

COLUMNISTS

Polish case exemplifies self-censorship

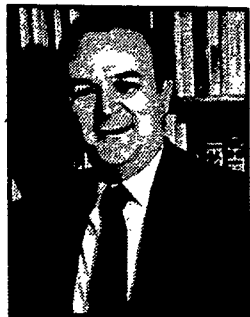
The worst and most insidious form of censorship is self-censorship. It is a censorship born of fear that someone at the next higher level of authority will be displeased and punitive if what is being considered for publication is, in fact, published.

Self-censorship is undoubtedly practiced in many Catholic diocesan newspapers across the country. It affects what is said or not said in the editorials, which items of religious news are covered (and how) and which are not, and which opinion columns are carried and which are not.

Without any direct order from the bishop publisher, but with full knowledge of what he would say if asked or how he would react if he saw the material actually printed in his diocesan paper, editors engage in self-censorship to protect their jobs.

Many of them are lay people who depend upon that diocesan check for the support of themselves and their families. One ought not to sneer at them, even as one deplores the predicament in which they find themselves.

One of the most blatant examples of self-censorship has recently been uncovered in Poland, with regard to the Polish edition of last year's best selling biography of Pope John Paul II, *His Holiness*, by



essays in
theology

By FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi.

The American publisher, Doubleday, is suing the Polish publisher, Amber, for damages and for the seizure of more than 14,500 copies of the Polish edition. At the same time, the coauthors have refused to tour the country to promote the book.

One of the authors, Carl Bernstein, sees a clear parallel between the behavior of the Polish publisher and the previous Communist rulers of Poland.

"In this case," he notes, "rather than there being Communist censors, there are people who fear some kind of imagined reprobation from the church or Polish readers."

This, of course, is an exact description of self-censorship and of its primary mo-

tive and driving force: fear.

His Holiness has already been published in 10 countries without incident. What special anxieties did the Polish publisher have about the book that led them down the path of self-censorship?

First, there were concerns about the pope's being portrayed as if he were old and ill, which he is, of course. The publisher was also uncomfortable with the authors' descriptions of the pope as angry during his fourth trip to Poland in September 1991. But he was angry and publicly so. The Polish publisher, on its own authority and without permission of Doubleday or the authors, simply excised all these references from the Polish edition.

Second, there were concerns about the book's criticisms of certain figures in the Polish hierarchy, past and present. Unflattering references to Cardinal Jozef Glemp, primate of Poland, were dropped, as was the famously anti-Semitic statement by Cardinal August Hlond in a 1936 pastoral letter: "There will be a Jewish problem as long as the Jews remain ... It is a fact that the Jews are fighting against the Catholic Church, persisting in free thinking, and are the vanguard of godlessness, Bolshevism and subversion."

Since the publication of the Polish edition, Doubleday has hired an independent translator to check the Polish translation more carefully. According to Doubleday, a 70-page review of the Polish edition has already uncovered even more examples of mistranslations, simplifications and unauthorized cuts (see "Fight Over What Was Lost in Polish Translation," *The New York Times*, 5/29/97).

Most forms of self-censorship escape such public scrutiny. The self-censor rarely get caught at what they do because self-censorship isn't so much a matter of what one does, as what one does not do.

By way of contrast to the practice and to the unhealthy atmosphere that fosters it, the Second Vatican Council insisted that "all the faithful, clerical and lay, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry and of thought, and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about those matters in which they enjoy competence" (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, n. 62).

Self-censorship makes a mockery of that principle.

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God wants us to enjoy Sunday R&R

Sunday's Readings: (3) Mark 6:30-34. (R1) Jeremiah 23:1-6. (R2) Ephesians 2:13-18.

Different people have different ideas about work.

A church had the same pastor for many years. He retired and a new young pastor took his place. The young pastor's first suggestion was that the church hire a part-time person to do the church lawn. One of the members of the parish council said indignantly, "The former pastor always took care of the church's lawn himself."

"I'm aware of that," said the young pastor. "But I called him and he doesn't want to do it anymore."

No matter our attitude toward work, you and I have a religious responsibility to take time to rest, to relax, to take off our shoes and let our hair down (if we have any). When the apostles returned from a missionary tour, Jesus said to them, "Come by yourselves to an out-of-the-way place and rest a little."

At the heart of the Ten Commandments, God said, "Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days you may labor but on the Sabbath you may do no work" (Ex 20:8-9).

It is not only sad, but tragic, that more and more commercial businesses are en-



a word
for
sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

croaching on the Sunday rest. Sunday has become a major shopping day. Working on Sunday takes people not only away from worshipping God, but also away from their families.

Then, too, God knows our frame. He knew that all work and no play would make one not only dull, but psychotic and neurotic. When a seven-day work week was introduced under the stress of World War II, industry was plagued by absenteeism. A bow always struck will lose its snap.

God wanted us to have one day a week in which everyone worships God and is free to visit friends and relatives and do whatever helps to refresh and rekindle our minds, our bodies and our spirits.

The church in her Code of Canon Law commands, "We are bound to participate

at Mass on Sundays." Then the code goes on, "We are to abstain from those labors and business concerns that impede the worship to be rendered to God, the joy which is proper to the Lord's Day, or the proper relaxation of mind and body" (Canon 1247).

Note the purpose of the Sunday rest: worship, joy and relaxation.

Businesses today are worshipping the golden calf. They are demanding 40, 50, even 60 hours a week; they are requiring more and more productivity out of fewer and fewer employees. Profits, not people, are their primary concern.

No one was more committed to his work than Jesus. Yet Jesus said to his disciples on more than one occasion, "Come by yourselves to an out-of-the-way place and rest a little." He knew the need of the body to get away and rest and relax.

Benjamin Franklin said, "Early to bed and early to rise." But Franklin liked to stay up late playing chess or chatting with friends. He whiled away hours tinkering with kites, bottles, keys, stoves. After introducing the bathtub to this country in 1790, Franklin spent hours inside his own, soaking and reading.

Often when Jesus took his apostles apart, it was to pray. He knew we needed

to refresh not only our bodies, but our spirits as well. The Sunday rest and worship prevent our being engulfed by destructive value systems and corrosive pressures that tend to mold human beings into caricatures of what God meant them to be.

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Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, July 21

Exodus 14:5-18;

Matthew 12:38-42

Tuesday, July 22

Exodus 14:21-15:1;

John 20:1-2, 11-18

Wednesday, July 23

Exodus 16:1-5, 9-15;

Matthew 13:1-9

Thursday, July 24

Exodus 19:1-2, 9-11, 16-20;

Matthew 13:10-17

Friday, July 25

2 Corinthians 4:7-15;

Matthew 20:20-28

Saturday, July 26

Exodus 24:3-8; Matthew 13:24-30

Women Needed for Hormone Therapy Research

As they search for the combinations of hormone replacement therapy that are both safe and effective, the Reproductive Endocrinology Unit and Menopause Center at the University of Rochester Medical Center seek women to participate in a study.

Volunteers must be healthy, post-menopausal women between the ages of 40 and 65. After a physical examination, women will be randomized to one of 8 treatment groups and receive various combinations of an FDA-approved estrogen and/or progestin, or placebo.

During this one-year study, volunteers are seen every three months. Benefits to volunteers include free Pap smears and lab tests, free mammogram, and possible relief of menopausal symptoms based on the medication(s) they receive. Compensation of \$450 is available. Women who have had a hysterectomy are not eligible.

Women interested in participating can call Wanda Rivers at 275-7891.



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