darkness. "A Christian is called on in Jesus Christ to victory," the Pope declared. "This kind of victory is inseparable from toil, even suffering, just as Christ's resurrection is inseparable from the cross" (237). He recalled chapters in the nation's history that showed how, through faith in God and persistence in the face of suffering, the nation was resurrected and conquered its enemies. As an example, the Pope cited the wars with the Turks – the "infidels" – and their defeat at Vienna by Poland and her Western allies before they could complete their conquest of Europe. By implication, this placed the communist Martial Law authorities in the role of "eastern" infidels in the act of conquering the civilized world, alien to the collective Christian body of Poland and of Europe. Furthermore, the implication refigured Poland as part of the Christian West, as its bulwark, in fact, suffering another incursion by barbarians from the east, as was the case so many times in Poland's history.

As in his homilies in 1979, the Pope also used the strategy of speaking in broad historical panoramas, in the context of which the present moment appeared as but a speck amid the eternal sands of time and the complex and unknowable designs of Almighty Providence. This change in perspective diminished present suffering, renewed hope, and motivated to action – spurred by historical examples of national calamities longer and greater than the 40 years of communism, followed by collective resurrection and national greatness. The pre-condition for such resurrection and greatness was faith, unity, and moral renewal; external victory over adversities can only be achieved through internal moral victory, to which Christ paved the way. "The desire for victory, noble victory," John Paul declared, "a victory achieved even through defeat belongs to the Christian design for human life – national life as well (239). The nation

must "alone achieve this victory which Divine Providence assigns it at a given stage of its history. We all know that we are not talking of military victory – as three hundred years ago, [a reference to the battle of Vienna against the Turks] – but of moral victory. Such victory is the essence of the frequently called-for renewal" (239). It is characteristic of the sometimes almost incredibly fine-grained rhetorical fabric of John Paul's oratory and performance that all this talk of "victory" through Christ even through defeat, could not but remind Poles that four years before he had celebrated Mass on Warsaw's Victory Square and declared, in a great voice, "the holiest Sacrifice of Christ on Victory Square" – words through which he forever joined the name of the square with the idea of resurrection, hope, and eventual victory over communism. In this way, John Paul touched, "renamed," and changed – figuratively and in fact – the places, and eventually the entire country he visited. The 1983 pilgrimage continued this work of changing and "renaming."

In the 1990s, General Jaruzelski remembered the rhetorical power of John Paul's touch:

We, the authorities, began to discern certain disturbing things, which might destabilize the situation [in the country] The Pope, of course, never said anything that might have actually created a controversy with us. But he knows how to speak so splendidly, to modulate the mood, and to create perceptions in such a way that a word spoken at random could open the way to a situation that might be hard to control. (quoted in Szulc 394)

The 1983 visit came at an even more difficult time in Poland than the 1979 visit. Yet, even more people attended the papal Masses and the authorities seemed almost resigned. The massive propaganda of discouragement, random cancellations of buses and trains so people could not attend papal Masses, and other difficulties, so characteristic of 1979, were rare. It is as if the communist government began to realize, albeit warily, that this massive movement, and the charismatic figure that was its focus, might yet bring some new hope to the politically deadlocked and economically bankrupt country. (By 1987, that had clearly become the case; by that time, the negotiations of the Joint Government-Episcopate Commission had become, to a large extent, the medium of *de facto* shaping the country's course.) Already in 1983, opinion about how to approach the Pope's visits was increasingly deeply divided within the Central Committee of the Communist Party, where reformers and hard-liners increasingly vied for power (Paczkowski). What the Pope said and did was not completely unrelated to these shuffles in the inner corridors of power, nor was John Paul unaware of these shuffles. Thus, by that time, what the Pope said and did during

his public performances was not solely calculated for the people, but also played out at higher levels. How it played out at both levels went a long way toward nudging Poland on a certain historical course.

Third Visit: June 8-14, 1987

The third papal visit to Poland came at a time of deepening economic crisis, with Solidarity operating almost openly (in spite of its continuing illegality) and with many Poles beginning to realize that the regime was on its last legs. However, how long it could still last and how much damage it could still do was anybody's guess. It was a time of stand-off. The regime could no longer effectively govern the country, nor did they have ideas for meaningful change; the opposition was not yet strong enough or ready, to assume power, but was strong enough to paralyze the country and to forestall any effort directed against its interests. Many historians (Skorzynski, Paczkowski), as well as the transcripts of the Joint Commission, suggest that by that time many at the top levels of the regime began to realize that something, anything, must be done and that the unthinkable (negotiations with the opposition, a fundamental reform of the system) was becoming thinkable. It was time to prepare for various, perhaps unexpected, eventualities. In this situation, the Pope was no longer an alien force to be feared and contained as in 1979 and to a lesser extent in 1983, but increasingly, a potential powerful partner in addressing the country's problems and with whom it was necessary, even desirable, to talk to try to influence the course of events.

The occasion for the 1987 visit was the 2nd Eucharistic Congress. The message was the Eucharist and its implications (the message was suggested by the Polish Episcopate following a discussion within the Main Council of the Episcopate). The theme was "He loved them to the end" from the Gospel of St. John, combined with Christ's words "I am with you." The leitmotif, just as in 1983, was hope.

The relationship between the message (the Eucharist), the theme, and the leitmotif (hope), was articulated in John Paul's welcome address at Warsaw airport: "I salute you, my compatriots, who know the joy and bitterness of living in this land. I invite you to join a community - that community which Christ has been shaping for generations. He ceaselessly returns "meaning" to man exhausted, lost, who suffers, who loses the sense (of existence). The Eucharist is the sacrament of this great 'meaning'. It helps in rebuilding faith in true ideals, the will to live, in rebuilding hope" (372).

During the 1987 visit, the Pope openly supported the still illegal "Solidarity." In his welcoming speech to the authorities, he explicitly articulated the cornerstone of "Solidarity's" political program: the concept of "agency" of the citizen. "In the name of ... dignity, everyone and all rightly attempt to become not only the object of the workings of authority, of the institutions of the state — but to be an agent. And to be an agent means to participate in the decision-

making concerning the 'public matter' [*res publica*] of all Poles." (384) The expression "public matter of all Poles" contains a complex and very sly reference to the name of the communist Polish state: Polish People's Republic. The Polish word for "republic" is a literal translation from the Latin "*res publica*" and means "public matter," as well as "popular matter," "popular" and "public" being the same word in Polish, with its old meaning also connoting "common." Through ambiguities, extensions, and plays on words so characteristic of his rhetoric. John Paul thus pointed out that the "People" in the name of the communist state is a sham, that the pretensions to being a "commune"-ist state are a sham, as are the pretences of being "popular" (with the people, and for the people). Thus, the entire state is a sham, and dishonest to itself, *ergo* immoral to boot. He also quoted the statement from Vatican II: "Praiseworthy is the behavior of these nations in which the largest number of citizens participate in public life under conditions of real freedom" (385). Finally, he also paraphrased the provisions of Vatican II to the effect that: "Correctly we may surmise that the future fate of mankind lies in the hands of those who can give the coming generations motivation for life and hope" (385). It is, he emphasized many times during the 1987 visit, this provision of "motivation for life and hope" that constituted the central underlying premise for all his visits to Poland.

The highlight of the 1987 visit was John Paul's homily during his "Mass for the working people" in Gdansk-Zaspa (the district of Gdansk where Lech Walesa lived). In this homily, delivered on "Solidarity's" and Walesa's home turf, John Paul II spoke openly to delirious applause: "There cannot be a struggle more powerful than solidarity. There cannot be an agenda for struggle above the agenda of solidarity" (494). (Note the characteristic ambiguity: solidarity or "Solidarity"? Is he speaking religion or politics? Is he talking about moral or political struggle?) After an interval of deafening applause, he added the most famous words of this visit, which also rank among the most famous of all his words: "That's exactly what I want to talk about, so let the Pope speak, since he wants to speak about you, and in some sense for you" (494). In his visits to post-communist Poland in the 1990s, John Paul referred to these words several times as expressing one of his main missions during his earlier visits: to give voice to the silenced nation; to speak what they could not and to speak in their name to those who would not talk with them, as well as to the world at large. Later in the same homily, referring to the theme of the visit ("He loved them to the end"), John Paul said: "There is no justice without love." (496).

Following this homily, in a follow-up ad lib talk, the Pope gave an unusually candid (for a public address in what was still a repressive communist country emerging from martial law) commentary on his own political and rhetorical agenda. He said, among other things: "I have tried in my words to speak about you and to speak for you. That is because I am deeply convinced that what has begun here, in Gdansk and on the coast, as well as in other workplaces in Po-

land, is extremely significant for the future of human labour. And not only in our land, but everywhere.” (497) And further:

Let this day remain the day of our common prayer for human labor in Poland, for solidarity [“Solidarity”?], for all the issues that are so important for you, working people, for your families, for the entire society, for our Homeland, that constitute the motives for hope about which I spoke already on the first day after my arrival in Poland. (497).

I pray for you everyday, there in Rome and wherever I am, everyday I pray for my Homeland and I pray for the working people, and I pray for this specific, great heritage of Polish “Solidarity.” I pray for the people who are connected with this heritage, and in a special way for those who had to or have to be victimized for this cause. And I will not stop praying, because I know that it is a great cause. Thus, my dear brothers and sisters, I end, I end with this promise of prayer, of an inner link with my Homeland and with you, with working people, with all those righteous and noble aspirations, which aim to make human life, through labour, more human, more worthy of a human being, in order to “renew the face of the earth,” our Polish earth. [in Polish the word for “earth” and “soil” is the same, which gives a fine ambiguity, difficult to render in idiomatic English], as I prayed already during my first pilgrimage on Victory Square in Warsaw, asking the Holy Ghost to come down and renew the face of the earth, this earth. I am asking you that you also remain in solidarity with the Pope in this prayer and in this “thinking-ahead” [the Polish word used here by John Paul II is also a neologism, apparently made up for the occasion]. One must look into the future and preserve the strength of spirit and body for the future. (497-98)

At the end of the visit, in his farewell remarks at Warsaw Airport, the Pope called again for dialogue between the government and the governed: “What is still needed is dialogue, patient perseverance, long-range thinking, courage in taking up and solving new problems ... Difficult issues demand the co-operation of everyone, the authorities and the people” (552).

During the 1987 visit, the Pope spoke more openly about “Solidarity” and more openly about politics in general, than during his previous visits. While the

core of his mission remained firmly religious and he never stopped emphasizing that, the follow-up remarks in Gdansk, the farewell remarks, and many other things he said indicate that he regarded the time as ripe for more concrete and direct political action; for concrete talks and concrete plans for reform or political compromise. In this sense, the Pope was clearly slowly entering into another role, that of a statesman and not just a religious leader, a major partner (along with the government, or at least its reform faction, and the opposition) in the shaping of the political future of Poland.

Even more interestingly, there is evidence that he may have already been preparing the ground for another role for himself altogether (the role he fully assumed in his first visit in 1991 to post-communist Poland): that of the stern shepherd and guide through the challenges, temptations, and labyrinths of freedom and liberal democracy. In his homily at the Royal Castle in Krakow, for example, the Pope spoke about the shared responsibility of every Pole for the "problem of freedom - what it means, that we are free, how we are to be free, how [do] we want to and in what manner we want to be free" (449). This is a new element in his rhetoric, and one that clearly anticipates his major agenda for his post-communist visits to Poland - dealing with the moral challenges and dilemmas of freedom, and his preoccupation with the moral dangers of liberal democracy. Similarly, in his welcome address at Warsaw airport, he greeted children, "including also those still living under their mother's hearts" (372), i.e. the unborn - a reference that, like so many others, got lost in the general focus on the political, anti-communist meaning of the Pope's visits, but one that also prefigures one of his major preoccupations in his post-1989 visits to Poland. It is as if, anticipating the coming changes, John Paul was already preparing the Poles for the challenges and dilemmas of a new epoch.

On the other hand, it is possible that these elements were always there, but they were overlooked or interpreted in light of the pressing needs of the moment. Certainly, reading all of John Paul's output from the perspective of two decades later, one gets the impression of amazing continuity and consistency in his agenda, but also of extension in complexity and reach, as if all his visits and speeches were part of a grand rhetorical plan for the overthrow of communism, leading to an eventual re-evangelization of Poland and Central Europe, and through them, of Europe.

Post -1989 Visits and Conclusions

Because of the radically changed political conditions after 1989, the character of the Papal visits changed as well. Marek Czekanski has captured the general spirit of the post-1989 visits well, in suggesting that John Paul II was in general answering the implicit question how to live in the new, and for most people incomprehensible, confusing, and difficult, reality of liberal democracy and capitalism. Hence, the Pope came with the message of a return to the foundations of

faith and moral life. The theme of his 1991 visit was "Though shalt not have other gods before Me," while the message was the Decalogue. In 1995, his message was increased moral consciousness in public life, while in 1997 it was that real freedom can only be based on a Christian life and the Eucharist. Finally, in his grand finale in 1999, the 20th anniversary visit, he came with the call for a "civilization of love" and a "new re-evangelization" of Poland and Europe.

Rhetorically, the post-1989 visits were less effective and less history making, although they inevitably continued to play an important role in the internal politics of this steadfastly Catholic country. The exception may be the spectacular 1999 visit, but its profound emotional impact and the tremendous crowds and enthusiasm it generated may have had less to do with its real impact on the country's course than in a nostalgic outpouring of collective spirit and support for the man who dominated the spiritual, moral, and political life of the country, and was a beacon of hope in the most difficult and significant decade in its recent history and certainly in the lives of most members of the then current generation of adult Poles, regardless of their religious beliefs.

The legacy of the manner in which Poland regained its sovereignty and democracy, the unique blend of religion, politics, and patriotism, of tradition and modernity enacted in the spectacles of John Paul's visits, will long remain an important feature of Polish political life. To what extent it is the legacy of John Paul II's oratory, as opposed to having always been a part of the country's political tradition, is debatable. Certainly, however, there is no doubt that John Paul II remains the spiritual father-figure of the country, while his political legacy is increasingly becoming a matter of democratic bickering. It was instructive that while the 1999 papal appearances garnered record crowds and featured pageantry and media attention on a scale unknown ever before, the subsequent presidential elections in 2000 showed a country more divided, the political spectrum more fragmented, and the political rhetoric more cynical and populist than ever before. It could be, that under conditions of democracy, and in spite of John Paul's fervent pleas, spectacle has begun to separate from substance, nostalgia from relevance, faith from self-interest, and practical politics from professed principles. In this case, John Paul's visits to Poland in the 1980s under the peculiar conditions of a failing totalitarian regime stand as monuments of a return to the heroic days of rhetoric in Greece and Rome, where moral oratory had the power to change the fate of nations and the world.

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