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Sociological aspect of miracles and apparitions in contemporary Poland

Methodological issues related to research in miracles in Poland

An important aspect of Polish religiosity, which has a mainly popular and the Marian character¹, are all kinds of miraculous events – miracles, apparitions, crying images etc. Quite often they are not only an element of individual religiosity, but due to the large effect, they are social facts. Therefore, subject to the interest not only of the theological studies, but the humanities and social sciences too.

Theologians are mainly interested in the authenticity of miraculous events, or their consistent with the Bible or religious tradition. Secular scholars are not interested in the authenticity of a miracle or healing, but are mainly interested in social, cultural or anthropological aspect. This perspective, treatment miraculous events as social facts, is accepted in the article.

Modern study of miracles, including the Marian apparitions, is not too popular in the academic world. Michael P. Carroll noticed “But despite the Importance of Marian Apparitions are so many Catholics, These Apparitions have not Attracted much attention from sociologists of religion. This neglect is mildly puzzling”². Rodney Stark tried to explain the neglect, pointed “The reason for this Theoretical neglect has been That the “Causes” of revelations have seemed obvious to most social scientist: Those

¹ S. Czarnowski, *Kultura religijna wiejskiego ludu polskiego*, in: S. Czarnowski, *Wybór pism socjologicznych*, Warszawa 1982, pp. 366–401.

² M. P. Carroll, *The Virgin Mary at Lourdes and LaSalette: Whom Did the Children See?*, “Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion”, 1985, no 1 (24), p. 57.

who claim to have received revelation – to have communicated with the supernatural – are either crazy or crooked, and sometimes both. Indeed, even many social scientists who will assume the Rationality of more mundane religious phenomena, find it quite impossible to accept That *normal* people can *sincerely believe* they have communicates with the divine”³.

Although these reconstructed by Stark’s views were never popular among Polish religious studies, social research on contemporary miracles are marginal in Poland.

Polish religious studies dealt with the miracles already before World War II. In 1926 there was an apparition in Słupia. At the Poznań University researchers conducted a study of it, and visionaries were subjected to experiments, trying in laboratory conditions induce religious visions⁴.

After World War II, Poland became dependent on the Soviet Union, all researches were ideology-bound and the study of religious phenomena was hampered due to political reasons. The Communist government struggled not only with the Catholic Church, but also from all forms of the presence of religion in the public sphere. He was fighting against miracles, revelations and information about them, even in the academic literature.

An example of the negative influence of the communist authorities on the study of miracles is the fate of the article, which describe miracles in Polish People’s Republic⁵. Although the editors of academic journal “Polish Ethnography” accepted it, however, it did not appear. Unjustly, the authors were accused of writing it from the position of believers⁶.

After the collapse of the communist system and the restoration of freedom of research academic studies of miracles began appear at minimal level. The banned text was released in 1990 and three books devoted to this subject were published⁷. And this is actually all that Polish social sciences developed when it comes to the study of modern miracles. So we can assume that it is still *terra incognita* Polish religious life that is waiting to take a broad and systematic research.

Despite marginality miraculous studies in modern Poland, Hemka and Olędzki outlined the concept of miraculous sensitivity⁸, helping to understand the post-war miracles. I accept this concept for the purposes of the article.

³ R. Stark, *A Theory of Revelations*, “Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion”, 1999, no 2 (38), p. 287.

⁴ S. Błachowski, S. Borowiecki, *Epidemia Psychiczna w Słupii pod Środą. (Z psychologii i psychopatologii sugestii)*, „Rocznik Psychiatryczny”, 1928, no 8, pp. 176-193; S. Błachowski, *O sztucznych ekstazach i widzeniach*, „Rocznik Psychiatryczny”, 1938, no 34/35, pp. 143-159.

⁵ A. Hemka, J. Olędzki, *Wrażliwość mirakularna*, „Polska Sztuka Ludowa”, 1990, no 1, pp. 8-14.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 14.

⁷ See H. Czachowski, *Cuda, wizjonerzy i pielgrzymi. Studium religijności mirakularnej końca XX wieku w Polsce*, Warszawa 2003; A. Zieliński, *Na straży prawdziwej wiary zjawiska. Zjawiska cudowne w polskim katolicyzmie ludowym*; M. Krzywosz, *Cuda w Polsce Ludowej. Studium przypadku prywatnego objawienia maryjnego w Zabłudowie*, Białystok 2016.

⁸ A. Hemka, J. Olędzki, *Wrażliwość...*, op. cit.

First of all, a miracle is considered such an event, that for individuals or communities is unusual, not daily. It is also not important whether a miracle was recognized by the Church or not. It is important that there are people who accept miracles. The question of explanation of these phenomena with the help of empirical science, it is also of interest to the researcher, because he is interested in people's reactions to the miracles, and do not look for their causes.

The authors draw attention to the naturalness, spontaneity in the development of miracles, though they may also be subsequently deliberately provoked, and the inability to interpret the miraculous events by category of superstition and magical practices. According to them miracles: "They express the need for divine revelations, divine intervention in the affairs of worldly, but also the need for extraordinary events, sensational, but in line with the traditional, and perhaps even a permanent system of concepts"⁹.

Studying the miracles of 1950-1960, the authors find their common characteristics, such as the Marian devotion, mass character and spontaneity of events, predominant activity of the rural population, the emergence of conflicts between supporters and opponents of the miracle, a group celebration of prayers and leave votive offerings (money, rosaries).

The summary states that miraculous event:

1. "There are a separate category of religious or para-religious behaviour. They may, but need not, be preceded by prayer, and the more supplication, vow, acts of penance and contemplation. They are indeed initiated by a single visionary, but quickly becomes a gift to many people"¹⁰.

2. There are one or two years after the important national events and they are its judgment.

3. "They are the need for transfer of the original ("as Rumour has it"), the hottest according to Marshall McLuhan's terminology, the need to feel, experience, and knowledge other than that shape official and recognized media, especially the state, but also the Church"¹¹.

4. "Complete, or even enhance, the repertoire proposed by the Church itself. They are a constant expectation of uniqueness; not reconciling the duration without experience the mystery of what is incomprehensible, unreal"¹².

This concept presented above, although developed in the 70's, is still useful in the study of recent miracles, as evidenced by references to it in a small number of contemporary Polish literature¹³.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 9.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 12.

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ See H. Czachowski, *Cuda...*, op. cit.; A. Zieliński, *Na straży...*, op. cit.; M. Krzywosz, *Cuda...*, op. cit.

The main miracles and apparitions in Poland after the Second World War¹⁴

Stalinism, miracle of Lublin 1949

The first major miracle in communist Poland had a place on 3 July 1949, in the Lublin cathedral. A copy of the image of black Madonna of Czestochowa began to cry tears of blood. One witness recalled: "I looked at the picture and noticed advancing the right eye, dark drops falling down his cheek (...) Lifting of people moaning, crying, they were so powerful that and I also threw himself on his knees and with the people I gave up lift great emotion, the tears (...) People prayed and cried: "Most Holy Mother, are you crying?"¹⁵

After a few hours the cathedral was filled to the brim, and the next day in the morning mile-long queues were already waiting in front of it. Also the messages about the miraculous healings was in public.

1949 is the time of Stalinism and the struggle of the communists to subjugate the last independent institution – the Catholic Church. The Church and believers are persecuted in different ways and harassed, from articles in the press, and ending on unfair lawsuits.

So the Lublin events are interpreted by the Catholics and the communist authorities in the context of the fight against the Church.

Whereas the attitude of the Communists was clear – the miracle is a provocation reactionary clergy, the view of the Church hierarchy to the events of Lublin was ambivalent. First of all, the atmosphere associated with the miracle, which intensified information about the healings, was great. In addition, the miracle as a sign of God's added strength in the resistance to the totalitarian state.

On the other one hand, the Church felt that a miracle can be used to fight with himself, so took quick action to stabilize the situation. Already on July 4, Bishop Goliński formed a committee to study the miracle and the liquid from the image¹⁶. However the results of the committee were never published.

To calm social moods on Sunday July 10, Bishop Kawla announced letter to the believers, in which he stated: "The existing results of the committee do not give rise to recognition of the phenomena that took place in our Lublin cathedral, the event

¹⁴ In this part of the article I used the information about the miracles and fragments of text from: M. Krzywosz, *Cuda...*, op. cit., pp. 93-136.

¹⁵ K. Rudnicki, *Cuda i objawienia w Polsce 1949-1986. Opis dwudziestu trzech wydarzeń uznanych przez ogół za ponadnaturalne*, Warszawa 1991, p. 13.

¹⁶ See J. Ziółek, A. Przytuła, *Represje wobec uczestników wydarzeń w Katedrze Lubelskiej w 1949 roku*, Lublin 1999, p. 33.

miraculous and supernatural (...) characters such as It not found and therefore the more you should remain calm"¹⁷.

The communist authorities were not satisfied with the Bishop's letter and decided to use the miracle and related events to discredit the Church. On July 13 appeared in "Sztandar Ludu" article *Abuse of Faith*, in which the author wrote: "Letter of bishop is evasive and Jesuitry. The author leaves a door open for further discussion orchestrated events ("so far findings", "phenomena in the Cathedral"), no less authoritative in such matters the person said that was not any supernatural (...) Spreading version of the "miracle" was organized character of involving many people (...) priests and monks initiated and led pilgrimages from villages to Lublin. On-site set up the group of priests on duty for a change in the cathedral (...). The authorities of the state, standing on the position of full freedom of religious belief, do not mix up this whole thing, in the belief that the Church hierarchy itself, if only out of respect for the feelings of believers, quickly mastered the obvious hysteria and put an end to psychosis. Meanwhile, the hierarchy of Lublin preferred consciously extend and foster arranged event"¹⁸.

On the same day, tragedy strikes in front of the cathedral – trampled to death 20 year old Helena Rabczuk and serious injury to other people. The communist press blamed the Church about the disaster.

Followed of the campaign in the press, the authorities take other propaganda activities. Organized rallies, mass meeting, during which participants condemned the activity of the clergy. The culmination of this campaign will be a huge demonstration, scheduled for July 17. This is all in an atmosphere of Stalinist terror, so that non-participation in these actions, organized by the communist authorities, at best, may result in the job loss, and at worst – put into the prison.

On July 17 comes to demonstration organized in Lublin, by the communist authorities. In the course of it, the people shouted slogan "Nobody back us to the Middle Ages", "Down with politicians in cassocks". They demanded "punishment of those guilty of the death of the girl".

As the demonstration was held on Sunday, the believers coming from the churches in the cries of "Down with the reactionary clergy" they began to shout: "Long live the clergy" or other anti-Communist slogan. In this situation, the police began to stop these people. There were clashes with stones and bricks. In the following days the Communist authorities decided that it could accede to the direct repression against supporters of the miracle and arrested hundreds of people, including almost all the priests serving in the cathedral.

In August, the church decided to radically solve the problem of a miracle. Bishop Goliński ordered the closure of the cathedral from August 8, justifying it the absence of the miraculous phenomena of the image and the need to complete the repair work. At

¹⁷ K. Rudnicki, *Cuda...*, op. cit., p. 30.

¹⁸ *Nadużycie Wiary*, „Sztandar Ludu”, 13 VII 1949.

the same time he has asked the believers not to arrival to Lublin in order to see the image in the cathedral. The attempt to close the church was a success, and the pilgrimages stopped.

When on August 12 cathedral was re-opened, it turned out all changes in the image disappeared. The miracle of Lublin was ended.

Years of intense Stalinism, progressive collectivization of agriculture, certainly brought a lot of local miraculous events. However, the communist terror, censorship, activity of secret police meant that they were quickly eliminated. The experience of the Church of the miracle of Lublin, and then his persecution meant that he preferred silence miracles than expose themselves to persecution.

Political thaw, miracle of Nowolipki – Warsaw 1959

Along with the political thaw, miracles and apparitions returned to social life. The communist authorities still struggled with religion, eg. removing religious symbols from schools, but for participating in miracles no longer threatened imprisonment, as in the case of a miracle of Lublin.

On 7 October, 1959 parish priest of the Church of St. Augustine in Warsaw at Nowolipki street, rev. Kuć wrote in the chronicle of the parish: "Passers-by noticed a silhouette at the top of the church tower. They began to gather groups of people who looked for in this phenomenon as the Mother of God"¹⁹. According to many Her profile was the result of glow emanating from gold-plated bullets, located on the church tower. This phenomenon was visible in the night hours, so arriving pilgrims, from all over the country, prayed, sang religious songs, lit candles, from late afternoon.

Hemka and Olędzki described atmosphere of those days: "The prevailing rural population, mainly women. Among these people it was said that Our Lady appears in different dresses, light and dark. Was recorded this statement: "Today, Our Lady is in a dark dress, because they came more". It was about policemen who guarded the order. Pilgrims gathered around the church and even far from the fence. They camped at night on located near ruins from the last war. They gathered in groups, praying and singing. When I noticed the tower brightness, they kneel. There were sighs, cries of "wow" and intensified the singing. Such a state of excitement lasted sometimes for hours evening and night. Residents of Warsaw hardly got involved in the crowds of people who came from outside"²⁰.

This situation not only disrupted the normal functioning of the district, but also the fulfilment of the ordinary pastoral functions. The rev. Kuć wrote: "Throughout

¹⁹ A. Paulska, W. Dutkiewicz, *Cud na Nowolipiu*, „Nowe Państwo” 2003, no 1. <http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kiosk/cud-na-nowolipiu/0rtkh> [16 III 2017].

²⁰ A. Hemka, J. Olędzki, *Wrażliwość...*, op. cit., p. 10.

[miracle] parish work suffered a lot. Children cannot get to church for catechism, it was not possible to carry out the sacrament of confirmation, singing lessons, etc.”²¹ The Curia issued an announcement in which the miracle of Nowolipki was defined as a natural phenomenon and asked the believers not to go to the Church of St. Augustine and stayed at their previous parishes.

The activities joined the police, which began regulating the movement of pilgrims, preventing the accumulation of people in one place. They introduced a curfew after 10.00 p.m. called people to disperse. However, not all went off peacefully, if punished with fines of nearly 300 people.

The authorities wanted to eliminate the source of the miracle, so in October dome was painted dark green and then finally glow disappeared, and pilgrims stopped arriving.

Miracle of Zabłudów 1965

On 13 May, 1965 on the local meadow, near Zabłudów, a 14 years old girl – Jadwiga Jakubowska had vision of the Virgin Mary.

She urged people to prayer and repentance, and made a promise to Jadwiga, that her ailing mother recovers. The next day, Jadwiga’s mother – Maria Jakubowska felt better and she was the first to believe in the apparition of her daughter.

Next apparition took place on 23 May. That day in the meadow gathered about fifty people. People sang Marian songs, prayed rosary. Our Lady appeared Jadwiga Jakubowska and promised that there will be in a week, on 30 May. Others present on the meadow was not given to see Her, but clearly felt Her presence, and besides, have witnessed the miracle of the dancing sun.

If the people have experienced something like this, it is obvious that recognized the apparition for real. The news of the miracle began to transform the myth of chronically ill mother, her holly daughter and the miraculous healing.

Local communist authorities also anxiously awaited 30 May, because this day was scheduled elections to the parliament. Elections in Polish People’s Republic had to demonstrate unity and public support for the government, and therefore mainly served as a propaganda. Apparition of the Virgin Mary that day could disrupt this effect.

On 30 May, thousands of people went to Zabłudów. The authorities tried not to allow the pilgrims to the city, organizing numerous road blocks and installing in the Zabłudów special police operating staff, which had the task of controlling the situation at location.

All these difficulties were overcome, because people bypassed the blockade, going up to the place of the promised apparition through meadows and forests. In the

²¹ A. Paulska, W. Dutkiewicz, *Cud...*, op. cit.

afternoon, on the meadow concentrate several thousand people, some of whom prayed and sang religious songs. Next to them, the riot police was waiting to crush assembly. About 5 p.m. there was a direct clash of riot police with the civilian. The police began to use batons to disperse the crowd, firecrackers and tear gas. The civilian did not remain indebted, destroyed police cars by stones. About 6 p.m., the police withdrew, due to the losses.

After that, the Virgin Mary once again appeared to Jadwiga Jakubowska on the meadow. Although only the girl had a vision, it is winning the fight against the forces of violent communist state was interpreted by many as the new miracle.

In June and July pilgrims have flocked from all over Poland to Zabłudów. There were news about miraculous healings, which attracted the sick and unhappy. There were songs and poems, describing the course of events. The believers erected crosses on the meadow at which to pray. People who had been healed, they left bandages and dressings. According to the logic of Marian apparitions dug pit, was commonly regarded as a spring.

However, the fact that Our Lady of Zabłudów did not appear again, the Church critical attitude to apparitions and repression of the communist authorities to people involved in the promotion of miracle of Zabłudów caused that after a few weeks of pilgrimages movement, the miracle started to fall into oblivion.

The marian apparitions in the martial law, Oława 1983

The most important revelations in the 80's, which attracted tens of thousands of pilgrims and initiated a network of visionaries, were miraculous events in Oława.

On 8 June, 1983, the Virgin Mary appeared to 51-year-old Kazimierz Domański, in his summer-house on the allotment. She said: "I healed you, you have to heal the sick"²².

On 4 October, Our Lady appeared again, ordering to build a chapel on the site of the apparitions and declaring that "who comes to this place, receives the grace of healing and blessing of God, but only if it will have a strong faith"²³. From that moment he began the healing people, which led to the mass arrival of pilgrims from all over the country.

The first half of the 80's and in particular the period of martial law, was a time of religious revival Poles. The communist authorities brutally pacifying "Solidarity", caused that the only sphere of freedom and hope for the Poles remained religion. It is difficult to say to what extent the Oława apparition consolation in a hopeless atmosphere of those days, but it certainly was one of the manifestations of then religious revival.

²² *Iskra Bożego Pokoju z Oławy*, B. Pawlak, W. Moszkowski (eds.), Wrocław 1997, p. 35. This book is actually a set of prophecies received by Domański in 1983-1996.

²³ *Ibidem*.

Communist authorities could not be reconciled with any unlicensed activity and thousands of pilgrims. Therefore, undertook typical in such situations action. Started from articles in the press accusing pilgrims of "ignorance, superstition, stupidity, obscurantism"²⁴ and so on. It did not bring results, because on 8 December 1984, The Feast of the Immaculate Conception, to Oława, which has 35 000 inhabitants came 28 000 pilgrims. Some of them had witnessed the miracle of the dancing sun. In addition, every day people flocked to the town hoping for a meeting with a visionary and subsequent healing.

Seeing the ineffectiveness of the current methods, the communist authorities decided to strengthen repression. The policemen wrote down the people coming to Oława and before allotments appeared a watch box with twenty-four-hour duty policemen, who tried not to allow the pilgrims to the visionary. On praying in the night directing strong headlights, they stopped for 48 hours, were punished with fines.

These actions, however, brought little effect. For the terminally ill for whom Domański was the only hope conduct of the authorities was not an obstacle. The believers made their way to the visionary side entrances and holes in the fence.

In the first years of the apparitions many priests cooperated with Domański: celebrate Mass, confessed pilgrims. However, from the beginning, the higher hierarchy of the clergy looked with great scepticism at the activity of visionary. On 20 January, 1986 the Press Office of the Episcopate released the information: "According to a conducted by the competent ecclesiastical authority investigations, there are no grounds to treat these supposed apparitions [in Oława] as supernatural. Therefore, the bishops turn to the diocesan clergy and religious, and the believers to stop concentrate in Oława and thus did not give support to these alleged apparitions. This may mislead public opinion, undermine the rule of faith and can be used against the Church"²⁵. It is clear that the Church strongly distanced himself from Oława apparitions.

Along with the restore freedom and democracy in Poland in 1989, the authorities changed the approach to all apparitions and miracles, whose has been going on freely.

Using this changes Domanski began in Olawa construction of the Shrine of Our Lady, Queen of the Universe and the God's Peace. In the next four years he was able to build a pilgrimage centre able to receive up about 3 000 pilgrims.

While in the '80s the main opponent Domanski were the Communist authorities, in free Poland, the most critical of the revelations in Olawa was the local bishop Gulbinowicz. On 14 December, 1999 he issued "strongest" of the published official announcement of the Church, which imposed an interdict on Domański and his followers. As a result, Domański and his supporters were *de jure* outside the Catholic Church.

²⁴ See K. Rudnicki, *Cuda...*, op. cit., pp. 55-57.

²⁵ R. Pindel, *Proroctwa nie lekceważcie, wszystko badajcie. Objawienia prywatne w świetle Słowa Bożego*, Kraków 1998, pp. 160-161.

It is difficult to assess how effective was an ecclesial punishment. In any case, there has been a decline in popularity Olawa among the pilgrims. Death of Domański in 2002 only deepened this process. In 2005, sanctuary built by visionary was transmitted to the Church, by the widow Barbara Domańska.

It is worth noticing, that Marian apparitions in Olawa contributed to the emergence in Poland of new visionaries, who created a network of contacts. Among the most important figure in this movement were: Ślipseki (1985) Ruda, Wiesław Piotr Łyjak (1986) Kępa Gostecka, Stanisław Kaczmar (1988) Chotyniec.

Miracles and apparition in democratic Poland

After 1989 and restore democracy and religious freedom, miracles initiated in the 80s were continued free, but there are also new phenomena.

In The Feast of Corpus Christi 1990, Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to Krzysztof Czarnota in Okonin. She said: "My son, do not be afraid, nothing bad will happen to you. People are unworthy, but abandon the time has come! My wish is that you be placed shrine to the faithful people here to pray. They come to this place, people of deep faith, but people will come who will laugh at you and make fun of My apparition. You is not discouraged, because they too will come. Therefore you will have suffered"²⁶. Okonin was also the site of other miracles: the multiplication of rosaries, cried statue of the Virgin Mary.

In 1994, in place of the apparitions, mentioned chapel was established and Masses are celebrated there. Later, Czarnota stopped receiving the message, but still has healing activity.

Another visionary who appeared in 1990, was Stefan Gwiazda from Wykrot. The Virgin Mary appeared to him and ordered to build a monastery of Divine Mercy, where would be the cult of the miraculous image. Gwiazda fulfil the request of Mary. He was helped in this by priest Hoppe, who began published prophecies, contributing to the popularization of Gwiazda. In Wykrot were other miraculous events: Mary left footprints and visionary receive communion from heaven.

Gwiazda managed to build a monastery, the consecration took place in 1999, Three years before his death.

Famous phenomenon in the Polish miraculous scene is activity of visionary Agnieszka Jezierska, who is promoted by suspend priest Natanek. However, due to the strong tension between the Church hierarchy and the movement organized by rev. Natanek and extremely critical views of theologians about her vision, Jezierska's influence on polish religiosity is very limited.

²⁶ E. Szczesiak, *Oni...*, op. cit., p. 112.

New phenomenon in polish miraculous scene

Apart from the above events, which are located in the traditional Polish popular religion, in recent times we have to deal with new phenomena – eucharistic miracles that have in a country dominated by the Mary cult did not occur.

On 12 October, 2008 during Mass in the church of Saint Anthony in Sokolka priest left the ground one of the Host²⁷. According to the procedure, it was placed into the liturgical vessel (*vasculum*) with water so as to dissolve, in the safe and locked in the sacristy. After two weeks, priest looked at the vessel and found that the Host not only wasn't dissolved, but its centre was established bloody stain-like clot.

Archbishop Ozorowski was informed about the event and in secret he set up a Church commission to investigate the matter. It commissioned a study of Host to histopathologists of the Medical University of Białystok. The results they obtained independently prof. Sobaniec-Łotowska and prof. Sulkowski indicated they are dealing with the heart tissue in a state of agony. In this situation, the Church commission published the results of the study on 14 October 2009.

Solemn Mass, which can be taken as the beginning of the promotion of the cult miraculous Host of Sokółka, took place on 2 October 2011. It was attended by about 25 000 believers from Poland and abroad. Then the part of miraculous Host has been placed in a special reliquary and exposed to public adoration. No doubt, Sokółka has become an important centre of pilgrimage on the map of contemporary Poland, attracting thousands of pilgrims.

The last of loud miracles was the eucharistic miracle of 2013 in Legnica²⁸. As in Sokółka, priest lowered down, the Host, which then does not dissolve in water, but on the surface of red blood clot appeared. It was then tested by scientists from the Medical University of Wrocław and Szczecin, where the shared material was able to extract the fibre tissue of the human heart.

In January, 2016 research report has been forwarded to the Vatican, which authorized the posting messages about the case and organize places of worship. On April 10, 2016, bishop of Legnica Kiernikowski made public the entire event, thus creating a new place of worship. The relics of the miraculous Host have been made available to the believers to adore, at the same time established a special book on the writing of new miracles.

²⁷ The course of events is taken from: A. Kaszuba, *Cud w Sokółce*, Warszawa 2009.

²⁸ The course of events is taken from: G. Górny, *Legnica i Sokółka w historii cudów eucharystycznych*, Radom 2016.

The postwar polish miracles as social facts

After the presentation in the previous section the most important miracles in postwar Poland, I would like them to characterize the features of sociological angle.

3.1. First of all, they grew from the traditions of popular piety. In the Polish religious culture, which is a strongly Marian, miracles and apparitions occurred for centuries. No wonder, that even the imposition of the communist system couldn't radically change the situation. Because of ideological reasons the Polish People's Republic was fighting religious life, miracles still took place. Repressive communist system did not destroy this element of Polish religiosity. This condition did not change after the political transformation, in fact, and now miracles still take place. The appearance of new miracles already in a democratic and free society shows that liberal democracy and is not in a position to threaten to that Polish form of religious life.

3.2. Miracles were largely people's reaction to the threat, which carried with it communism. They added strength and comfort during attempts to destroy the foundations of folk culture. The miracle of Lublin appeared at the beginning of attempts to collectivize Polish agriculture, which, if proved successful, would be the destruction of the world Polish peasant, as happened in the 30s in the Soviet Union. Miracle of Nowolipki appeared when the authorities removed crosses and religious educations from public schools, which caused numerous protests, especially in the provinces. Apparitions of Oława was partly a reaction to the introduced in 1981, martial law, which rapidly using violence ended the dream of a free Poland.

Miracles, and especially the messages that have already appeared in a democratic Poland, including threads, criticizing changes in social or religious, resulting from the processes of modernization. I mean a change in the Church, as the distribution of Communion in the hand, or in social life – trading on Sunday²⁹.

3.3. The most important post-war miracles have been and are still events engaging thousands of people. For some apparitions (Zabłudów, Oława) came to the formation of social movements aimed at inducing further apparitions and miracles and the promotion of information about them. In the case of Oława it came up to the formation of a network of visionaries, who contacted each other, and in a free Poland managed to organize in 1993 visionaries world congress. It was attended by guests from Canada, the USA and Japan³⁰.

3.4. Miraculous events often caused conflicts in local communities. This applies to, and the wonders of the communist period, but also those that occurred after the transition. The sources of these conflicts were varied: from the settlement of a financial nature (material goods left by pilgrims), through inability to believe that so far known to ordinary people suddenly become visionaries chosen by God, to disputes of ideological.

²⁹ See A. Zieliński, *Na straży...*, op. cit., pp. 153-154.

³⁰ See H. Czachowski, *Cuda...*, op. cit., pp. 189-190.

Dispute between the modern, progressive, secular worldview, where miracles are a sign of backwardness and ignorance, and the traditional image of reality, where they still have their place.

3.5. Despite the fact that Poland is a country almost religiously homogenous and the miracles described participated mainly Catholics, in the case of apparition in Zabłudów a miraculous event was also attended by the Orthodox. On the meadow, where there has been a apparition, placed symbols of Orthodox, mainly ritual towels. This demonstrates the strength of popular religion, which is able to overcome confessional divisions³¹.

3.6. After the war, The Catholic Church was extremely careful with miracles and apparitions. Firstly, due to the centuries-old tradition of the Church, which is always very carefully approached this type of event. Secondly, the experience of a miracle of Lublin, after which the communist authorities torture and imprisonment penalties multiannual persecuted dozens of people.

No wonder that the Church preferred to keep the far-reaching neutrality. Not supported miraculous events, he did not want to expose the oppressive communist rule. On the other hand, clearly they do not condemned, because he did not want to alienate itself of the believers, for whom miracles were important events on the basis of their individual piety. As a result, none of the miracles of the communist era has not been formally recognized by the decree of the Church. The level of tension between the movements propagating miracles and the Church was not high and did not lead to the separation of the members of the Catholic Church. The greatest tension occurred between visionary Domański and Bishop Gulbinowicz that in 1999 interdict imposed on a visionary and his followers. But on his deathbed Domański received the sacraments and his funeral was Catholic too.

3.7. With regard to the neutral attitude of the Church to the wonders of the time communist, neither of the places where they occur not turned into a permanent place of worship, which would become a shrine of pilgrimage. It was not until the last Eucharistic miracles in Sokółka and Legnica having a place in churches and is under the full control of religious institutions, can turn into a major place of pilgrimage. They serve the activities of the Church, as a new habit in the diocese of Białystok – a pilgrimage for First Communion children to Sokółka.

3.8. Although the fight against miracles in the communist era, blocking and censorship of information about them, however strong the memory of them persistent in the local consciousness. Conducted contemporary interviews with the participants of the event and the study of collective memory of the miracle in Zabłudów unambiguously confirm this. Getting to the living participants, witnesses miracles or apparitions of

³¹ See M. Krzywosz, *Religijność ludowa na pograniczu katolicko-prawosławnym w perspektywie prywatnego objawienia maryjnego*, „Pogranicze. Studia społeczne”, 2003, no. XI, pp. 107-114.

the past and observe new miracles and worship emerging around them, will set the perspective of research on miraculous events in contemporary Poland.

Conclusions

Miracles and apparitions did not disappear during the communist Polish People's Republic and the modern secular liberal democracy because of the tradition and strength of Polish popular religion. Unfortunately, due to the strong ideologized social sciences in the communist period, which was reflected, in the belief that miracles and apparitions are superstition, research them do not actually carried out. Only political transformation of 1989 allowed to undertake research on them.

The most important miracles and apparitions in Poland after World War II can include the miracle of Lublin (1949), the miracle of Nowolipki (1959), an apparition in Zabłudów (1965), the apparitions in Oława (1983-2002), an Eucharistic miracle in Sokółka (2008).

From a sociological perspective post-war Poland miracles were characterized by a strong grounding in traditional religious culture, being a reaction to the threat, which carried with it the communist regime as openly atheistic system, seeking to destroy the traditional folk culture. In addition, they were massive event, involving tens of thousands of people, leading to the emergence of social movements promoting apparitions and related social conflicts. The attitude of the Catholic Church to miracles especially in the communist period, was characterized by far-reaching caution or even distance. If the miracles took place after the political transformation and occurred in churches, so they are under the full control of the religious institution (Sokółka, Legnica), we are witnessing the promotion and the emerging cult.

Maciej Krzywosz - SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECT OF MIRACLES AND APPARITIONS IN CONTEMPORARY POLAND

The article presents and analyzes in the sociological perspective the most important miracles and revelations that have taken place in Poland since the end of World War II to present. The text begins with the presentation of problems related to the study of these phenomena, particularly during the People's Republic of Poland, when for ideological reasons, such research were almost not conducted. Next, the most important miracles of that time (Lublin, Nowolipki, Zabłudów), the period of political transformation (Oława) and the recent phenomena (Sokółka and Legnica) were presented. The sociological analysis of the postwar miracles shows that they were significant social facts and an important element of Polish religious life, mainly popular religion. Transformation of the system and the transition to the system of secular liberal democracy did not undermine this element of Polish religiosity.