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*Hungarian Communists' Struggle with the Catholic Church in the reports of Polish Diplomatic Post in Budapest (1946–1948)*

**Abstract**

The issue of Catholic Church was one of the most important for communists taking control over all aspects of political, economic and social life in Soviet Bloc. It was a major problem in Poland and Hungary. The struggle with Catholic Church was initiated first in Hungary and it was the reason why Polish communists decided to observe that problem carefully to use Hungarian experience in their own country. It was possible due to the activity of Polish diplomatic post in Budapest which was reporting the most important elements of that struggle. The conclusions were essential not only for the government in Warsaw, but also for Polish diplomats. One of their goals was to control Polish diaspora in Hungary which was devoted to Catholic Church. The analysis of reports enables not only to learn about diplomat’s interpretation of the situation, but also their “auto-censorship” lack of objectivity.

**Keywords:** Polish diplomacy, Catholic Church, Polish-Hungarian relations, Polish diaspora, diplomatic post, Mindszenty’s trial, communist repression

After the World War II Poland and Hungary, as many countries of Central-Eastern Europe, were left behind the Iron Curtain in the sphere of Soviet influence. Since 1944, when the Red Army appeared on the territory of both countries, their situation was prejudged. It affected not only the domestic policy of both countries, but also their diplomacy and mutual relations. Polish-Hungarian tradition of one-thousand-year friendship was neglected by Soviet plans of reorganization of Central-Eastern European relations.

In spite of an intensive cooperation between Poland and Hungary in the interwar period¹ and good relations during the World War II (it is important to remember about the support given to Polish refugees in Hungary²) contacts between both countries after 1945 were

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² Read more about Hungarian support for Polish refugees in the World War II: J. ANTALL, *Les réfugiés polonais en Hongrie pendant la guerre*, Athenaeum, Budapest, 1946. BUDZIŃSKI F., *Szkoly polskie nad Balatonem w okresie II wojny*
established late. There are a few reasons of such situation. First of all, the political status of both countries after the war was quite different. Poland was the ally of Anglo-Saxon powers and Soviet Union which won the war. Hungary was known as „the last ally of Hitler” and it was obvious that the country will be severely punished for that. What is more, Moscow decided to form a „Slavic Front” consisting of Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, whose main goal was to protect the Central-Eastern Europe from the German invasion in the future (Soviet Union was also afraid of the possibility to make use of German territory for potential Anglo-Saxon offence), what delayed the regulation of Polish–Hungarian relations. It is also important to remember that in the early postwar period both countries had different political priorities. Polish communists had to legalize their governance (in Great Britain the Government in Exile still existed). What is more, Poland had to secure its entitlement to administrate the post-German territory (so-called Recovered Territories). The sovereignty of Hungary, as a defeated country, was reduced because of the Allied Control Commission’s activity. Its main goal was to sign the peace treaty.

Because of all these factors Poland and Hungary established diplomatic relations just on 28th December 1945. Although Hungary was not the most important political partner for Poland, it was essential to establish a diplomatic post in Budapest due to the matter of Polish refugees’ repatriation. It was proposed to exchange diplomatic representatives for the first time in January 1946. The first Polish chargé d’affaires Piotr Szymański arrived to Budapest on 6th July 1946.


5 Piotr Szymański was chargé d’affaires in Budapest in 1946–1947.

6 Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych [AMSZ], Departament Polityczny [DP], 6/26/392, Szymański’s report, August 5th 1946. 3.
There were four main groups of Polish diplomats’ duties. First of all, they were obliged to realise Polish policy towards the Hungarian government. It meant that they had to take part in development of Polish-Hungarian relations, for instance to investigate the conditions of future political, economical and cultural agreements. The second duty was the realisation of Polish propaganda – it was particularly crucial in the postwar period because of Polish diplomatic efforts to gain an international acceptance to administrate the Recovered Territories. The third goal of diplomats was to organise and control the life of Polish diaspora in Hungary. There were two main areas of diplomats’ activity: they had to support the Polish refugees and subordinate those living in Hungary to communist regime. Finally they were obliged to regular reporting on the political, economical, social and cultural life in Hungary.

Diplomats’ reports contained varied information. In the postwar period diplomats focused mainly on political struggle in Hungary. Hungarian Communist Party, led by Mátyás Rákosi, implemented so-called „salami tactics”. This term was typical for all countries of People’s Democracy and it meant the struggle with opposition by gradual and systematic accusation as well as elimination of right-wing groups of their opponents, in particular the Independent Smallholders’ Party. However, the other parties were not the only obstacle to communists’ plan to gain full power in Hungary. Another serious opponent who could not be underestimated was the Catholic Church and its charismatic leader, cardinal József Mindszenty.

The issue of Catholic Church in Hungary was significant for Polish government because of the fact that the institution played also a great part in Polish social life. Both countries were in majority catholic (in Poland more than 90% of population admitted to that confession, in

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Hungary around 70%) and the influence of the Church was evident for communists. The catholic faith stood in opposition to marxism and its further Lenin's and Stalin's interpretation and could not be tolerated by new government because of its conservative character. The communists aimed at creation of new type of human, who would be obedient to Stalin's words and they were aware of the fact that if they did not eliminate the influence of Catholic Church it would be impossible to implement.

Despite all similarities, there were also some differences between the situation of Catholic Church in both countries in the postwar period. First of all, the repressions in Hungary started much earlier than in Poland. The beginning of persecution in Hungary was in 1945, in Poland not until 1947 – and it was much more ruthless in Hungarian case. It could be surprising if we considered the fact, that political situation of communists in Hungary seemed to be more difficult than in Poland. As a consequence of Stalin's experiment – holding free and fair elections – the Independent Smallholders Party became, at least in theory, the most influential party in coalition government. In spite of that fact the Catholic Church in Hungary was in much more disadvantageous situation than in Poland.

The explanation of that phenomenon is related to the difference in the role the Church played in both countries. Its significance was out of question, but there were different origins of its strong position. In Hungary the Catholic Church was an influential landowner and controlled largely the educational system. What is important, its influence was present also in political life: according to law, the primate was the second the most important person in country just after the king (or in the interwar period – after the regent Miklós Horthy). The land reform in 1945 and educational reform in 1948 undermined considerably the privileged position of the institution.

The situation described above was possible also because of the fact, that the support of society for that institution was not as significant as it was in Polish case. The Catholic Church in Hungary, despite being the religion of majority of the population, was not as respected as in Poland. Church was often associated with the Habsburg family, the symbol of Hungarian dependence for centuries. Of course this argument should not be overemphasized, but could be taken under consideration. Certainly Hungarian communists knew that resistance of society would be much easier to break than it could be in Poland.

The Catholic Church in Poland, in contrary to Hungary, was considered to be a symbol of freedom and resistance. It always
supported Polish independence aspirations during the partition times and the World War II. It was also very often a shelter for resistance movement in the early postwar period. Its impact on society was more significant than it was in Hungary, although it did not play such a considerable role in economic and political life of the country. Certainly Polish communists were aware of that fact and had to delay the use of more drastic ways of struggle with the Church. The proof was the cooperation between Polish diplomatic post and Polish catholics at the beginning. Polish priest Erazm Malczyk together with nuns participated in diplomats' activity toward Polish diaspora in Hungary, i.a. they were the members of Polish School Committee. Polish diplomats took also part in church services, e.g. on the occasion of anniversary of PKWN (Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego, the first Polish communist government established by Soviets) Manifest on July 22nd.

Despite the differences between the situation in Poland and Hungary, Polish communists obliged the diplomatic post in Budapest to study attentively the way the Hungarian Communist Party tried to discredit the Catholic Church.

It is also important to underline that the issue of Hungarian Catholic Church was crucial for Polish diplomatic post because of one more reason. As it was mentioned before, Polish diplomats were obliged to control Polish diaspora in Hungary. One of the biggest obstacles was the fact that Poles living in Hungary were devout Catholics. For this reason Polish diplomats reported the results of the struggle between communists and Church authorities because it influenced the attitude towards Polish diaspora.

The main goal of the article is not a detailed description of subsequent stages of that conflict because it is already well known in historiography. The goal is to present: a) the way the Polish...

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9 AMSZ, DP, 6/27/410, The protocol of organisational meeting of Polish School Comittee, May 3th 1947, 13–14

10 AMSZ, DP, 6/26/390, Szymański to Olszewski, August 7th 1946, p. 1; AMSZ, BK, 20/15/182, Kościński's report, October 12th 1948, 137–138


12 The struggle betwen communists and Catholic Church owns a numerous bibliography, my recomendation: D. LÁSZLÓ, A magyar katolikus Egyház 1945-től napjainkig, [w:] A katolikus Egyház Magyarországon, ed. Á. SOMORJAI, I. ZOMBORI, Magyar Katolikus Püspöki Egyháztörténeti Bizottsága, Budapest, 1991;
diplomats described the conflict, b) the effectiveness of Polish diplomats in gathering reliable and useful information about the conflict, c) Polish diplomats' action towards Polish Catholics in Hungary dependent on the situation of Hungarian Catholic Church.

In September 1946 Piotr Szymański described for the first time the role of clergy in postwar Hungary. According to Polish chargé d'affaires Hungarian society was resistant to communist propaganda and still supported the Catholic Church. Its trust and faith was abused by clergy for the struggle with new governance. Catholic priests' sermons – as well as calvinists' – were the mean to strengthen Hungarian nation's aversion, or even hate, to democracy and Soviet Union. The character of the preaching was of course „nationalist and fascist”. Undeniably the leader of that „reactionary” movement was cardinal József Mindszenty.

Not only the sermons were used by priests to fight with new political order. To achieve their goal clergy preached their ideas in catholic organisations, mainly among young people and students. Communists, being aware of the significance of the Church influence on society, decided to act drastically. In July 1946 the Minister of Interior Affairs László Rajk closed down all catholic organisations. The pretext was the manslaughter of two Soviet soldiers committed by a member of one of catholic organisations.

Piotr Szymański was also sure that clergy were planning to found a party and the only reason why it had not happened yet was the unstable geopolitical situation of Hungary and existence of Allied Control Commission. The leader of that party would be cardinal Mindszenty\textsuperscript{13}.

Polish diplomats paid attention to the way the Hungarian press related to the matter of Church. In 1946 the image of clergy was negative, but even the leftist journalists had to admit that Mindszenty was one of the most influential people in country. Wherever he appeared, he was accompanied by the support of society\textsuperscript{14}. Hungarian journalists not only studied the situation in country, but also the relations between state and Church abroad\textsuperscript{15}.

\textsuperscript{13} AMSZ, DP, 6/26/394, Szymański to Olszewski, 10\textsuperscript{th} September 1946, 23–24.

\textsuperscript{14} AMSZ, DP, 6/26/400, Press report no. 4, August 4\textsuperscript{th} 1946, 55.

\textsuperscript{15} An example was an article in „Új Szó” in November 1946, which informed about the weapons of Polish resistance movement WiN („Wolność i Niezawisłość”) found in church: AMSZ, DP, 6/26/400, Press report no. 9, November 1946, 153.
According to the description submitted to the political report of the post in December 1946, written by press attaché Tadeusz Fangrat, cardinal József Mindszenty was the most influential and charismatic representative of Hungarian „reaction”. Catholics in the whole country knew his opinions on political situation very well because Mindszenty wrote several pastoral letters which were read during church services (although, according to diplomat, some parsons, afraid of potential repressions, refused to read them). Because of his activity the leftist press started to attack him severely, what is more, some demonstrations, when the primate was abused, took place in the meantime. Due to that unfavorable situation, Mindszenty decided to leave Budapest and move to Esztergom. In Polish diplomat’s opinion it was also a result of prime minister Ferenc Nagy’s behaviour who had asked him to cease any political activity. Although he stopped writing anti-communist pastoral letters for the short time, certainly he did not change his attitude to the new government. According to the diplomat’s analysis he was supported by Anglo-Saxon powers who wanted to make use of him to expand their influence in Hungary and South-Eastern Europe.\(^{16}\)

At the end of 1946 Tadeusz Fangrat had even a conversation with Mindszenty, which was a chance to learn more about political opinion of controversial cardinal. According to Mindszenty his aim was to defend Hungarian nation from „communist and Jewish terror”\(^{17}\) not supporting the „reaction”. No one was able to stop him because in his opinion his activity was respected by 80% of Hungarians. The only party, which should have been supported, was Independent Smallholders Party (although in other conditions he would not have tolerated it), because the whole nation's effort should have been focused on struggle with communism. According to him, the behaviour of Smallholders' leaders was the effect of geopolitical situation of Hungary and their leftist opinions were imposed by communists. He was not afraid to state that socialists and communists „executed the command” of Soviet Union.\(^{18}\)

Fangrat took advantage of that meeting and asked Mindszenty about his attitude to postwar Poland. In cardinal’s opinion Poland destroyed one-thousand-year traditional Polish-Hungarian friendship

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\(^{17}\) It is worth remembering that cardinal Mindszenty, just like the rest of Hungarian Catholic Church authorities, was perceived as an antisemite: P. KENEZ (2006), 166.

\(^{18}\) AMSZ, DP, 6/26/393, Political program of József Mindszenty December 1946, 41–42.
because of its behaviour during the peace conference in Paris in 1946\(^\text{19}\). However, he did not blame the nation for the behaviour of Polish delegation. In his opinion the government was not respected by society and its decision was imposed by Moscow. Due to his opinion about Polish nation, he was not surprised that termination of concordat by Warsaw did not influence the attitude of worshippers to Church\(^\text{20}\).

Undoubtedly József Mindszenty was an implacable enemy of communism. He believed that considering the lack of royal family and regent Miklós Horthy, the primate was the head of state. Cardinal Mindszenty is even nowadays perceived as a controversial character. He was an unusually courageous person who always clearly expressed his opinion. Being aware of the fact that his behaviour was risky and it might have resulted in repression, he persisted and continued his activity. He is often compared to Polish primate Stanisław Wyszyński, but Mindszenty lacked his political sense. Wyszyński knew how to cooperate with communists to save as much freedom for catholics as it was possible. Mindszenty could not accept any kind of cooperation with new authorities.

Such an attitude could be admired and respected, despite the fact, that lack of pragmatism prevented Mindszenty from being a reliable leader of anticommunist movement. However, it was not the only controversy related to the primate. He wanted not only to fight with the new political power, but he also strove for restitution of previous political, economic and social order. In the postwar period just few opponents of communism would agree to restitute the kingdom or the semifeudal system which existed in Hungary in the interwar period\(^\text{21}\).

Despite repressions and escalation of fierce political battle in 1947, which were the result of implementation of „salami tactics“, Catholic Church authorities did not decide to change its attitude to the new order. What is also important, the society supported them in their

\(^{19}\) Poland demanded 20 million dollars of compensation from Hungary, stating, it is an equivalent of Polish refugees’ property who were interned in Hungary during the World War II. Hungarians, expecting strict conditions of peace treaty, were disappointed that even Poland „betrayed“ them. Their bitterness was even stronger because they were sure that Poland would remember about the support of Hungarian nation towards Polish refugees and would be a defender of Hungarian rights on the peace conference: T. KOPYŚ, *Stosunki polsko-węgierskie w latach 1945–1970*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków, 2015, 38–41.

\(^{20}\) AMSZ, DP, 6/26/393, Political program of József Mindszenty, December 1946, 42–43.

activity which was a signal for observers what is the opinion of ordinary Hungarians. On August 20th 1947 during the Saint Stephen Day, the most important day combining the historical and religious elements of Hungarian identity, the procession attracted 400 thousand people in Budapest! According to new Polish press attaché Zbigniew Udziela Hungarian clergy were aware of their power. The procession was not the only example of Hungarians' piety, they participated numerously in church services²². During the meeting with the prior of Pauline order in Hungary Michał Zembrzuski, Udziela noted that according to monk, Hungarians were very piety and they would do anything what Mindszenty would demand from them. What is more, Zembrzuski stated that there were a lot of leftist politics among catholics who attended church services and received the sacraments²³. The Catholic clergy, in contrary to Protestants, were not going to change their implacable attitude²⁴, what was proved in the letter of Church authorities to prime minister Lajos Dinnyés published in catholic newspaper „Új Ember“ on November 9th 1947. They protested against discriminating Catholics and making them join communist party if they wanted to be employed in state administration²⁵. They also condemned the repressions towards people who did not agree to spy and inform the security services about the situation in catholic community²⁶.

In 1947 Polish diplomats in their reports were informing mainly about the political struggle between communists and their opponents. It started to change in 1948 due to the communists’ triumph. When the political opposition was „incapacitated“, Mátyás Rákosi and his comrades could concentrate on the struggle with Catholic Church. The change on the political scene was also a signal for Polish diplomats – it was the time to change the narration, especially that the analogical situation took place in Poland. „Neutralization“ of political opponents enabled communists to

²² AMSZ, DP, 6/26/406, Udziela’s note, August 20th 1947, 51; AMSZ, Telegrams [T], Fiderkiewicz’s telegram to Olszewski, August 21st 1947, 9.
²⁵ It was related to the affair of so-called „list B“. László Rajk decided to rid the state administration of „reactionary elements“ which in fact was a mean to discriminate employees supporting Independent Smallholders Party. Due to that decision 60 thousands people lost their job: P. KENEZ (2006), 131.
commit all forces to subjugate clergy. Moreover, that change of priorities was expressed by Hungarian politicians unequivocally. During his visit in Budapest in May 1948 Wiesław Sobierański met Jenő Heltay, the Head of Political Department in Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His interlocutor admitted that the issue of Catholic Church and primate József Mindszenty had been the most important ones in current politics of the government.

In opinion of Alfred Fiderkiewicz, the successor of Piotr Szymański, at the beginning of 1948 the most significant threat to democracy was cardinal Mindszenty. He was not only an embodiment of „reactionary system”, but he was also abused by Anglo-Saxon powers to restitute their influence in Hungary. In 1948 it was already a serious accusation. Conflict between Soviet Union and Western Powers was obvious to observers and suspicion of supporting the Anglo-Saxons could be an excuse for repression. Just before the Unification Congress of Hungarian workers parties in June 1948 Fiderkiewicz noted that Hungary had found itself behind the Iron Curtain and had decided to break off relations with Western Europe. Mindszenty was also suspected to enable the reconciliation between government and clergy, although the part of Church authorities changed their attitude to the new political order, what was exposed by Hungarian press. Despite the fact that most of Church authorities were eager to cooperate with communists just to avoid the repressions and discrimination, Mindszenty prohibited even to administer the sacraments to those who supported the theory of dialectical materialism.

Subsequent months were the time of the radicalization of Mindszenty's attitude and deterioration of relations between state and Catholic Church. An important step was the nationalization of Hungarian schools on June 16th 1948 (it was mentioned above that hitherto schools had been controlled by Church). That decision was accompanied by the indignation of some catholic members of

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27 Sobierański was the Head of South-Eastern Department in Political Department in Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
29 Alfred Fiderkiewicz was an envoy in Budapest in 1947–1949.
31 AMSZ, DP, 6/28/427, Fangrat to Olszewski, May 3rd 1948, 76.
32 AMSZ, DP, 6/28/427, Fiderkiewicz to Olszewski, April 7th 1948, 37; AMSZ, DP, 6/28/427, The attitude of Catholic Church to the state based on articles in Hungarian press, 74–75; AMSZ, Departament I [DI], 7/65/533, Fangrat’s telegram to Wierblowski, April 27th 1948, 246.
parliament and clergy, but in Fiderkiewicz’s opinion it was the victory of government. He was also sure that Mindszenty would not resign and he was not mistaken: cardinal called the priests and nuns, who were teachers, to boycott public schools33. Mindszenty claimed that secular education would not be able to raise young patriots. Fiderkiewicz referred to the behaviour of Mindszenty critically when he noted appreciatively the conciliatory attitude of Protestant Churches34. The question of the nationalization of schools was an important in Polish diplomats’ work. They wrote a special report on that situation in which they drew conclusions, based on information from “well-informed circles”, that government did not want to punish Mindszenty. It would have made him a martyr and that was what communists wanted to avoid. They rather wanted to concentrate on those who were supposed to execute his commands35.

In the meantime another problem appeared which was related to the situation of Catholic Church and engaged Polish diplomats. The prior of Pauline order Michał Zembrzuski came to the diplomatic post and related about the incident which had already happened. Paulin order had its chapel in grotto hollowed in the Gellert’s Hill and it held its services there. The order was known for its Our Lady’s services because thousand of worshippers took part in them. On June 12–13th 1948 the Unification Congress was organised in Budapest and the delegates were accommodated in the Gellert Hotel which was opposite the grotto. Due to that fact, a policeman came to the prior of the order and told him it would have been too dangerous if such a big crowd would have been in the neighbourhood of the hotel. Zembrzuski asked the policeman to let him use a radio to cancel the service but he refused, being aware of the fact it would have had negative propaganda effects on the government if the Western journalists had learned about it. Not being able to cancel the service,

33 Mindszenty wrote several pastoral letters to worshippers and letters to the Minister of Religion and Education Gyula Ortutay, complaining about nationalisation of schools and warning against that decision. The letters can be found in: J. MINDSZENTY, Cardinal Mindszenty Speaks: Authorized White Book, Longman, New York-London-Toronto, 1949. The letters can be also find in Polish diplomats’ reports: AMSZ, DP, 6/28/426, Moszczeński’s report on the question of Catholic Church, June 9th 1948, 145–155.


thousands of people came and police had to intervene, commanding them to leave the grotto and go back home. Fiderkiewicz reported on it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw\(^{36}\). He was criticised for passivity because in the opinion of Polish governance the attitude of Zembruzski was "directed against the Government of Hungarian People's Democracy". According to them, he should have asked about Zembruzski's attitude to that fact. Fiderkiewicz was obliged to control the behaviour of Polish monk and inform him that such an attitude would not be tolerated\(^{37}\).

The lack of political sense, which was mentioned above, was the reason of another crisis in the relations between Church and government. For Hungarians the Day of Saint Stephen was one of the most important days during the whole year. It was always associated with the procession held on streets of Budapest. In 1948 the government decided to organise a "Day of Bread" in the same time. It hoped that some people would choose its celebration. It was desired by communists because in former years 200-400 thousands of people participated in processions. That year Mindszenty wanted to give the ceremony more ceremonial character and asked for permission to conduct the procession in the main streets of Pest. The government refused, agreeing for the procession around the Saint Stephen's Basilica only. Mindszenty decided to express his dissatisfaction, not organising a procession at all. In opinion of communists his behaviour was provocative and was evidence of Mindszenty's hostile attitude to the government\(^{38}\).

In the last quarter of 1948 Alfred Fiderkiewicz realised that the time had come for the "final battle" between Catholic Church and communists. In November he condemned irreconcilable attitude of Mindszenty and noted that the authorities had been gathering information about his anti-state activity. According to the confidential information Mindszenty had been organising the resistance movement with the support of Anglo-Saxon Powers. Communists were supposed to welcome his emigration, but being aware of his character it was obvious he would never leave Hungary. In the opinion of Fiderkiewicz the only possible solution which could be implemented was arrest\(^{39}\).


\(^{37}\) AMSZ, DP, 6/28/426, Wierblowsk to Fiderkiewicz, July 9\(^{th}\) 1948, 159.


\(^{39}\) AMSZ, DP, 6/28/427, Fiderkiewicz to Olszewski, November 15\(^{th}\) 1948, 200; AMSZ, DI, 7/64/539, Fangrat's telegram to Sobierajski, November 10\(^{th}\) 1948, 6.
Cardinal Mindszenty was arrested on December 26th 1948. Fiderkiewicz reported that just before the arrest even a major part of catholic society had turned away from him. According to the confidential information Church authorities had received the recommendation from Vatican to reach an agreement with the government.\textsuperscript{40} Intensive propaganda in press had been a communists' mean to prepare Hungarian catholics for such a radical solution.\textsuperscript{41}

The accusation against Mindszenty of being an American spy resulted in the protest of the USA. Hungarian government took advantage of that situation and made American diplomats leave the country. It also initiated the propaganda action whose goal was to inform the society about the threat from the West. That "threat" was also an argument to begin the propaganda offensive against the USA and Great Britain as well and Hungarian communists used it to explain their hostile attitude towards Western diplomats.\textsuperscript{42} Every aspect of Mindszenty's trial was studied and reported by Polish diplomats carefully.\textsuperscript{43}

In opinion of Fiderkiewicz, Hungarians reacted surprisingly calmly. There were two possible explanations of that situation. First of all, the part of society was bored with the behaviour of Mindszenty and did not want to contest the government, as the cardinal had demanded. What is more, they were disappointed with his behaviour during the trial: he seemed to be a weak man who had lost his former self-confidence.\textsuperscript{44} The second explanation was less optimistic for communists. Fiderkiewicz accounted that Hungarians as a nation were not used to show emotions. Especially in the postwar period because of the presence of the Red Army they learned to "suppress feeling" what

\textsuperscript{40} AMSZ, DI, 7/65/533, Fangrat’s telegram to Sobierański, December 21\textsuperscript{st} 1948, 250.

\textsuperscript{41} Although Vatican recommended to find a solution of the crisis, there were different opinions about what Hungarian bishops should do. One of Vatican authority stated in the conversation with Archbishop of Eger Gyula Czapi that Hungarian bishops should have "become martyrs": G. ADRIÁNYI, A Vatikán keleti politikája és Magyarország 1939–1978. A Mindszenty-ügy, Kairosz Kiadó, Budapest, 2004, 14–15.

\textsuperscript{42} AMSZ, DP, 6/28/427, Fiderkiewicz to Olszewski, December 27\textsuperscript{th} 1948, 219–220.

\textsuperscript{43} AMSZ, DI, 7/72/591, Fiderkiewicz’s report, February 21\textsuperscript{st} 1949, 1–2.

\textsuperscript{44} AMSZ, DI, 7/64/539, The communiqué of the Press Department of Ministry of Interior Affaires in Hungary, December 28\textsuperscript{th} 1948, 7–10; AMSZ, DI, 7/64/539, Fiderkiewicz’s special report on question of Mindszenty, January 10\textsuperscript{th} 1949, 11–13; AMSZ, T, Fiderkiewicz’s telegram to Wierbolowski, January 1\textsuperscript{st} 1949, 1–2.

\textsuperscript{44} However, for the observers it was obvious that the behaviour of Mindszenty was the result of tortures during the interrogation. Due to the physical suffering Mindszenty broke down and was unable to resist any more: M. BOÉR (1949), 314.
meant they had not accepted the situation but had been waiting for a
good moment to express their hate towards communists. The only
evident opponents were Church authorities who refused to appoint a
new primate stating that previous still lived and was fulfilling his
office. A person who was appointed to replace him „in the meantime"
(until the moment he would leave the prison) was the bishop of
Kalocsa József Grósz.\(^{45}\) In 1949 and at the beginning of 1950 the
Episcopate constantly, but not as ostentatiously as Mindszenty had
done, although tended to cooperate with governments on certain
conditions, refused to submit to communists\(^{46}\).

The „neutralization” of cardinal Mindszenty was a major triumph
of communists in their struggle with Catholic Church. Of course it
was not the end of it because they planned to subordinate the
Catholic Church in the same way as they had already done in the case
of Protestants. They were also aware of the fact that international
public opinion would be interested in the matter of Mindszenty and
that it would be discussed in the ONU\(^{47}\). However, they knew that the
most serious opponent had been beaten and the rest was the question of
time.\(^{48}\) Despite the long time of resistance it turned out they had
not been mistaken. The agreement between Church and state signed
in August 1950 was much easier to gain in those conditions\(^{49}\). In
opinion of chargé d'affaires Henryk Minc\(^{50}\) Hungarian communists

\(^{45}\) AMSZ, DI, 7/65/533, Article Kościół i państwo in „Hazánk” in January 7th

\(^{46}\) AMSZ, DI, 7/71/592, Minc’s report, January 31st 1950, 12; AMSZ, DI, 7/71/592,
Minc’s report, April 1st 1950, 77–78; AMSZ, DI, 7/71/592, Minc’s report, May 31st
1950, 150–151.

\(^{47}\) AMSZ, DI, 7/71/591, Fiderkiewicz’s report, February 1st 1949, 7. According to
the communists, the discussion about Mindszenty in the ONU was an example of
„interference in interior affairs of Hungary”. They even decided that there had
been no Hungarian delegates during the trial in front of the International Court of
Justice: AMSZ, DI, 7/71/591, Fiderkiewicz’s report, April 5th 1949, 75; AMSZ, DI,
7/7/1/592, Minc’s report, May 1st 1950, 177.


\(^{49}\) AMSZ, DI, 7/71/593, Minc’s report, July 30th 1950, 9–11; AMSZ, DI, 7/71/593,
Minc’s report, August 31st 1950, 28; AMSZ, DI, 7/71/593, The agreement beetween
the Episcopate of Catholic Church and Hungarian People’s Republic in August 30th
1950 in „Szabad Nép” (August 31st 1950), 29–30; AMSZ, DI, 7/71/593, Minc’s
report, September 30th 1950, 45–47; AMSZ, T, Kościński’s telegram to Wierblowski,
August 30th 1950, 15.

\(^{50}\) Henryk Minc was a chargé d'affaires in Budapest in 1949–1951, an envoy
were inspired by Polish government and its way to gain the analogical agreement in April 1950\textsuperscript{51}. The arrest of Józef Grósz in 1951 did not arouse much emotions, the society and Church authorities seemed to be „paralyzed” with the ruthlessness and effectiveness of the communists\textsuperscript{52}. The reports of Henryk Minc presented new phenomenon in Hungarian Church: he compared the attitude of „reactionary” minority of Church members who supported arrested Grósz and the majority of clergy who joined the movement of „peace priests”, submitted to communists\textsuperscript{53}. It is worth to remember that mentioned movement was modeled on Polish organisation of „patriotic priests”. The Polish diplomatic post participated in exchange of the organisational experience between Poland and Hungary\textsuperscript{54}.

The change of Catholic Church position in Hungary and consolidation of communist governance, analogous to the turn of events in Poland, resulted in deterioration of cooperation between Polish diplomats and Polish Church representatives. Despite the engagement of Erazm Malczyk and Polish nuns in work for diaspora, Henryk Minc decided finally to end the cooperation. Erazm Malczyk, being aware of potential repressions, decided to live Hungary and emigrate to Canada. In the meantime Henryk Minc abolished the house of elderly members of Polish diaspora, where Polish nuns had worked. The nuns, deprived of work, had no excuse to stay in Hungary and emigrated to Rome\textsuperscript{55}. It was much easier to do so in 1950 because Polish members of clergy lacked any support from Hungarian Catholic Church. As Polish citizens, they had to submit to Polish diplomats’ decisions. The lack of Polish clergy did not change the attitude of members of diaspora towards faith, but the diplomats did not have to be afraid that their „bigotry” would strengthen.

The reports of Polish diplomats could be a useful material for the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but it is crucial to remember about differences between the situation in Hungary and Poland which had

\textsuperscript{51} AMSZ, DI, 7/71/592, Minc’s report, June 30\textsuperscript{th} 1950, 224–225.
\textsuperscript{52} AMSZ, DI, 7/65/543, Minc to Skrzegowski, June 8\textsuperscript{th} 1951, 101–103; AMSZ, DI, 7/65/543, Minc’s report, July 1\textsuperscript{st} 1950, 133–135.
\textsuperscript{53} AMSZ, DI, 7/62/544, Minc’s report, August 1\textsuperscript{st} 1951, 13–16.
\textsuperscript{54} AMSZ, DI, 7/68/566, Fiderkiewicz to Sobierański, March 2\textsuperscript{nd} 1949, 1.
\textsuperscript{55} AMSZ, BK, 20/5/70, Kościński’s report, February 7\textsuperscript{th} 1950, 10; AMSZ, BK, 20/5/70, Kościński’s report, September 1\textsuperscript{st} 1950, 22; AMSZ, BK, 20/5/20, Romanowicz’s report, February 27\textsuperscript{th} 1951, 6; Wierni polskim korzeniom. 45 lat Polskiego Stowarzyszenia Kulturalnego im. Józefa Bema na Węgrzech, ed. J. KRÓLIKOWSKI, A. NAGY, Polskie Stowarzyszenie Kulturalne im. Józefa Bema na Węgrzech, Budapest, 2003, 33.
been mentioned at the beginning. Due to that fact, the struggle with Polish Church was postponed and it was less radical. It was not possible to pacify Polish Catholics as it had been done in Hungary. What weakened the position of Catholics in Hungary, and what did not occur in Poland, was the attitude of Protestants. Due to their submissive behavior, it was easier to attack the Catholics, opposing those two confessions and stating that Catholic Church had been unable to any cooperation.

However, the reports could be used as a warning and information what steps could have negative effect on Poland, e.g. the severity of communists' attitude towards Mindszenty resulted not in his „neutralization” but made him even more implacable. It led to the situation that the only solution was brutal arrest and trial which was condemned in the international forum. The reports, although very detailed, had one drawback: the narration and interpretation of the events. It is crucial to underline that they were informed very well about the situation (especially considering the information obtained from „confidential sources”), but their interpretation was affected by communist propaganda. Sometimes the diplomats did not try to find or to present the more possible reasons of some situations. It is difficult to judge if they really believed in everything they wrote or if they were aware of the fact that being a diplomat of communist country they were obliged to present the reality in „required” way. It should be also underlined that the interpretation was evolving – the more advanced the conflict was, the more unequivocally negative the comments were. The opinion about cardinal Mindszenty was also changing. At the beginning, he was supposed to be just a controversial and reactionary personality. When the communists started to consolidate their power, the diplomats' accusations against Mindszenty became more serious.

The analysis of the conflict was definitely crucial for the policy of diplomats towards Polish diaspora in Hungary. Their activity in that case was strictly coordinated by Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was the reason why their attitude to Polish clergy changed so drastically during that time. The careful study of the situation let them solve the problem of Polish clergy at the appropriate moment. They also avoided the accusation of brutal treatment because they could pretend that the decision of Malezyk's and nuns' emigration was not imposed by them.

Summing up, it is needed to state that the process of solving the problem of Catholic Church in Hungary was much more long-lasting in Hungary than it was in Poland. The way it was
implemented was more drastic. However, despite all differences it is crucial to remember that both countries were realising the same policy, imposed by the Soviet Union. The goal was identical, the Polish and Hungarian communists were obliged by Moscow to gain it in limited period of time and the means were not as significant as the final result.