

Vatican encouraged by changes in Poland

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The selection of a Catholic editor as Poland's designated prime minister has heartened Vatican officials, who described the move as a dramatic turning point for Eastern Europe's most Catholic country.

They said Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the Solidarity leader chosen Aug. 19 to form a government, was an old friend of Pope John Paul II. The two saw each other frequently when the pope was archbishop of Krakow, and when they met at the Vatican in 1987 the pope embraced Mazowiecki warmly, they said.

"It's a dramatic and important development," said one Vatican official who deals with Polish affairs. "It certainly represents a turning point in the history of Poland."

The official said the selection of Poland's first non-communist prime minister since the war, along with a government led by the mostly Catholic Solidarity movement, could have immediate positive effects for the church.

For example, the official said, the recent law granting the Polish church legal status would probably have an "easy" application under a Solidarity-led government. Under the old regime, he said, there might well have been conflict over specific points of the legislation.

The official said the church has had an indirect but important role in Poland's democratization. The Polish church encouraged and observed last spring's round-table talks that opened up the political process to opposition candidates. Local church leaders generally supported the Solidarity candidates in the June elections, which set the stage for Mazowiecki's selection.

"These were extremely important elections. This meant the regime, at least partially, recognized the sovereignty of the Polish nation. The pope has been insisting on this — in public and in private — for years," said the official.

The official cautioned that Poland's new leaders are inexperienced and "are bound to make mistakes."

"But they have potential talents to lead and rule the country. We are praying for them," he said, adding that Western economic aid will be essential to their success.

The official said the pope has followed the events "closely but privately — he's been careful not to be seen as intruding."

During a flight to Santiago de Compostela, Spain, Aug. 19, the pope called the formation of the new Polish government "a step forward."

Having a non-communist government in Poland is "a very important event," the pope said. "That which has been done is



Solidarity leader Lech Walesa addresses strikers at a shipyard in Gdansk in this May 1988 file photo.

AP Wide World Photo

very important."

Polish church leaders had a visible role in the events surrounding Mazowiecki's rise to power. Poland's primate, Cardinal Jozef Glemp of Gniezno and Warsaw, met with the president, Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski, shortly before Jaruzelski nominated Mazowiecki, according to press reports from Poland.

After he was informed of the decision, Mazowiecki's first visit was to Cardinal Glemp's residence. The next day, Mazowiecki attended Mass in Gdansk, where the local bishop introduced him to an overflow crowd outside.

A Polish Vatican source, reflecting on the sudden political turn in his homeland, said: "It seems difficult to imagine a prime minister wearing on his lapel a Solidarity button and another of the Madonna of Czestochowa. But at this point, it's just as hard to imagine a prime minister wearing a Communist Party pin."

Another Vatican official said that while risk is inherent in such swift political change, he doubted whether the Soviet Union would interfere. In 1981, after Soviet pressure, Polish troops were used to crush the Solidarity movement. That scenario is "certainly not" possible today, he said.

"I'm sure Jaruzelski himself regrets that act. I'm sure they would cancel that page of history if they could," he said.

Catholic journalist to become Poland's non-communist leader

WARSAW, Poland (CNS) — Tadeusz Mazowiecki, selected prime minister of the first Polish government with a non-communist majority since World War II, is a Catholic writer and one of Solidarity leader Lech Walesa's closest advisers.



The 62-year-old editor of *Tygodnik Solidarnosc* (Solidarity Weekly) led intellectuals who advised striking workers at Gdansk's Lenin shipyard in August, 1980. The strike gave birth to the first free trade union in the communist world.

Known as a reserved and cautious Catholic writer, Mazowiecki was a top Solidarity negotiator at talks with the government last winter. The talks paved the way for the opposition's entry into Parliament.

He spent a year in jail after being interned when the authorities imposed martial law in December 1981, sending Solidarity underground for more than seven years.

Unlike other leading union advisers, Mazowiecki did not run for the Sejm, Poland's parliament, last June. He in-

stead reopened the weekly newspaper he had edited until the authorities banned it under martial law.

"The reappearance of *Tygodnik Solidarnosc* in the shops is the final proof for many Solidarity members that the union finally exists normally," he said.

For 10 years during the 1960s, Mazowiecki was an outspoken parliamentary deputy for a small Catholic opposition group. He simultaneously edited a monthly, *Wies*, in which he published works by authors banned by the communists.

The communist authorities barred him from running for Parliament in 1972 after he tried in vain to set up an inquiry to investigate the December 1970, killings of dozens of striking Baltic coast workers by the armed forces.

In the late 1970s he helped organize the so-called "Flying University" of leading academics who gave clandestine lectures and tuition outside the communist-run education system.

Mazowiecki again became an adviser to Gdansk shipyard workers in 1988 when they twice went on strike, in May and August, to demand that Solidarity again be legalized.

Mexican church seeks amendments to constitution

By Mike Tangeman
Catholic News Service

MEXICO CITY — In negotiations with the government, Mexican church officials are seeking to abolish five of the various anti-church measures contained in Mexico's post-revolutionary Constitution of 1917.

The changes would require amendments to five constitutional articles that govern church-state relations. A key amendment would grant the church legal status for the first time in more than 70 years.

The articles in question are:

- Article 3, dealing with education, which states that "religious corporations, ministers of worship, shareholding societies engaged exclusively or predominantly in educational activities and associations or societies linked to the propagation of any

religious creed shall not intervene in any way in facilities in which primary, secondary and teacher-training education and that destined for workers or campesinos (small farmers) is imparted."

- Article 5, which governs the right of association and declares that because the state will not allow establishment of organizations that restrict the rights of the individual, "the law, consequently, shall not permit the establishment of monastic orders, whatever be their denomination or intended object of their establishment."

- Article 24, which declares the right to worship to be an individual right to be carried out in churches or at home, states that "all religious acts of public worship shall be celebrated precisely within the churches, which will always be under the vigilance of the (public) authority."

- Article 27, which regulates the ownership of property, declares that "religious associations known as churches, whatever be their creed, cannot, in any case, have the capability of acquiring, possessing or administering real estate, nor capital (buildings) erected upon it."

The article also states that "the churches destined for public worship are property of the nation, represented by the federal government, which shall determine which shall continue to be destined to (that) object."

"The bishoprics, rectories, seminaries, homes or colleges of religious associations, convents, or any other building constructed or destined for the administration, propagation or teaching of religious worship shall pass ... to the direct dominion of the nation, to be destined exclusively to the

public service of the federation, or of the states, in their respective jurisdictions. The churches which subsequently are erected for public worship shall be property of the nation."

- Article 130, which specifically regulates church-state relations and states that "the law does not recognize any legal capacity whatsoever of the religious groupings known as churches."

According to Bishop Luis Reynoso Cervantes of Cuernavaca, adviser to the Mexican bishops conference on canon law and Mexican constitutional law, the amendment to Article 130 is the key to all other constitutional reforms being sought because "the recognition of our legal capacity ... implies the recognition of other rights contained in the rest of the articles."