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Poland
5 May 1966

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Millennium Church Celebrations at Czestochowa

In 50 hours of liturgy, sermons, and processions, starting in Czestochowa on May 2 and culminating the next day in what a Reuter correspondent called "the largest open air Mass in Poland since 1956, when the Catholic Church began the long approach to this year's Millennium ceremonial," hundreds of thousands of Polish Catholics staged a demonstration of their devotion to their faith, their Church, their Pope, and their Cardinal.

Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski, arriving in the Jasna Gora shrine on May 2, was greeted by an enthusiastic crowd of pilgrims outside the monastery's walls and by "Tu es Petrus," a liturgical song reserved for the Pope or his legate. It was in this latter capacity that Wyszynski was received at Jasna Gora by the Episcopate and by delegations from the diocesan clergy, surrounded by miners from the nearby Silesian coal basin and by peasants in embroidered folk costumes.

"Long live the Papal Legate!" - "Long live the Holy Father!" and "Long live our father!" - the crowds roared, cheering the Cardinal who, although accustomed to enthusiastic receptions, "looked startled by the fervor of the crowd," according to Henry Kamm of The New York Times.

Next day the Polish Primate received what UPI called "an unprecedented address of loyalty from his 68 bishops." This was expressed by Archbishop Antoni Baraniak of Poznan who stated:

"We, the Polish bishops, all of us and each one of us, are united as one body with you. We have unlimited confidence in you."

Although all correspondents stressed that the speeches and sermons delivered at Jasna Gora contained no political references and were dignified and moderate in tone, this statement of Baraniak certainly had a political significance; it was directed rather to the

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Communist rulers of Poland than to Cardinal Wyszynski. It should be recalled that the Communist propaganda devised a standard strategy in all the attacks on the Cardinal, implying a division between the "part of the Episcopate" led by a "reactionary" Primate and the rest of bishops who do not share the Cardinal's "backward" views. Baraniak's declaration was therefore intended to dispel any hopes among Communist leaders of a split in the Episcopate.

There was another political implication coming from two top representatives of the hierarchy, the Cardinal and Archbishop Boleslaw Kominek of Wroclaw. Both repeated the declaration of forgiveness which had earned them the wrath of the government.

"We forgive and we know how to forgive -- and this is going to be our program for the future," Kominek stated on May 2 (Reuter). "Nobody can cram our faith into a narrow nationalistic ghetto," he explained.

A similar declaration was made by the Cardinal on the evening of May 3: "At the threshold of the new millennium, we forgive," and the phrase was taken up by the crowd amid applause (NY). Fraternal love for the German people was impossible without forgiveness, the Cardinal explained.

(Rival government celebrations at nearby Katowice and in Warsaw will be described tomorrow.)

Polish-West German Trade Protocol

A supplementary Polish-West German trade protocol was initialled in Bonn on May 3 by Ambassador Egon Emmel for West Germany and Wlodzimierz Wisniewski for Poland (RFE Special). The accord which fixes new commodity lists and quotas will be signed later in Warsaw when the text will be made public, said the Special.

Commenting on the Polish West German protocol, Die Welt of May 4 reported that the 1963 Polish-West German trade agreement (valid till 1966) was extended till the end of 1969, with the provision that it may automatically be further extended. According to the paper, both Warsaw and Bonn expressed the desire to increase technical and economic cooperation between the two countries.

Judging by the length of the negotiations preceding the recent accord -- they started on December 14 -- there must have been many difficulties in coming to an agreement. Some of them were already discussed in the SR of December 23.