



The Holy See

PELLEGRINAGGIO APOSTOLICO IN POLONIA

DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II DURANTE L'INCONTRO ECUMENICO NELLA RESIDENZA DEL PRIMATE*

Varsavia (Polonia)

Venerdì, 17 giugno 1983

*Mr. President and General, Distinguished Gentlemen,*1. «A prosperous and peaceful Poland is... in the interest of tranquility and good cooperation among the peoples of Europe». I take the liberty of beginning my speech with the same words that I used in this same Belvedere Palace in June 1979, during my previous visit to my homeland. I repeat these words because they were said by a great friend of Poland, Pope Paul VI, to whom the Church in our country owes the important work of normalization in the northern and western territories. I repeat them also because these words reflect, so to speak, the constant quintessence of what the Apostolic See thinks of Poland, and what it hopes for Poland.2. This way of thinking has an important significance against the background of our difficult historical past, beginning especially from the end of the eighteenth century. Precisely against the background of the partitions of Poland, the thought that «A prosperous and peaceful Poland is in the interest of tranquility and good cooperation among the peoples of Europe» has been a postulate of international morality, as well as a healthy European reason of state. For more than a hundred years this thought had to seek to establish itself amid the imperialist powers contrary to our independence; to find expression at last, at the end of the First World War, in the peace treaties. The Polish nation is steadfast in its gratitude towards those who at that time were the heralds of its independent existence. While we are here in Warsaw, Poland's capital, the memory of all these historical experiences comes to life again in a special way. Hence the words of Paul VI remain ever important, stating as they do not only that Poland has the right to sovereign existence as a State, but also that in her own place she is necessary to Europe and the world.3. In the words quoted, Pope Paul VI underlined that «Poland... is in the interest of tranquility and good cooperation among the peoples of Europe». This affirmation has its own full eloquence against the background of the Second World War, which was the greatest violation of peace in this century, above all on the continent of Europe. Poland found itself at the very centre of the terrible experiences of that war. For its right to sovereignty it paid with six million of its citizens, who sacrificed their lives on the various war fronts, in the prisons and in the extermination camps. The Polish nation has confirmed at a very high price its right to be sovereign master of the land that it inherits from its ancestors. The memory of the terrible experiences of the War, lived through by Poland and by the other peoples of Europe, causes one to renew, Once more, the impassioned plea that peace should not be disturbed or

endangered, and in particular that, at the earliest possible moment and in an effective way, namely by frank and constructive negotiations, the arms race be remedied.⁴ Coming to Poland, I have before my eyes its whole thousand-year history, and, first of all, the experiences of this century, linked with my own life. I very much wish to thank the Supreme Authorities of the State for the invitation to come home, transmitted to me in a letter from the President of the Council of State. I come to my homeland as a pilgrim on the occasion of the Jubilee of Jasna Gora. I come in order to be with my compatriots at a particularly difficult moment in the history of Poland after the Second World War. At the same time I do not lose hope that this difficult moment may become a path to social renewal, the beginning of which is established by the social agreements stipulated by the representatives of the State Authorities with the representatives of the world of labour. And even if life in the homeland since 13 December 1981 has been subjected to the severe rigour of the state of war, which from the beginning of the present year was suspended – nevertheless, I do not stop hoping that that social reform, announced on many occasions, according to the principles so painstakingly worked out in the critical days of August 1980, and contained in the agreements, will gradually be put into effect. This renewal is indispensable for maintaining the good name of Poland in the world, as well as in order to find a way out of the internal crisis and spare the sufferings of so many sons and daughters of the nation, my compatriots.⁵ The Apostolic See devotes so many of its efforts to the cause of peace in today's world. This year is the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* of Pope John XXIII. Pope Paul VI advanced the efforts in this field in many forms. These efforts are very numerous and at the same time generally known; it would be difficult at this moment to mention them in detail. I will mention only the initiative of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in 1981. Eminent specialists in the scientific disciplines such as physics, biology, genetics and medicine drew up a memorandum on the foreseeable consequences of the use of atomic weapons. The memorandum was presented by the representatives of the Academy to the Heads of State of the Soviet Union, the United States of America, Britain and France, to the President of the Assembly of the United Nations and to the Secretary General of the United Nations. From the time of Pope Paul VI the custom was established of celebrating on New Year's Day the World Day of Peace, a custom linked with an annual Message. This year the Message of 1 January 1983 is entitled «The dialogue for peace, a challenge for our times». I have taken the liberty of sending the text of this Message also to the highest Representatives of the State Authority in Poland. This message refers to the experiences of the past to show that dialogue for peace, especially in our time, is necessary. It is also possible: «People are finally capable», I wrote, «of overcoming divisions, conflicts of interests, even if the oppositions would seem radical ones... if they believe in the virtue of dialogue, if they accept to meet face to face to seek a peaceful and reasonable solution for conflicts» (No. 5).⁶ Later on, the document enumerates the distinctive marks of true dialogue and the obstacles that it encounters. This year's Message devotes a great deal of space to the problem of dialogue for peace on the international level. Given the circumstances, I shall take the liberty of drawing attention to the paragraph entitled Dialogue on the national level, where we read: «Dialogue for peace must be established in order to resolve social conflicts, in order to seek the common good. While bearing in mind the interests of different groups, the common effort for peace must be made ceaselessly, in the exercise of freedoms and duties which are democratic for all, thanks to the structures of participation and thanks to the many means – of reconciliation between employers and workers, in the manner of respecting and associating the cultural, ethnic and religious groups which make up a nation. When unfortunately dialogue between government and people is absent, social peace is threatened or absent; it is like a state of war. But history and present-day observation show that many countries have succeeded or are succeeding in establishing a true working together, to resolve the conflicts which arise within them, or even to prevent them by acquiring means of dialogue which are truly effective» (No 8) ⁷ Distinguished Gentlemen! I return once again to the words of Paul VI: «A prosperous and peaceful Poland is in the interest of tranquility and good cooperation among the peoples of

Europe». As a son of the land of Poland, I make these words in a special way my personal hope for the nation and the State. This hope I address at the same time to the Representatives of Authority and to the whole of society. I ardently desire that Poland may always have her proper place among the nations of Europe, between the East and the West. I ardently desire the re-creation of conditions of «good cooperation» with all the Western nations on our continent, as well as in the Americas, above all with the United States of America, where so many millions of citizens are of Polish origin. I am deeply convinced that these conditions can be created. This too is one of the tasks of dialogue – international dialogue – for peace in today's world. I also know that the Polish Episcopate constantly makes tireless efforts to ensure that the principle of dialogue proclaimed by the Church may become a fruitful basis both for internal peace and for «good cooperation» between Poland and the other nations of Europe and the world⁸. I desire once more to express my gratitude for the invitation to come home. I wish also to place in the hands of the Representatives of the Supreme Authorities of the Polish Republic – both these Authorities and the organs of local administration under them – my thanks for all that they have done to prepare my meeting with the nation and with the Church in my homeland. Just as I did during my previous visit, I wish finally to affirm that I will continue to consider as my own every true good of my homeland, as though I were still living in this land, and perhaps even more, because of the distance. With the same strength I will also continue to feel the effects of what could threaten Poland, what could do her damage, bring her dishonour, what could signify stagnation or a depression. In my prayer for Poland great numbers of people of good will are united with me, throughout the world. I add my expressions of esteem for all the distinguished representatives of the Authorities and to each one in particular, according to the office that they exercise, the dignity that is theirs, as also according to the important share of responsibility that lies upon each one of you before history and before your consciences. I also wish to thank you for the gift offered to me, and at the same time I ask you to accept my own

gift.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English* n. 26 pp. 4, 5. © Copyright 1983 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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