

sacrilege against the Church of Christ, these metropolitans and every bishop who dares to do the same, do not have the right to wear a bishop's crown, and should be prosecuted according to church canons for violation of their episcopal oath and for their acts against the church.

During these fateful times we must all build up our faith and strengthen our spirit with fervent prayer to our all-sufficient God. May God be merciful to us all and enable our nation to emerge whole and unharmed from the trials which it has endured, and confirm its existence in peace and freedom.

Bulgaria waits patiently for Christ's peacemakers to arouse and organize the Christian conscience of the whole world so that it no longer remains indifferent before the tyranny and injustice which separate nations and which lead to conflict and suffering.

Lord, subdue the wrath of these modern-day herodians who pitilessly commit outrages against thy children. Dissipate their dark forces and put them to flight, so that thy children may come in peace from all countries, nations and States, in unity and concord, to do thy will for thy glory and the common good, so that thy Kingdom may come in their hearts and souls, in personal and public life because thou alone art the Way, the Truth and the Life. Apart from thee there is not, nor can there be any life and salvation.

The blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

Banya village, Karlovo district

Good Friday, 1952

BULGARIAN EXARCH

✠ STEFAN I

## The Polish Roman Catholic Association "Caritas"

*The 164th Plenary Conference of the Polish Episcopate, which was held on 15 June 1978, issued a letter to the clergy forbidding them to cooperate with or belong to the Catholic Association "Caritas", or to have anything to do with the Pension Fund for Priests. The letter was signed by the cardinals, archbishops and bishops who attended the Conference. Attached to the letter was an appendix entitled "Some Observations on the History and Activities of the Catholic Association 'Caritas'", which we print here in full.*

### SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE HISTORY AND ACTIVITIES OF THE CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION "CARITAS"

1. A careful look at the origins and history of the Catholic Association "Caritas" throws a great deal of light on the activities of this organization. On 23 January 1950, during the period referred to by the state press as "the period of errors and distortions", the state authorities, in violation of the law and using administrative measures, took the Church Association "Caritas"\* away from the Church on the pretext that she was misusing it, and forced upon the

Association a Compulsory Council of Management.

The Polish Episcopate, in a letter to the President of the Polish Republic dated 30 January 1950, protested strongly against this unlawful action. The letter had no effect because the removal of "Caritas" from the Church was only one move in a widespread campaign against the Church, undertaken by those in power at that time, with the aim of exerting pressure on the Episcopate, of forcing their hand and of weakening the Church internally.

2. At the head of the Council of Management were people who were appointed by the state authorities — members of the body of so-called "patriotic priests" (formed a short while before the seizure of "Caritas") and activists from lay Catholic organizations, who were used in the campaign against the

\* The Church Association "Caritas" should be distinguished from the Catholic Association "Caritas". The former was removed from the control of the Church in 1950 and re-organized by the State as the Catholic Association "Caritas", renamed later the Catholic Association for Aid to the Poor and Needy. *Ed.*

Church, particularly during the Stalinist period.

All the functions of the Church Association "Caritas" were taken over by the Council of Management and subsequently a new organization, called the Catholic Association, unlawfully seized the possessions and real estate of the disbanded Church Association "Caritas".

In this way the Church in Poland lost over a thousand educational and charitable institutions, not to mention her other establishments set up to help the poor and needy. Moreover, the name of the Church Association "Caritas" was appropriated quite unethically and unlawfully by the Catholic Association. At a meeting on 14 April 1950 of the Joint Committee of representatives from the Government of the Polish Republic and from the Polish Episcopate, it was unequivocally decided that the Church Association "Caritas" be transformed into the Catholic Association for Aid to the Poor and Needy.

The seizing of the Church Association "Caritas", as we have mentioned above, was part of the fierce political campaign against the Episcopate. Thus on 30 January 1950, immediately after the Council of Management had been appointed by the State, a so-called National Conference of the Association "Caritas" was held in the main assembly hall of the Warsaw Technical University. Among those present were: the prime minister and the minister for public administration, who were in office at that time, and also several priests who had been induced to attack the bishops. During this period there was hardly a political rally at which the Church and the Episcopate were not subjected to virulent attacks, which lacked any factual basis. People were horrified that an institution of such good standing within the Church as "Caritas" should be used for such a purpose. It soon became known that most of the priests were forced or blackmailed to attend the Conference at the Technical University. The fact remains, however, that a few totally irresponsible priests who spoke at the Conference actually attacked the Episcopate in terms so violent and direct as to be incompatible with their priestly status. In a special letter to the clergy dated 30 January 1950, the Polish Episcopate called the attention of the priests

to this fact and urged them to be vigilant, and then went on to protest at the campaign being waged against the hierarchy.

3. The state authorities were well aware that the legal position resulting from the takeover of the Church Association "Caritas" was highly irregular. They therefore endeavoured to solve this problem in the appendices to the Agreement of 14 April 1950 between the representatives of the Polish government and the Polish Episcopate, which was signed under pressure and in difficult circumstances. During the discussions over the Agreement, the Polish Episcopate, bearing in mind the needs of its spiritual mission, also brought up the subject of the disbanded Association "Caritas", refusing to relinquish by any statement or action its claim that the Church Association "Caritas" should be restored to the Church. Neither did the hierarchy ever recognize the state institution "Caritas" as having the right to replace the Church Association "Caritas", or to take over the Church's charitable work, which is grounded on the principle of Christian love and which is an inalienable part of the Church's mission.

Such being the state of affairs, the Episcopate expressed its readiness to allow priests to be employed in the newly formed institution known as the Catholic Association for Aid to the Poor and Needy, but only on condition that their work remained true to the principles to which the Church adheres. There was therefore no question of the hierarchy agreeing finally and unconditionally to the employment of priests in the Catholic Association; rather, it approved such an arrangement only in view of the charitable nature of the work, and on condition that it conformed to the principles to which the Church adheres, that is such norms which it is the duty of all church members, in particular the clergy, to observe.

Neither of these conditions were fulfilled by the Catholic Association for Aid to the Poor and Needy, which was finally formed on 13 September 1950. The Association became less and less concerned with charitable work and increasingly involved in political activity - so much so that out of about 1,000 educational and charitable institutions seized from the Church Association

"Caritas", the Catholic Association has retained barely 200 to date, and these are reserved exclusively for the seriously handicapped and the very elderly. All the educational establishments, especially the nursery schools, have been forfeited by the Catholic Association, and it has *de facto* ceased to be concerned with charitable work, caring for the handicapped only in a limited number of closed institutions which are financed from state funds. One cannot therefore talk about the Association's charitable work, or even about its relief work. One can only say that it runs, on behalf of the state authorities, a small number of homes for the handicapped and the elderly.

4. We regret that we must state most emphatically that the Catholic Association is trying to recruit priests, thus contravening the letter and the spirit of the Agreement of 14 April 1950 and the code of conduct obligatory within the Church. Between 1950 and 1956 organizations of so-called "patriotic priests" were formed to fight against the hierarchy. These organizations disintegrated during the October liberalization (1956), when the administrative machinery stopped pressurizing the clergy. Less than two years passed, however, before the pressure made itself felt once more, aiming to cause trouble amongst the Polish clergy and to turn sections of the clergy against the hierarchy.

Because the former organizations of "patriotic priests" had been compromised in the eyes of Catholic opinion, it was decided not to revive any of them. Instead, in 1959 "Priests' Circles" attached to the Catholic Association began to be formed. The Priests' Circles were initially only an appendage of the Catholic Association, and their administration and actual work were organized separately. However, because the forming of the Priests' Circles met with stiff opposition from the Episcopate, this method of winning over the clergy was formally abandoned.

Even though the Episcopate agreed conditionally to the participation of priests in the charitable work of the Catholic Association, it cannot agree to priests engaging in political activities within this Association behind a smoke-screen of charitable work. Priests connected with the Catholic Association

are not undertaking any charitable work, nor do they have any influence on the direction of the Association's activities.

In view of the Catholic Association's violation of the conditions agreed upon in the Minutes of the 1950 Agreement, that priests who worked in the Association would do so "in accordance with the principles and practices of the Catholic Church", it is illegal, from the point of view of church discipline, for priests to belong to the Association's "circles" or to its regional or central branches. The Polish Episcopate is therefore obliged to warn the clergy against belonging to the Association, at the same time emphasizing the consequences in canon law of failing to comply with the hierarchy's firm directives in this matter.

5. The Catholic Association has become an instrument for misinforming Catholic opinion in this country and abroad as regards both the Church's situation and the Association itself. Matters have reached the stage where representatives of the hierarchy of the Church abroad, and even representatives of the various departments at the Vatican, do not know the true situation. This has only been possible because the Association publishes under the name of "Caritas", without making it clear that it has nothing to do with the Church, and it is common knowledge that the name "Caritas" is used exclusively by church organizations. The Catholic Association exploits the name "Caritas" profitably in its attempts to recruit priests and in its widespread propaganda activities at home and abroad, which are intended to create the impression that "Caritas" functions normally in Poland, just as it does throughout the rest of the world.

The average person reading the Polish press, or receiving information abroad, thinks that the organization known as "Caritas" is a church organization, and so is inclined to believe the picture it paints of the Church's situation in this country. The Catholic Association today has nothing to do with the Church or with Catholicism, since it has no connections with the hierarchy. The Association even calls itself a social organization under the authority of the Ministry for Religious Affairs, financed by the State and adhering to the regu-

lations laid down by the Law on Associations.

That the Church lost the Association "Caritas" 28 years ago is a fact not generally known today, even to leading members of the hierarchy of the Church abroad. This is how the Catholic Association, by using the name "Caritas" and by giving the impression that it is connected with the Church, misleads Catholic opinion and even church leaders. This is why the Episcopate is obliged to state explicitly that the Catholic Association has nothing to do with the Church; on the contrary, it was against the will of the hierarchy, and even in spite of its protests, that the Association unlawfully assumed the name "Caritas". Whilst carrying out its charitable functions in a comparatively narrow sense, the Association is used to recruit a priests' movement and to involve them in politics.

6. One indication that the Catholic Association is moving away from charitable work and concentrating on breaking up the cohesion of the clergy is the formation, inspired by the Association, of the Pension Fund for Priests. This Fund is intended to make priests dependent on the state-run institution for their livelihood, so that later they can easily be used in the Association's political activities and in opposing the bishops. The Pension Fund is not in keeping with the Association's aims, because, according to the Minutes of the Agreement, the Association is an institution designed to help the poor and needy, not an institution providing a secure future for priests.

The Plenary Conference of the Polish Episcopate on 9 September 1976 stated, with reference to the Catholic Association, that "priests presently employed in the Association do not have their bishop's consent to hold such posts", ... "they have no right to represent the clergy or to take decisions on vital questions concerning the same".

The Episcopate stands firm by the conditions defined in the Agreement of 14 April 1950, and under no circumstances will it agree to priests being employed in the Catholic Association, or to their engaging there in activities which have nothing to do with their ministry to the poor. Neither will the Episcopate agree to priests being materially dependent on

the Pension Fund for Priests, since this Fund was set up for political purposes. This is particularly evident in the context of the normalized pension schemes for priests in dioceses. The hierarchy protested against the setting up of this Fund by the Catholic Association and the Department for Social Security, recognizing it as an attempt to destroy the unity of the clergy by making some priests materially dependent on the State and by trying to subordinate their lay organizations to secular authority.

7. The Church in Poland cannot change its attitude to the Catholic Association and the Pension Fund for Priests. By treating priests in this way the Association is contravening the canonical regulations, which forbid the setting up of organizations for the clergy outside the Church's authority. Likewise, the creation of an interdiocesan Pension Fund for Priests contravenes church law, since it is an incursion into the sphere of competence of the ordinaries of the diocese who are responsible for the welfare of retired priests.

The bishops bring these facts to the attention of the priests so that they might not, through ignorance of the history and activities of the Catholic Association, find themselves at variance with the canonical regulations, with church discipline and with the overriding issue of unity within the Church in Poland. The bishops remain steadfast in defence of the unity of the clergy, and are not intimidated by the hostile campaign being waged against them, by the Catholic Association's offensive remarks in its journal *Mysl Społeczna* (*Social Thought*), or by the overt threats addressed to the Polish Episcopate.

The demagogy practised by the Association, which presents the Episcopate's defence of the unity of the clergy as contrary to priests' consciences and as a breach of human rights, is clearly based on a misconception and is only further evidence that the Association and the Fund have a political aim – to attack the hierarchy and the unity of the clergy.

The tactics used by the Catholic Association in its political activities have changed since the Stalinist era, when the "patriotic priests" were active. During that period individual bishops and the Episcopate as a whole were subjected to

direct and brutal attacks. When the activities of the "patriotic priests" came to be centred mainly on the Association, these open verbal assaults on the bishops ceased for a while, and the emphasis was placed on winning the priests over by playing on the Association's "social work". At the same time particular importance was attached to making priests dependent on the Association, and with this in view proposals were made concerning the use of the Association's residential property as holiday-homes etc. for the clergy. One of the latest attempts to win over priests, without openly involving them in the conflict with the Episcopate, is the creation of this Pension Fund for Priests. In addition to the above-mentioned new tactics, the Catholic Association, through its journal *Mysl Społeczna*, is also beginning to attack individual bishops and threaten the Episcopate just as it did during the Stalinist period.

The Catholic Association, bypassing the hierarchy, is trying to put pressure on the priests and harness them to a particular policy. This has now become evident because the Association itself, wishing to produce for its protectors evidence of its political activity amongst the clergy, simply acknowledges the fact in its own documents. Thus a report on a general assembly of the Catholic Association, held on 21 September 1976, disclosed that "there are 51 priests' 'circles' and nine laymen's 'circles' oper-

ating throughout the country". Of course there is a striking imbalance between the numbers of the priests' and laymen's "circles", from which it transpires that the Association is a political organization for priests. The "circles" do no charitable work at all; rather they are used to indoctrinate the priests in the spirit of advancing particular political aims.

8. The Association maintains that it had nothing to do with the seizing of the Church Association "Caritas", since it came into being only after the latter's liquidation. At the same time, however, the Association, in Art. 6 of its constitution, confesses itself the possessor of "all the effects and property, and all the title deeds, which on 28 January 1950, for one reason or another, belonged to the Church Association "Caritas" or to the institutions and establishments connected with it".

The Church has never relinquished its lawful right to ownership of the Church Association "Caritas".

After the liquidation of the Church Association "Caritas", the very same people who had been members of the Compulsory Council of Management - compromised individuals, laymen and clergy alike - were appointed to key posts in the organization known as the Catholic Association "Caritas". Many of them still belong to this organization. History will judge them.

## Cardinal Wyszyński Writes to Professor Kakol

*Professor Kakol is Poland's Minister for Religious Affairs and thus a key political figure as regards official policy towards the Church in Poland. The following letter from Cardinal Wyszyński, dated 10 June 1978, was published in Kultura (based in Paris) No. 1-2, 1979, pp. 221-4. It reveals some of the current areas of conflict between Church and State.*

Warsaw, 10 June 1978  
N. 1414/78/P

Professor Kazimierz Kakol,  
Minister for Religious Affairs,  
Warsaw.

Dear Professor Kakol,

Your letter of the 29 May 1978 (Ref. RK-540/8/78) could justifiably have been left unanswered in view of the tone and poor quality of its reproaches. However, I do not wish the correspondence between us to be maintained on this level.

Your opening "emphatic protest at the continuing misuse of sacred buildings etc." is a typical oversimplification and an unfounded generalization. It raises a few questions and calls for clarification of the following: