JONATHAN LUXMOORE

Tinker, tailor, soldier, priest

A spate of revelations by priests in Poland, and in other former Communist countries, that they had spied for state secret police forces, has left Catholics divided over the best way to move forward. Should the church authorities further investigate the priests or should the past be left behind?

Last month a prominent Polish priest became the latest church figure to confess that he spied for the secret police during the Communist era.

"I wish to apologise to everyone, including my relatives, and ask forgiveness from those I harmed," Mgr Michal Czajkowski, the Church's representative on the Catholic *Wiez* monthly, told newspapers in a statement.

"My guilt is indisputable. I can't excuse this 24-year entanglement only by citing the nature of the times or my own naivety, fear and loose talk. I also showed a weakness of character."

Mgr Czajkowski's admission came soon after it was reported that another senior priest, a friend of John Paul II, had been a police informer. A new book, *Spying on Wojtyla*, details the bugs and cameras planted in the future pope's Krakow residence and the information supplied about his private life by informer-priests with codenames such as "Jurek" and "Trybun". An investigation is also under way into possible Polish involvement in the May 1981 attempt on the Pope's life in Rome. All of this has renewed interest in identifying clergy agents.

In the late 1990s, stories abounded of priests who had informed for the regime while denouncing it from their pulpits, prompting calls for the full-scale screening, or lustration, of Catholic clergy. Yet while few question the Church's heroic role in defending human rights under Communist rule, the latest revelations have placed the historical record in a more realistic, less iconic light.

In a late June statement, the Polish Bishops' Conference said it would oppose any form of screening which drew only on files from the Sluzba Bezpieczenstwa, or SB, Poland's secret police. "These documents were prepared by secret services hostile to the Church," the bishops noted. "There can be no proper lustration without first uncovering the SB's structures and methods of activity."

Under a 1997 law, MPs, judges and other civic officials are required to state whether they "consciously and secretly collaborated" with the SB, at the risk of being labelled "lustration liars".But Church personnel are not covered by the measure, and the judicial and administrative procedures remain ill-defined, making it easier to impugn than to exonerate. Some Catholics think that if priests collaborated and informed, they should con-

fess and apologise. Until that happens, they argue, there can be no understanding and forgiveness.

During his late-May pilgrimage to Poland, Pope Benedict came to the defence of accused clergy, insisting the *confessio peccati* – a public admission of guilt – should be accompanied by a *confessio laudis* which acknowledged the Church's past achievements. "We believe the Church is holy, but that there are sinners among her members," he told clergy in Warsaw's St John's Cathedral on 25 May. "Humble sincerity is needed not to deny the sins of the past, and at the same time not to indulge in facile accusations in the absence of real evidence or without regard for the different preconceptions of the time."

A day after the Pope's departure, however, another senior priest, Mgr Mieczyslaw Malinski, was named as an informer by Poland's Catholic *Tygodnik Powszechny* weekly. Mgr Malinski, a friend of John Paul II from seminary days, admitted contacts with the SB, but denied being an agent. However, editors of the newspaper, whose Krakow staff was heavily infiltrated, said they had known for a long time about "Delta", the 83-year-old priest's codename.

Krakow's archdiocesan curia condemned the reports and accused the media of "undermining love for the Church and Christ". And when Fr Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski, a much-harassed former Solidarity chaplain at the nearby Nowa Huta steelworks, promised to publish the names of 28 more clergy who had informed on John Paul II, Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz stepped in.

"Throwing accusations at particular people after just a superficial examination of the material is highly irresponsible and harmful," the cardinal, who was John Paul II's personal secretary until his death in April 2005, told the priest in a published letter. "I have not authorised you to deal with this matter. Instead, I have made it a task for competent people with historical knowledge and experience, who will guarantee a neutral examination of this delicate material."

In a Corpus Christi sermon, Cardinal Dziwisz apologised to Poles who felt "hurt by clergy collaborators", urging Catholics not to "lose trust in the Church" over the issue. However, when his own commission presented its report in June, there were no names and facts – only a series of reflections "on the theological dimension of the problem".

Around one in 10 Catholic clergy is estimated by the country's National Remembrance Institute (IPN) to have acted as informers in Communist-ruled Poland, beginning in the 1950s when attempts were made to install pro-Communist "patriot priests" in top positions. However, virtually all were approached at one time or another, especially those with particular needs and vulnerabilities, with the highest recruitment rates recorded in the 1980s.

After 1989, Church hierarchies throughout Eastern Europe made efforts to vet their priests, retiring or downgrading those compromised by collaboration. But in Poland, the process was often piecemeal.

The end to Communist rule was negotiated at government-opposition talks, so there was no systematic clear-out of office holders such as occurred in Czechoslovakia or East Germany.Clergy collaboration seemed marginal beside the Church's role in helping restore democracy. Not surprisingly, Poland's Catholic bishops resisted calls for a public discussion.

In 2001, a former Interior Minister, General Czeslaw Kiszczak, confirmed in a newspaper letter that he had agreed to shred documents "presenting clergy in an unfavourable light" when Church-State relations were normalised. However, there were warnings that some priests could face blackmail by former SB agents.

Poland's Catholic primate, Cardinal Jozef Glemp, admitted some had shown a "far-reaching loyalty" to Communist power "for the sake of a quiet life or a few wretched coins". Yet although SB archives were collected and catalogued by the IPN after its creation in 1999, Church leaders appeared more interested in what they revealed about the glory

of Catholic martyrdom than the shame of Catholic collaboration.

Evidence suggests the SB added the names of dissidents to their files to discredit them, and gave codenames to casual contacts who had merely been considered as potential recruits. But in early 2005, an enterprising journalist secretly copied the IPN's database and published the names of 240,000 alleged collaborators on the internet. The "Wildstein List" appeared without supporting documentation; and for a short time, names could be added or deleted by readers. Many of those included protested their innocence but found themselves ostracised by friends and colleagues. In at least one other case, the priest was supported by some colleagues but not by others. When Fr Konrad Hejmo was accused in April 2005 by the IPN of spying on John Paul II in Rome, his superior helped publicise the allegations, while fellow Dominicans came to his defence, accusing the IPN of acting as "judge, prosecutor and executioner".

Controversies about the role of priests in the Communist era are not confined to the Church in Poland. In May 2003, the Czech Bishops Conference rejected the resignation of its general secretary, Mgr Karel Simandl, after his name appeared among other priests on a list of 75,000 former Statni Bezpecnosti (StB) police informers. In March 2005, bishops in neighbouring Slovakia announced fresh plans to vet clergy after claims that former informers still held Church offices. In neighbouring Hungary, the Bishops' Conference asked forgiveness after a list of clergy-agents was published on the internet, including the Church's retired primate, Cardinal Laszlo Paskai.

The Polish Church has, however, been divided in its reactions. Four dioceses have set up commissions to investigate Communist-era infiltration, as have the Dominican order and Conference of Religious Superiors representing Poland's 23,000 Catholic nuns. But most have refused, pleading lack of time and resources. Some, like Archbishop Tadeusz Goclowski of Gdansk, have cited practical reasons. If it is to be fair, he argues, the lustration of priests should be handled by a neutral body rather than by the Church itself. Others, like Archbishop Jozef Michalik of Przemysl, the Bishops' Conference president, have objected that there are more pressing problems to attend to, such as mass unemployment and emigration, and that the current hunt for informers will merely "create new martyrs".

Yet many Poles believe church leaders are failing to confront reality in their determination to defend the Church's institutional interests. By opening the archives, they could show how the Church's own collaborators were victims of the system. They could also set an important example by facilitating a much-needed debate on the parameters of guilt and forgiveness, and by helping restore integrity and honesty to public affairs.

■ **Jonathan Luxmoore is *The Tablet*'s Poland correspondent and is based in Warsaw.**

PETER STANFORD

'A bit more boredom and a little less cosseting might teach children self-reliance'

The long summer holiday from school is reaching seemingly to the far horizon. And with it comes a pressure for ceaseless activity. Where once August was a time to hang out with your friends away from school and its pressures, today there's hardly a classmate of my children who doesn't seem to have a full programme of stimulation, travel, sightseeing, play dates and sports camps mapped out for each and every day of the seven-week break. One mother even had it all set out on a colour-coded chart which she proudly brandished. "Last year," she explained, "we only managed a week away and I was determined it wasn't going to happen again." This year, it seems, her offspring will hardly have a chance to draw breath.

My wife recently dug out of her father's attic a box of her old school books. Buried among them was a diary, written when she was 14 or 15. The highlight of most weeks was going to Mass on a Sunday. "Catenians there," she reported excitedly in one entry that unwittingly gives an insight into the monotony of it all. The word that recurs most often is "bored". "Another Saturday night in. Even *Starsky and Hutch* a repeat," she recorded.

My childhood was much the same. There would be a statutory family break to Barmouth in west Wales – one or two weeks' full board at Min-y-Mor guest house. And the rest of the time I just messed about in the garden. If I was lucky a friend would call by unannounced. Play dates, elaborately arranged by our parents on the telephone in advance, were about as foreign to us as daytime TV and children's menus.

So now I feel torn when it comes to my own children's holiday. Part of me thinks that being bored did me no harm at all. A bit more boredom and a little less cosseting might teach children self-reliance and stimulate their imagination. I became very adept at playing Subbuteo with myself, even though the box said "minimum two players needed".

Sometimes, stuck in a traffic jam with Kit and Orla on the way to another fabulous children's party bursting with entertainers, child-friendly food and elaborate party bags which set the standard for every celebration that comes afterwards, I look at the children sitting in the cars alongside, no doubt themselves heading to a similar event. Amid all the over-stimulated frenzy of their lives, they look bored. Not just understandably bored with sitting in traffic jams – though there are now lavish ranges of in-car entertainment. No, plain, deep down bored and cut off from the world outside their sun-shaded window.

But then I think of my own, by comparison, uneventful childhood and feel a powerful urge to make sure my children have all the things that I didn't. So I get the leaflets for the endless array of improving residential and non-residential summertime courses that dangle the prospect of turning my children into the next Wayne Rooney/Freddie Flintoff/Andy Murray/Darcey Bussell and casually waft them in front of Kit and Orla.

To their credit, neither is that bothered. Perhaps they are just odd and we need to book them into a group analytical summer camp on "why I don't want to spend every waking moment making the most of myself"? Or perhaps we should learn to listen to them and let them be.

By and large, we opt for the second. It's cheaper, for a start. But then I catch the hint of boredom in their eyes and feel like a failure. So this year, to avoid the guilt, we're heading off to Norfolk to be bored and by the sea. Beaches are the one place where children can spend hours doing nothing.

There is a sprinkling of highlights for August. Kit is altar serving at a ruined abbey nearby when the local bishop pays a visit. And Orla has finally persuaded us to get the puppy she's been asking Father Christmas for these past three years. I've just been to buy the pooper-scooper in preparation. Using it will, I anticipate, introduce us all to a different kind of boredom.

At least the summer gives us a break from another kind of tedium; as term drew to a close, there was the usual round of parents at the school gates announcing that they had got little Johnny and Jemima a scholarship to a "decent" prep school. In theory I – and many others – have no interest in sending our children to be educated in such a velvet-cushioned cocoon with other privileged middle-class children. Mixing with all races and backgrounds at the local primary still seems to me the best possible education in life.

Hawkstone Hall

Redemptorist International Pastoral Centre

The Three-Month Renewal Course

Hawkstone Hall re-opened in June after a six-month refurbishment programme offering improved facilities including access for people with disabilities. It continues to serve the needs of the universal Church as a centre of renewal for women and men in ministry worldwide. With over thirty years' experience to draw upon, the team of Redemptorists, religious, and lay people offers the Course three times a year. The Course provides a balance of lectures, a choice of workshops, daily liturgy, spiritual accompaniment, personal space, and social time in the setting of an international community.

25 September – 7 December 2006 (FULL) **8 January – 22 March 2007**
23 April – 19 July 2007 **10 September – 6 December 2007**

During the course break, optional pilgrimages are offered to Rome / Assisi on the Summer and Autumn courses, or to Scotland / Iona on all courses.

Advent Retreat 2006		
'Waiting on God'	7 – 9 December	Fr Denis McBride CSsR
Week Courses – Spring 2007		
Our Story as a Source of Spirituality	15 – 19 January	Fr Nick Harnan MSC
The Beginning of the Gospels	22 – 26 January	Fr Denis McBride CSsR
Death & Resurrection of Jesus	29 January – 2 February	Fr Denis McBride CSsR
True Self-esteem	19 – 23 February	Fr Jim McManus CSsR
The Public Ministry of Jesus	26 February – 2 March	Fr Denis McBride CSsR
Managing Trauma and Grief	5 – 7 March	Mr Patrick Strong
Prayer and Eucharist	8 – 9 March	Fr Maurice O'Mahony CSsR
Retreats 2007		
Lenten Weekend *'Be still and know ....'*	23 – 25 March	Fr Kevin Callaghan CSsR
Lenten Retreat *'On the road with Jesus – a Lenten journey'*	26 – 31 March	Mrs Margaret Silf
Holy Week Retreat *'From Passion to Compassion'*	2 – 8 April	Fr Maurice O'Mahony CSsR & Sr Assumpta Hegarty OSF
Summer School *'Journey into the Inner Self'*	20 July – 3 August	Fr Ittoop Panikulam SVD
Preached Retreat *'Plentiful Redemption'*	4 – 11 August	Fr Ralph Heskett CSsR
Women's Weekend *'Working with trauma and grief'*	11 – 14 August	Mr Patrick Strong & Sr Jackie Smith SP
Advent Retreat *'Journeying as a pilgrim people'*	7 – 9 December	The Hawkstone Team

For further details of all courses, and retreats please contact
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