

CHARITAS. CHARITY AND WELFARE WORK IN THE
IDEOLOGY, NORMS OF CONDUCT AND PRACTICE OF
VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS IN THE 16th–18th CENTURIES

A conference devoted to *Charitas. Charity and Welfare Work in the Ideology, Norms of Conduct and Practice of Various Denominations in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 16th–18th Centuries* was held in the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences from October 26th to 28th, 1998. It was organised by the Chair of History of Old Polish Culture of the Historical Institute of Warsaw University and the Centre for Modern History of the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

The conference opened with a paper read by Bolesław Kumor (Catholic University of Lublin) *The Care Extended by the Church in the Light of Independent Poland's Synodal Legislation*, which acquainted the participants with the Church's social activities propagated by Polish synodal legislation and the wide range of social problems dealt with by the synods. *The Notion of Charity in the Works of Piotr Skarga* was discussed by Father Stanisław Obirek (Jesuits' College in Cracow), who recalled the still underestimated charitable aspect of Skarga's homilies and the many Charitable Brotherhoods set up by the Jesuits. Katarzyna Karaskiewicz's (Historical Institute of Warsaw University) short paper *Primate Michał Jerzy Poniatowski's View of Charity as Presented in His Pastoral Letters from the 1770s and 1780s* was connected with the previous paper for in his activity the Primate was inspired by Piotr Skarga's teachings. Karaskiewicz criticised Poniatowski, saying that what he offered was charity devoid of mercy and magnanimity without its spirit.

The main subject discussed after a break in debates was charity in Protestantism. The first paper, *Historical Protestantism's Idea of Charity* was a kind of introduction. It was read by Janusz Maciuszko (Christian Theological Academy), who presented Protestantism's doctrinal principles of charity, their origin and evolution. Elżbieta Byrtek (Christian Theological Academy) discussed *Charity and Social Work in 18th Century Pietism*, that is, the evolution of Protestant conceptions of charity. These studies were supplemented by a short paper read by Sebastian Kawczyński (Historical Institute of Warsaw University) on *Charity in the Homilies of Father Samuel Dambrowski*. Kawczyński characterised Dambrowski's concept of charity as well as his practical guidelines in this respect, and presented a quantitative evaluation of the place of charity motifs in moral teaching.

The next speakers discussed the charitable work conducted by Orthodox believers and Moslems. Antoni Mironowicz (Białystok University) presented *The Charitable Work Conducted by the Orthodox Church in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, drawing attention to the fact that the Orthodox Church did not stop caring for the needy even in the years when its fate hung in the balance. *Charity in Islam* was dealt with by Imam Mahmud Tah Żuk (Moslemic Institute in Warsaw) and Andrzej Zakrzewski (Centre for the History of Law of Warsaw University). The former presented the Koranic view of charity and the way it was practised by the Moslems, and the latter spoke of the charitable work conducted by Moslem communities in the Commonwealth. He said that in view of the scarcity of sources it was impossible to present a full picture of this work. He warned against confining the subject to funeral banquets and care of relatives, for this would be a simplification.

The second day of the conference, devoted to charity in practice, was opened by Jakub Goldberg (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) who in a paper *Poverty and Destitution and the Polish Jews' Charity in the Old Commonwealth* said that the growing poverty of the Jewish population and the increasing difficulties in collecting funds for charitable work, which as

time went on was extended only to local Jews, not only aggravated the situation of persons needing constant assistance but were a powerful blow to the almsgivers, who were unable to fulfil an essential moral and religious duty. This subject was continued by Anna Mi ch a ł o w s k a (Historical Institute of Warsaw University) whose brief study *The Charity Brotherhood (khevre kadisha) in the Jewish Commune of Swarzędz in the 18th Century* confirmed the conclusions of the previous speaker, showing two faces of charity. Charitable work was the commune's duty and was a highly commendable deed, but it was an enormous financial burden. This is why expenditure on benevolent work was reduced and its range was restricted to local needs.

After a break, Wojciech K r i e g s e i s e n (Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences) read a paper entitled *Welfare Work in the Activity of Calvinist Churches in the 18th Century* in which he discussed the Calvinists' charitable work in Lithuania and its specific characteristics. In Lithuania charity was extended mostly to persons of noble descent. The organisation of Christian benevolent work in Gdańsk in the 16th and 17th centuries was presented by Father Zdzisław K r o p i d ł o w s k i (University of Gdańsk) who acquainted the audience with the development of charitable work steered by municipal authorities and the agencies set up by them for the purpose. *The Development of Hospitals in the Archdeaconry of Sandomierz in the 17th and 18th Centuries* was described by Waldemar K o w a ł s k i (Teachers' Training College in Kielce) who drew attention to the fact that hospitals, whose number did not change, were increasingly poor because of the worsening economic situation and pauperisation of the population. This part of the conference ended with short essays presented by Grzegorz M a z e k (Warsaw) *Care of Orphans as a Social Institution in Toruń at the Beginning of the 17th Century*, Rafał D e g i e ł (Historical Institute of Warsaw University) *The Orthodox Church's Social Work in Stuck Compared with the Work of Other Denominations*, and by Dorota M a z e k (Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences) *The Order of St. John of God and Its Principles of the Care of the Poor and Mentally Ill in the 17th and 18th Centuries*.

The third day, devoted to social work in situations when whole communities were endangered, was opened by Andrzej W y r o b i s z (Historical Institute of Warsaw University). In his paper *Christian Charity during Epidemics in Towns in the Modern Era* he showed that people's behaviour was shaped not only by natural factors, such as instinct, fear of death, but also by cultural and social factors. Andrzej K a r p i Ń s k i (Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences) read a paper *Care of the Sick and Poor in Polish Towns during 17th and 18th Century Epidemics*, in which he described the organisation of the care of the sick, the persons responsible for it, the forms of care and its financial basis. He also quoted examples of persons who were deeply involved in this work. The conference ended with a paper by Father Ludwik G r z e b i e Ń SJ, *Polish Jesuits in the Face of Epidemics*, in which he discussed charitable work during epidemics, the organisation of pharmacies and some hospitals as well as the services rendered by priests, confessors and monks specially appointed for this purpose.

Each paper was followed by a discussion. Most questions concerned the connection between norms and practice, differences and similarities between various denominations' idea of charity, differences in the way they treated people needing help in various periods, and the factors which shaped their attitudes. Many questions concerned the organisation of research work and the use of sources.

Piotr Kroll

POLITICAL CULTURE IN THE PAST AND NOW

On April 22 and 23, 1998, a second national conference in the cycle *Political Culture in Poland* was organised by the undersigned. The conference, which was held at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, was attended by representatives of academic circles from Cracow, Opole, Warsaw, Wrocław, Bydgoszcz, Katowice, Rzeszów, Gdańsk and Poznań. It was a continuation of the discussion held at the Adam Mickiewicz University at the end of 1995, the

results of which were presented in the publication *Political Culture in Poland in the Past and Now* (collective work, ed. M. Kosman, Poznań 1996, 271 pp.). The articles included in the volume had summaries in German.

This year's conference, held under the motto *Myths and Facts*, was attended mainly by historians and political scientists; like the previous conference it showed close ties between these disciplines and also between historical and political culture. The twenty-four papers read at the conference concerned mainly the 15th–17th and 20th centuries. Among the papers belonging to the first group were: Jan Seredyka's *The Archbishops of Gniezno during the First Stage of the Counter-Reformation. Myths and Facts*, Stanisław Obirek's *Ignatius Loyola's Political Thought*, Janusz Byliński's *Facts and Myths in the History of the Church Union from the 15th to the Middle of the 17th Century*, Jan Kwak's *The Possibilities of Poland Recovering Silesia during the Thirty Years War*, and Henryk Wisner's paper on the Lithuanians' attitude to Sweden during the Swedish invasion of Poland in 1655 (*The Myth of Kiejdany*).

The Lithuanians' place in the tradition of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was discussed by Marceł Kosman (*Revival of Mythology. Between Lithuanomania and Lithuanophobia*), Jacek Sobczak (*The Stereotype of the Lithuanian*) and Jakub Wajer, who dealt with an unknown source from the beginning of the 20th century (*Between Warsaw and Kovno. The Lithuanians' Dilemma*). Andrzej Wojtas raised the question of *Paternalism in Polish Political Culture in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Władysław Gill spoke about the *Myth of Francis Joseph in Poland*, and Józef Długosz presented facts and reflections connected with the 50th anniversary of the death of Father Josef Tiso, president of the pro-Nazi Slovak Republic set up during World War II. Włodzimierz Jastrzębski recalled an episode from the beginning of World War II, the well known "Bydgoszcz events", in the light of facts and propaganda.

Among the papers dealing with contemporary times particularly interesting were by Zbigniew Drozdowicz (*Threats from the West — A Myth or Reality?*), Andrzej Chodubski (*Myths and Facts among Members of the Present-Day Polish Diaspora*), Karol Janowski (*The Year 1989 — New Forms of Expression and Political "Game"*), and Jan Załubski (*Politicians and the Media — the Sources of Conflict*).

Full materials from the conference will be published with German and English summaries. The third conference of the cycle is planned for the spring of 2000. It will deal with *Political Culture in Poland — Visions of the Future*.

Marceł Kosman

We would like to inform our readers that one more article, strictly connected with the subject of this volume, namely:

Włodzimierz Mędrzecki:

***The Shaping of the Personality
of Peasant Youth and Its Start in Life
in Central Poland, 1864–1939***

will be published in the next issue
of «Acta Poloniae Historica».