

To what extent was Pope Saint John Paul II influential in the fall of Communism in Poland from 1964 to 1989?

History

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Abstract

Starting with the creation of the Polish People's Republic by Communist leaders in 1947, corruption in the government led to widespread poor quality of life among the Polish population, which lasted until Communism's collapse in 1989. Shortly after, many other Eastern European countries followed in liberating themselves from the Soviet Union, making Poland's change a decisive one in Europe's recent history. Today, many Polish people believe that Karol Wojtyla, later Pope Saint John Paul II, was an essential contributor to this change. This essay will examine the question: **to what extent was Pope Saint John Paul II influential in the fall of Communism in Poland from 1964 to 1989?**

To answer this question, topics such as the physical and psychological presence of the Pope in Poland, his dialogue with Polish resistance and Communist leaders, and the scope of his religious and moral authority will be examined, in the context of the communist Polish People's Republic. Information from biographies, experts' opinions, and news articles was accessed through libraries, the Internet, and personal interviews. This essay will encompass Karol Wojtyla's actions from his ordainment as archbishop in 1964, throughout his papacy beginning in 1978, and until Communism's collapse in Poland in 1989.

Although the fall of Communism was due to the collective actions of the majority of Polish society against the government, Pope John Paul II's presence in Poland and on the international stage offered an effective environment for organization within the country and encouraged the expression of the people's beliefs. This investigation is limited due to the difficulty in assessing the exact influence of the Pope's actions, as there were many other

religious and secular leaders that played a part in shaping Polish society's fight against the corrupt government.

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Analysis	
2.1 Karol Wojtyla’s Pre-papal Actions.....	3
2.2 Pope John Paul II’s Religious Authority	7
2.3 Pope John Paul II and the Media	10
2.4 Pope John Paul II and Political Involvement.....	11
3. Counterargument	
3.1 The Pope or the People?	14
4. Conclusion	16
5. Bibliography	18

Introduction

In itself, communism is not a corrupt system. It is a political theory in which all property is under public ownership and everyone works according to need and ability. However, after the Polish parliament confirmed Communists' control of the country on January 17th, 1947, blackmail, censorship, propaganda, and corruption became norms of everyday life for the majority of the Polish population.¹ Adam Lopatka, the Polish minister for religious affairs, described that there were “‘flagrant and permanent violations of human rights on a massive scale’ in Poland.”² Amid these difficult circumstances, Karol Jozef Wojtyla, later Pope Saint John Paul II, was a student, professor, and priest. He personally witnessed the physical, psychological, and moral suffering of Polish people. His experience would later influence his actions as a leader of the Roman Catholic Church in the years from his ordainment as priest in 1946, and throughout his papacy, beginning in 1978. The increasing order of hierarchy in the Catholic Church is as follows: priest, bishop, archbishop, cardinal, and pope. However, for the purpose of this investigation, Wojtyla's actions after becoming archbishop of Krakow in 1964 will be examined, as this position granted him religious influence in a major city in Poland. Today, many people believe that his impact was profound on Poland's history, which raises the question: **to what extent was Pope Saint John Paul II influential in the fall of Communism in Poland from 1964 to 1989?**

¹ Carlton Martz, “Life Under Communism in Eastern Europe,” *Bill of Rights in Action* 19, no. 1 (2002). <http://www.crf-usa.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/bria-19-1-a-life-under-communism-in-eastern-europe>.

² George Weigel, *The End and the Beginning: Pope John Paul II – The Victory of Freedom, the Last Years, the Legacy* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2010), 157.

In addition to social and political issues, a “vicious cycle” of economic decline was put into place by the Communist state, which eventually caused “another drop in the rate of growth of the national income, as well as a slow-down in the growth of consumption.”³ This amalgamation of economic, political, and social distress caused widespread unrest within the Polish population.

Throughout this paper, some of the historical sources viewed Pope Saint John Paul II as an independent hero, while others viewed him as an active member of the Polish Church, who was “lifted on a historic tide sweeping all Catholics, as well as Communists, before it,”⁴ due to the societal nature of Communism’s collapse in Poland in 1989. The British journalist John O’Sullivan and American writer Margaret B. Melady tend to portray John Paul II as an independent force, due to the individualist cultures the two authors studied in. On the other hand, Polish experts on the topic, such as Professor Pawel Skibinski, usually refer to John Paul II as a member of Polish society’s movement against Communism, because they have been more exposed to the different groups that resisted the government. Throughout the paper, both types of perspectives are used to investigate the Pope’s influence on this historic event in Poland’s recent history.

³ Gedymin Spsychalski, "Catholic Social Thought and Socio-Economic and Political Transformation in Poland," *Review of Business* 22, no. 3 (2001), <http://questiaschool.com/read/1G1-98125501/catholic-social-thought-and-socio-economic-and-political>.

⁴ Jane Barnes, Helen Whitney, “John Paul II and the Fall of Communism,” *Public Broadcasting Service*, accessed August 24, 2016. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/pope/communism/>.

Karol Wojtyla's Pre-Papal Actions

As mentioned earlier, before beginning his papacy, Wojtyla lived in the Communist state of the Polish People's Republic, or PRL. His actions to help retain a sense of Polish identity through religious connection within the population were apparent during his time in Poland as archbishop of Krakow, beginning in 1964, and cardinal, beginning in 1976. The PRL perceived religious activities as "divisive,"⁵ as they opposed the ideals presented by the communist theory by preventing the establishment of a secular society. Margaret B. Melady, an American author with international experience in cultural and political studies, describes how Karol Wojtyla led quietly subversive activities on different scales, some being smaller, such as organizing "meditation days" for "specific professional groups." Others were more prolific, such as "[holding] mass in... open lots, and [complaining] to the government that parishioners were forced to stand in the cold and rain to worship" after being denied permits by the state to build churches there.⁶ Then, in 1969, he started the Sacrosong Movement to serve "as a form of catechism to bypass regime strictures against religious education"⁷ which was "an attempt to use modern 'beat' music with religious lyrics to appeal to youth."⁸ His religious work in a state with a staunch Communist government was so significant because, in the words of Krystoff Kozlowski, editor of Catholic weekly magazine *Tygodnik Powszechny*, "[e]verything is political

⁵ Margaret B. Melady, *The Rhetoric of Pope John Paul II: The Pastoral Visit as a New Vocabulary of the Sacred* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1999), 43, <http://questiaschool.com/read/27484903/the-rhetoric-of-pope-john-paul-ii-the-pastoral-visit>.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Tad Szulc, *Pope John Paul II: The Biography* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 251.

⁸ Melady, *The Rhetoric of Pope John Paul II: The Pastoral Visit as a New Vocabulary of the Sacred*, 43.

in a totalitarian state.”⁹ The Communist government could be interpreted as totalitarian, because it oppressed the population in political, social, and economic spheres. Overall, the most significant aspect of Wojtyla’s actions is their inexplicit subversion, which was a major feature of his strategy to inspire the Polish people to challenge the oppressive government.

However, Wojtyla was not seen as a threat to the regime at first. In his book, Tad Szulc cited a “secret document of the UB, the Polish secret police, dated August 5, 1967... titled ‘Our Tactics Toward Cardinals Wojtyla and Wyszynski,’” which described Wojtyla as “over-intellectualized” and “lack[ing] organizing and leadership qualities.”¹⁰ In fact, the document detailed how Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski was a greater threat to the PRL’s control than Wojtyla. Wyszynski’s approach will be discussed shortly.

The government’s perception of Wojtyla changed in the late 1970s, after police were responsible for the death of “a student leader,” the government increased food prices, causing “bloody clashes between workers and police,” and “five priests disappeared in a short period of time.”¹¹ At this point, Cardinal Wojtyla began to speak out more explicitly against the PRL in his sermons, by saying that Polish people need “the right to freedom... an atmosphere of genuine freedom; an atmosphere of inner freedom, of freedom from fearing what may befall me if I act this way or go [to] that place.”¹² This rapid transformation in Wojtyla’s behavior was a vital part in becoming a stronger influence against the injustices and corruption of the state. Instead of holding smaller scale subversive activities protected through ideas of solely religious intent,

⁹ Barnes, Whitney, “John Paul II and the Fall of Communism.”

¹⁰ Szulc, *Pope John Paul II: The Biography*, 244.

¹¹ Barnes, Whitney, “John Paul II and the Fall of Communism.”

¹² *Ibid.*

Wojtyla pushed the boundary to publicly link religious messages with sociopolitical ones. In fact, Jane Barnes and Helen Whitney state that “Wojtyla contributed more from the pulpit than from the underground.”¹³ This is a significant difference from Wojtyla’s counterpart, Cardinal Wyszynski, who was known among the masses for his underground work. However, this was not the only difference between the two.

Cardinals Wyszynski and Wojtyla both shared the same goal of liberating the Polish people from the corrupt government through the appeal to religion, but the two carried out the goal through different means. Wyszynski was imprisoned for his outward opposition against the state and support for the Catholic Church during World War II, and “was popular with the masses,” unlike Wojtyla, who “appealed to youth and intellectuals,” and who was decidedly “more inward” and “not confrontational” in his approach.¹⁴ This difference can be attributed to the differences in the nature of the regimes against which the two were originally fighting. Wyszynski’s outward character as a religious leader was shaped during World War II, where he learned “the tough negotiating skills to deal with the Stalinists.”¹⁵ On the other hand, Wojtyla’s approach was impacted by the state’s “[shift] from terror to the gray numbing of spirit.”¹⁶ In other words, the PRL oppressed the population through psychological means, such as propaganda, deception, and censorship. Both cardinals’ strategies were challenging to implement, but Wojtyla’s approach offered more safe and realistic means of subverting the state’s power, and would therefore be adopted by more people.

¹³ Barnes, Whitney, “John Paul II and the Fall of Communism.”

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Tad Szulc, author of *Pope John Paul II: the Biography*, argues that “[Archbishop Wojtyla] was the second most powerful and influential Church leader in Poland after Primate Wyszynski, and many churchmen believed that in fact Wojtyla had more quiet influence.”¹⁷ This idea of “quietness” in Wojtyla’s actions is a major factor in Wojtyla’s success, as it differed so dramatically from Wyszynski’s more outward approach. The government leaders who worked to suppress Wyszynski’s actions were not accustomed to the implicit nature of Wojtyla’s messages and his ability to portray the Church’s code for morality in an “intellectual” manner, which the state perceived as Wojtyla’s weakness in the first place.

When Wojtyla was elected Pope in 1978, adopting the name John Paul II, he had gained enough experience with the nature of the PRL to understand how to reach the Polish people through the veils of censorship and propaganda set by the state, and utilize his intellectual and moral image to inspire the people and other international politicians to challenge the corrupt Communist leaders. His papacy offered him the official and international stage for bringing to light the corruption of Communist rule in Eastern Europe. Now, he had the resources available to magnify Poland’s plea for help, and his position offered the Polish people a sign of hope. His intent even extended beyond Poland’s borders, when only one month after his election, “[he] declared of the Church behind the Iron Curtain, ‘It is not a church of silence any more because it speaks with my voice.’”¹⁸ Pope Saint John Paul II was ready and eager to speak out for those in need.

¹⁷ Szulc, *Pope John Paul II: The Biography*, 239.

¹⁸ John O’Sullivan, *The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2006), 93.

Pope John Paul II's Religious Authority

Between June 2nd and June 10th 1979, Pope John Paul II created a huge shift in the conscience of the Polish people. Leading pilgrimages across Poland during these “Nine Days” of 1979, he reminded the Polish people of their history and identity as a nation that has overcome adversity before. Until this point, the Communist leaders’ control over Poland restricted ideas of Polish independence and history. Polish youth were frequently taught “Marxist-Leninist ideology and praise of the Soviet Union” in schools,¹⁹ and censorship flooded virtually all media outlets,²⁰ impeding possibilities for discussion of Poland’s history and patriotism. However, during the religious services in Poland over these nine days, Pope Saint John Paul II implied patriotic and political themes through a religious perspective. An example of this occurred when he said: “Let Your Spirit come down and renew the face of the land—this land.”²¹ In this statement, he was referring to the Holy Spirit in the Catholic faith, but by linking these religious ideas with the Polish people’s need for a “renewal” of the country, John Paul II was publicly recognizing the oppression faced by the people before him. To even further spark a revival of patriotism, he acknowledged the Warsaw Uprising during the homily in Warsaw’s Victory Square on June 2nd, 1979; this was “generally forbidden”²² to discuss, as it was closely tied to the treachery

¹⁹ Cathleen Giustino, “Making the History of 1989,” *Roy Rosenzweig Center for History & New Media*, accessed August 23, 2016. <https://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/exhibits/everyday-life/introduction>.

²⁰ Melady, *The Rhetoric of Pope John Paul II: The Pastoral Visit as a New Vocabulary of the Sacred*, 45.

²¹ O’Sullivan, *The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister*, 92.

²² Newton Gingrich, Callista Gingrich, “Nine Days That Changed the World – Study Guide,” *American Council for Polish Culture*, last modified November 10, 2010. http://www.polishcultureacpc.org/LessonPlan/NINEDAYS_v1.pdf

committed by the Soviet Union in 1944 when they invaded Warsaw after it was destroyed by Nazi forces. The most surprising aspect of John Paul II's outspokenness is the government's lack of intervention. Due to this, the Polish people were allowed to reach an awareness of their collective condition, and gained confidence in seeing that it was possible to resist the state's oppression.

This religious visit to Poland offered the perfect circumstances for maneuvering around the title of social or political gatherings, which could be harshly put down by government forces as they could stand in the way of "political and social stability."²³ Although the Communist government strongly preferred secularity, opposing Pope John Paul's messages laden with emphasis on "the defense of religious liberty throughout the world"²⁴ would harm the international image of the leaders of the PRL. Therefore, the Pope's strategy offered the perfect circumvention of Communist opposition. This focus on morality in Pope Saint John Paul II's religious campaign was a clever approach, as it did not explicitly challenge the PRL's societal and political corruption, but rather the void of morality and trust it created.

The fact that the expressed intentions of these gatherings were religious offered the Polish people the opportunity to organize in a public space. In fact, "[s]ecurity and organization for the Pope's visit were provided by thousands of Catholic volunteers."²⁵ Pope Saint John Paul II's presence and moral authority provided an opportunity for the Polish people to build up their confidence in public organization. Adam Michnik, "a secular dissident," described the behavior

²³ Weigel, *The End and the Beginning: Pope John Paul II – The Victory of Freedom, the Last Years, the Legacy*, 157.

²⁴ O'Sullivan, *The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister*, 94.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 92.

of those who attended the religious services: “those very people who are ordinarily frustrated and aggressive in shop lines were metamorphosed into a cheerful and happy collectivity, a people filled with dignity.”²⁶ This indicates that the Pope’s physical presence in the country caused a sense of solidarity to form within a large part of the population. His presence helped show the Polish people that organization can be achieved through moral means, instead of having to be oppressed by the PRL’s strict social, political, and economic regulations. In fact, Professor Pawel Skibinski, senior fellow of the Centre for the Thought of John Paul II, stated that “[John Paul II] weakened the moral authority of the Soviet Union” by introducing the possibility of self-organization outside of the regulations asserted by the Communist state.²⁷

After the Nine Days of 1979, Pope Saint John Paul II returned to Rome, but his presence in the country remained in the minds and hearts of the Polish people. According to John O’Sullivan, in April 1980, the Polish Communist leader Edward Gierek said to Vadim Zagladin, senior member of the Communist Party’s International Department, that “[i]t is good that Wojtyla has left for Rome. Here, in Poland, he would be a disaster. He would create great difficulties for us. In Rome, he is less dangerous.”²⁸ This statement suggests that the Pope’s visit created an impression on the Polish people, and if he were to stay longer, it would further rush the spiritual revolution that he had sparked during the nine-day pilgrimage.

²⁶ Timothy George, “John Paul II: An Appreciation,” *Pro Ecclesia* XIV, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 270.

²⁷ Pawel Skibinski (senior fellow of the Centre for the Thought of John Paul II), in discussion with author, July 7, 2016.

²⁸ O’Sullivan, *The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister*, 93.

Pope John Paul II and the Media

Media, in its many forms, was an important asset in spreading Pope John Paul II's message of support for the Polish people seeking liberation from Communism. This is exemplified by the PRL's attempts to suppress the knowledge of Pope John Paul II's visit in 1979, by controlling and limiting images of him in television and the press.²⁹ Through his direct and dynamic approach to spreading the messages of the Roman Catholic Church by international travel, he gained worldwide attention. Undoubtedly, Pope John Paul II's background in theater and professorship contributed to his "ability to project a personal presence"³⁰ and the ease with which he was able to communicate the Vatican's anti-communistic messages to political figures and the press.³¹ In fact, many attribute his success with the media to his "personal charm."³² The Vatican had already established policies about modern media communications³³ and embraced its popularity, through the creation of "its newspaper, radio station, television capabilities, and ... internet web site."³⁴ This puts into question the extent to which it was Pope John Paul II himself who influenced the spread of anti-communist messages to the modern world. Although he did capture the attention of the media by reimagining his role as Pope as an active world-traveler,

²⁹ Melady, *The Rhetoric of Pope John Paul II: The Pastoral Visit as a New Vocabulary of the Sacred*, 45.

³⁰ Ibid, 41.

³¹ Ibid, 45.

³² Weigel, *The End and the Beginning: Pope John Paul II – The Victory of Freedom, the Last Years, the Legacy*, 12.

³³ Melady, *The Rhetoric of Pope John Paul II: The Pastoral Visit as a New Vocabulary of the Sacred*, 49.

³⁴ Ibid, 48.

instead of a figure bound to the Vatican,³⁵ it is still important to consider the Vatican Council's contributions to spreading Pope John Paul II's anti-communist messages.

However, the media under the PRL restricted the exposure of these thoughts to the public, impeding Pope John Paul II's influence in Poland by means of television, radio, and press. This suggests that Pope John Paul II's influence on the Polish people through the media itself may have been smaller than by other means. He had to find a different method of inspiring resistance in the Polish people, which he found to be through his religious and moral authority.

His visit during the Nine Days of 1979 proved to be the best way of communicating his solidarity with the Polish people, as it is estimated that "one-third of the country, some eleven million people, saw John Paul II in person,"³⁶ offering a personal inspiration for a moral revolution within the population.

Pope John Paul II and Political Involvement

Pope Saint John Paul II's international respect as the leader of the Catholic Church and his ability to assert moral authority granted him the ability to effectively communicate with international leaders. Unlike Cardinal Wyszynski, whose influence was restricted to Poland, Pope John Paul II held an important position on an international scale, on both sides of the "Iron Curtain."

The feature that highlighted and enhanced the Pope's role in the international political stage was his emphasis on morality. Just after the declaration of his papacy, he published his first

³⁵ Weigel, *The End and the Beginning: Pope John Paul II – The Victory of Freedom, the Last Years, the Legacy*, 17.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 112.

encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*, which emphasized the importance of human rights.³⁷ In addition, “[o]n the thirtieth anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights” the Pope stated that “[f]reedom of religion for everyone and for all people must be respected by everyone everywhere.”³⁸ The fact that these events took place early into Pope Saint John Paul II’s papacy suggests that one of his goals was to assert his moral authority on an international scale, as this would be a strong factor in his strategy to liberate those who were oppressed. During a personal interview, Arturo Mari, the Pope’s private photographer, stated that “as the head of the church, [Pope Saint John Paul II] had much higher ideals in mind, that were directed towards every place in the world where there was not peace, where there was not freedom, where people were persecuted... and Poland found itself in that situation.”³⁹ It would be small-minded to assume that the Pope would only be interested in the well being of his home country because of his personal connections. His moral authority was an overarching aspect of his international image and strategy to liberate those in need. John Paul II was able to do what many politicians could not: he employed morality as the reason for supporting the changes that should take place to help Polish citizens.

Crucial features of Pope Saint John Paul II’s approach were his unique diplomatic interactions with the Communist leaders of the PRL. Professor Skibinski said that John Paul II was different from his predecessors because he “stopped treating Communist countries as... countries with special circumstances,” meaning that he was unafraid of approaching difficult

³⁷ O’Sullivan, *The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister*, 94.

³⁸ Ibid, 93-94.

³⁹ Arturo Mari (Pope’s personal photographer), in discussion with the author, April 2016.

problems associated with human rights in the Soviet Union.⁴⁰ For example, he wrote in a letter to Henryk Jablonski, the head of state of the PRL, that he had “the sacred right and responsibility to feel at one with the nation” in response to the government’s attempts to weaken patriotic sentiment in Poland before the Pope’s arrival in 1979.⁴¹ There were also other instances in which he communicated personally to other Communist leaders, such as Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev,⁴² and Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko,⁴³ to assert that compromise will not be an option for the Polish people. Undoubtedly, this frequent communication was meant to put pressure on these leaders. Furthermore, in addition to pressuring on those in power, John Paul II had to encourage those who were challenging the state.

In 1980, Lech Walesa, an electrician and later president of Poland, founded the Independent Self-governing Labour Union "Solidarity," or NSZZ Solidarity, to combat the state’s suppression of economic and social independence. John Paul II’s visit in 1979 indirectly helped the union to reach its maturity, through providing proof of the possibility of self-organization in the Communist state. Then, during his second papal pilgrimage to Poland in 1983, he “restored hope to a people who had begun to lose hope,”⁴⁴ through showing “that the

⁴⁰ Pawel Skibinski (senior fellow of the Centre for the Thought of John Paul II), in discussion with author, July 7, 2016.

⁴¹ Weigel, *The End and the Beginning: Pope John Paul II – The Victory of Freedom, the Last Years, the Legacy*, 159.

⁴² Ibid, 124.

⁴³ O’Sullivan, *The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister*, 94-95.

⁴⁴ Weigel, *The End and the Beginning: Pope John Paul II – The Victory of Freedom, the Last Years, the Legacy*, 161.

movement for freedom and solidarity hadn't died."⁴⁵ John Paul II achieved this through creating the ability for large crowds to organize at public church services and successfully holding a private meeting with Lech Walesa. Pope John Paul II organized these events to prove that change was possible.

The Pope or the People?

With the election of Tadeusz Mazowiecki as postwar Poland's first non-Communist prime minister in 1989, the Polish people could finally celebrate victory over the harmful Communist regime. Although the nation's economy required a slow and difficult repair, the people allowed themselves to look towards a future of freedom. However, the changes that took place could not be solely credited to the leadership of a single person, as writers looking through an American lens often tend to portray.⁴⁶ It was due to the combined efforts of the majority of the Polish population in political and social spheres.

For example, the Polish people took advantage of the weaknesses presented in Mikhail Gorbachev's initiative of glasnost and perestroika. Glasnost was a policy based on the encouragement of self-expression in social and political spheres, a decrease in censorship, and an increase in criticism of political leaders. Perestroika, on the other hand, was aimed at economic and political changes: "contested elections" were put into place, de-monopolization occurred, and semi-private businesses were allowed to operate. Nonetheless, instead of easing the tension between the people and the government, these policies only allowed the Polish people to further

⁴⁵ Weigel, *The End and the Beginning: Pope John Paul II – The Victory of Freedom, the Last Years, the Legacy*, 162.

⁴⁶ Barnes, Whitney, "John Paul II and the Fall of Communism."

spread information against the state, share feelings of increasing unrest, and build up resistance.⁴⁷ George Weigel argues that this was due to the failures of the communist system itself when he writes: “[T]he fundamental errors in communism’s understanding of the human person, human community, and human destiny were not reparable by the patchwork fix of perestroika and glasnost.”⁴⁸ Certainly, this system did not work for the Polish people, and the distress was already existent before the Pope arrived during the Nine Days of 1979.

Another example of these successful combined efforts is exhibited in the formation of NSZZ Solidarity, a movement that was secular in nature, as it concerned political, economic and social goals. Although the Pope helped show that self-organization was possible during the Nine Days of 1979, the movement itself was a powerful force in bringing the collapse of Communism in Poland, and was not completely dependent on the religious support offered by John Paul II.

Even though the Polish people already understood the importance of challenging the corrupt regime, Pope Saint John Paul II offered them the initial organizational support and reminder of the importance of hope, by reigniting ideas of history, patriotism, and independence under the name of the Catholic Church. In fact, many Polish people who opposed the state, but were not religious “came to church as a way of casting their silent vote against the regime.”⁴⁹ The Pope was by no means entirely responsible for the collapse of Communism in Poland.

Rather, he played a crucial role in inspiring the Polish people to challenge the state through his

⁴⁷ Sasha Gitomirski, “Glasnost and Perestroika,” *The Cold War Museum*, accessed August 28, 2016. <http://www.coldwar.org/articles/80s/glasnostandperestroika.asp>.

⁴⁸ Weigel, *The End and the Beginning: Pope John Paul II – The Victory of Freedom, the Last Years, the Legacy*, 167.

⁴⁹ Barnes, Whitney, “John Paul II and the Fall of Communism.”

moral authority and to have hope in reclaiming the country's history and culture, through his powerful presence in the country before and during his papacy.

Conclusion

Pope Saint John Paul II had vital influence in the fall of Communism in Poland, due to his physical and psychological presence among the Polish people, his dialogue with Communist and Polish resistance leaders, and the widespread scope of his religious and moral authority. However, this liberation was bittersweet. Although the Polish people could finally celebrate the election of a non-Communist prime minister in 1989, the state of Poland's economy required a lengthy and thorough repair. In fact, one may find it surprising that according to Karolina Slovenko in her article "Post-communism nostalgia in Poland," there exists a longing for the life in pre-1989 Poland among the elderly. Slovenko argues that this is due to "unfulfilled expectations of a new and better future," that only further provides evidence that Poland's "transformation process" is "unfinished."⁵⁰ Arturo Mari summarized this idea during an interview: "people's problems did not disappear [with the fall of Communism in Poland], because every democratic system also is not perfect and has its dark sides, and one must work hard to afford bread... every system has its unfair sides and communism was one of them, [it] had to disappear in order for people to continue living."⁵¹

The Polish people's freedom from this destructive system was the first step to reclaiming Poland's cultural independence and providing better lives for its citizens in the future. Pope John

⁵⁰ Karolina Slovenko, "Post-communism nostalgia in Poland. Nostalgia for Polish People's Republic," *Change and Resistance* (blog), December 2006, <http://changeandresistance.blogspot.com/2006/12/post-communism-nostalgia-in-poland.html>.

⁵¹ Arturo Mari (Pope's personal photographer), in discussion with author, April 2016.

Paul II's influence was both strong and far-reaching, as his work to help end Communism in Poland also inspired the people of surrounding countries under Soviet domination to free themselves from oppression. Further investigation into the extent of Pope John Paul II's effect on other Eastern European countries under Communist rule could provide more insight into the topic discussed during this essay, by providing means of comparison to his influence in Poland.

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