

10 JULY 1961

Tadeusz Zabinski: New Director of the Office for Religious Denominations

On the 18 May 1961 the new Polish Cabinet of Ministers was accepted by the newly elected Sejm.

Changes in the Cabinet were few and not interesting with one exception. Dr. Jerzy Sztachelski, minister without portfolio and Director of the Office for Religious Denominations was appointed Minister of Health. Office for Religious Denominations for seven weeks remained without chief. These seven weeks were filled by rumors naming as candidates to fill the vacancy in turn Jozef Siemek, deputy chief of the Press Department of the Party's CC and active Atheist (cf. "Le Monde" 19 May 1961), and Kazimierz Rusinek, Deputy Minister of Art and Culture (cf. "Die Welt" 9 June 1961).

On 8 July 1961 all doubts and rumors were dispersed by Radio Warsaw's announcement that Tadeusz Zabinski has been appointed Director, but no mention was made whether he like his predecessor has got ministerial rank. Out of four last directors only two were ministers. Antoni Bida, director of the office from, we believe mid-1950, was appointed minister without portfolio in mid-1951. His successor Jan Izydorczyk (31 August 1954-9 April 1955) did not possess that title. Next director Marian Zygmanski (9 April 1955 - 25 November 1956) was styled minister but we are inclined to think it as rather courtesy title than as formal rank (cf. "Slowo Powszechne" 5 November 1955). Full minister was again Jerzy Sztachelski (25 November 1956-18 May 1961).

If, as we feel at the moment, Zabinski was not appointed minister it would show decrease of the influence of the Office of Religious Denominations, but even greater loss of prestige is indicated by the choice of the person of new director.

Tadeusz Zabinski was born in 1904, "for long years active in working class movement in between-the-war period", member of the Polish Workers' Party during the war, inmate of Nazi concentration camps, according to Radio Warsaw after the war was on several executive positions in National Councils. There is a satirical article "On goldfish and on...dignitaries" in Kielce's "Slowo Ludu" of 4 June 1956 criticizing an unnamed dignitary. This article almost certainly applies to Zabinski, though local editors did not dare to call by name the powerful local boss. If our supposition is correct Zabinski started

his postwar career as chairman of village commune national council and was promoted to the chairmanship of district national council. On firmer grounds we are from 1949. In July that year he was reported member of Party's Voivodship Committee in WARSAW. Next year in May he was reportedly Chairman of the Voivodship National Council in SZCZECIN and in 1954 he was Chairman of the National Council in KIELCE (cf. Trybuna Ludu 17 December 1954).

Zabinski, man without formal education, in his own words "plain worker from Ursus Works" acquired taste for power and luxury. In Kielce he (with wife and one child) lived in 14 room villa of his pre-war predecessor, and had it luxuriously furnished. Besides from living in great state he also adopted role of great strong man in his official life. This could go on unchallenged during the Stalinist period but with the advent of "thaw" things took turn rather unpleasant for him. Fact that he kept waiting for hours the whole group of Sejm deputies from Kielce constituencies and when eventually they could start their meeting, without being deputy he tried to play role of chairman to them was raised at the meeting of the parliamentary committee and sharply criticized by the Secretary of the Council of State (Marian RYBICKI). (cf Trybuna Ludu 13 April 1956). Numerous other criticisms and attacks on him were published in "Po Prostu", "Rada Narodowa" and even local "Slowo Ludu". They led to the demand of members of the Kielce Voivodship National Council that Zabinski be dismissed from his post (cf Slowo Ludu and Radio Warsaw both of 14 August 1956).

That for years ended Zabinski's career. He has disappeared from the limelights and only on occasion of his present appointment Radio Warsaw disclosed that he had been chief of denunciations department in the Warsaw Voivodship National Council.

The new director appears first of all to be a man of small stature. With the exception of short-lasting appointment of Zygmanski all his predecessors were persons of ministerial quality. All, with the same exception were able (if not always permitted) to conduct personal policy towards the church. Bida and Sztachelski were skilled negotiators, the latter personally a very cultivated man. Zabinski, self-made man, with Stalinist past, dictatorial streak in his character and without any personal standing and authority does not seem to be able to play director.



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One can safely assume that decisions will be taken elsewhere not only in principle, but even as to details of their execution.

It seems that such an insignificant man was chosen on purpose as deliberate insult to the Catholic hierarchy whose representatives will have to discuss vital problems with a man far below standard for holder of such a high office.

An Evaluation of the new appointment will be sent tomorrow.