

A Realist and a Prophet: The Role of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński during Communist Rule in Poland

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Abstract:

Largely thanks to the outstanding personality and leadership talents of Cardinal Wyszyński and his great authority, the Catholic Church in Poland did not fully submit to the Communist power; in contrast, it not only retained but also significantly increased its influence in society. The plan to break up the church and atheise Poles ended in defeat, and the primate of the millennium played a key role in this failure. Thanks to the pastoral programmes he prepared and carried out, the Catholic faith and attachment of Poles to the church deepened significantly. This movement can also be traced to an increase in independent and oppositional attitudes towards the authorities of the Polish People's Republic, which significantly gained strength in the 1970s, the most important expression of which was the establishment in 1980 of the Solidarity social movement. It was this significant role of the church that distinguished Poland from other countries in the Soviet bloc, which did not have a leader of such stature as Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński.

Keywords: *Catholic Church, primate Stefan Wyszyński, authorities, nation, society.*