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Jasna Góra in the system of world pilgrimage centres

1. Introduction

In spite of the general tendencies to secularise individual and social life, the last twenty years have seen an abrupt growth in pilgrimage migrations. In the Roman Catholic Church, but also in other churches, this growth is undoubtedly connected with the Apostolic Journeys of John Paul II. It is estimated that 220 to 250 million people a year take part in pilgrimages heading for religious centres of greater than regional importance. 150 million of them (60-70%) are Christians. In Europe alone, about 30 million Christians, mostly Catholics, spend their holidays (or at least part of their holiday time) on pilgrimages¹.

2. Major pilgrimage centres of the world

A concentration of pilgrimage migrations to several major centres has been observed in modern times. 40 million Christian pilgrims (over 25%) travel to 20 major Cult centres (3% of all centres). The largest Christian centres of religious Cult draw 25 million pilgrims (15% of all Christian pilgrims): Rome and the Vatican (ca. 8 ml), Lourdes (ca. 6 ml), Jasna Góra (4-5 ml), Fatima (4 ml), Guadalupe (2 ml). A similar concentration of pilgrimages to major Cult centres can be seen in other religions. In Islam, for instance, the fifteen holy cities draw over 10 million Muslim pilgrims (25% of all of them), and Mecca alone over 2 ml (5%). Similarly, over 30 per cent of Hindu pilgrims make their pilgrimages to the seven "holy cities", especially to Varanasi (formerly Benares, the ancient Kasi: "city of light"), Hardvar and Kanchipuram, but also to Allahabad, situated at the meeting place of the three "holy rivers", the Ganges, the Djamuna and the invisible, mythical Sarasvati. Apart from the yearly crowds of millions of pilgrims, every twelve years 10 million of them come to Allahabad to celebrate the Kumbh Mela there. Other religions and creeds have also experienced a similar growth in the number of pilgrims travelling to their major religious centres.

An important digression must be made here. Dealing with matters of utmost delicacy such as religion, it would be wrong to determine the importance of partic-

ular religious centres only on the basis of numbers of pilgrims visiting them. The popularity of one or another centre is a result of many factors. On the one hand, the numbers may depend on the size of a given religion (world-wide or locally), the geographical location of the sanctuary and its accessibility to various groups of the faithful (e.g. refusing admittance to women or other social groups), but on the other hand, they may be also influenced by the availability of transportation, the wealth of the people, the level of religious awareness, or finally, by pilgrimage traditions. In some cases the growth in pilgrim numbers may have political reasons. Because of a strict monastic rule, the Holy Mount Athos, a major spiritual centre of the Orthodox Church, is visited by no more than 50 thousand pilgrims a year. The remote location of the most important Buddhist centre in Bodh Gaya (India), as well as the poverty of most Buddhists, explain why the shrine receives only 500 thousand pilgrims a year. The unstable political situation in the Middle East in recent decades has discouraged many Christian (as well as Muslim) pilgrims from travelling to Jerusalem and other holy cities in the region. Finally, the Orthodox centres of religious Cult in Russia and the Ukraine are a good illustration of the influence that politics may have on the decline of religious practices and pilgrimages. Only in recent years has there been a revival of religious life in the region.

The present paper offers a more detailed analysis of Christian shrines, especially Marian sanctuaries. According to the Holy Father, Marian sanctuaries belong to “the spiritual and cultural heritage of a nation and possess a great power of attraction and influence”². Most Christian pilgrimage centres (80%) are related to the Marian Cult. Without going into details of the complicated history of this Cult, it must be noted that it has been developing since at least the eleventh century, both in the Western and the Eastern Church.

As early as the Middle Ages there existed large pilgrimage centres of the Marian Cult of super-regional influence. For example Walsingham in England (then frequently called the Nazareth of the North), Le-Puy-en-Velay and Rocamadour in France, Montserrat and Saragossa in Spain, Altötting in Germany, Mariazell in Austria, Einsiedeln in Switzerland, Přeborn in the Czech Republic and Levoča in Slovakia. Among Polish sanctuaries it was Jasna Góra which gained importance from the end of the fourteenth century to acquire an international role already at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

The Marian Cult was also well developed in the Orthodox Church, particularly in Ruthenia (Rus). In the Marian iconostas the most prominent place was taken by Mary of Vladimir, appreciated for her merits and well known for her numerous graces and miracles. The effigy of the Orant Mary in St. Sophia’s Orthodox Church in Kiev as well as the icon of Sleeping Mary in Kiev’s Lavra Petcherska Church were zealously worshipped. An important role in the development of the Marian Cult in the eastern part of Poland was played by Poczajów (now in the Ukraine). Outside the area of Ruthenia it is the icon of Mary on the Greek island of Tinos (called “*Lourdes of the East*”) which is also fervently worshipped.

A significant role in the development of the Cult and the pilgrimage migrations connected with it was played by the places of Mary’s revelations. Of numer-

Fig. 1
Pilgrimage movement in chosen centres of religious cults in Europe
at the beginning of 20th century (in thousands of persons).

ous places where such revelations were noted across the centuries, in contemporary Catholicism the most important ones are La Salette (1846), Lourdes (1858) and Fatima (1917). Medjugorje (1981) is also important, although the revelations there have yet not been formally accepted by Church authorities. Outside Europe the biggest centre is Guadalupe in Mexico (Mary's revelations in 1531). In the Orthodox Church there are also many places where either Mary or her miraculous icon are said to have revealed themselves. For example Poczajów, where according to tradition, Mary's icon appeared in 1198 and 1260, or the village of Kolomien-skoye (now a district of Moscow), where the revelation of Mary's miraculous icon took place in 1917. In this context one should realise that Jasna Góra is the biggest Marian centre in the world which is neither in its origin nor its development connected with Mary's revelations. The popularity of the Cult of the Black Madonna from Jasna Góra was the result of both the fame of the picture and Mary's role in the history of the Polish nation (particularly in the numerous periods of foreign oppression), and through Poland in the history of Europe.

Lourdes is a specific kind of centre, which, since Mary's revelations in 1858, has changed from a small agricultural town into a specialised religious centre as a result of the development of pilgrimages. The growing religious function has been accompanied by the development of the infrastructure necessary to receive the increasing number of pilgrims. The hotels offer over 18 thousand rooms (one room

per inhabitant!) and nearly 40 thousand beds. Taking into account other places to stay, Lourdes can accommodate approximately 90 thousand people (5000 beds per 1000 inhabitants). Out of 400 businesses, over 85 per cent specialise in religious merchandise. Yearly there are 5-6 million pilgrims coming from over 120 countries. Foreigners come mainly in organised tours (over 60 per cent). The sick are a special group of pilgrims (about 70 thousand people a year), of whom about 60 per cent are foreigners. They come to Lourdes mainly by several hundred special trains ("*trains blanc*"), which due to a well developed system of side-tracks can be parked there for a number of days. Despite its location away from the European centres, Lourdes is very easily accessible through the well developed railway and road systems as well as its own airport (Tarbes-Ossun-Lourdes) serving 500-800 thousand passengers a year. This makes Lourdes one of France's biggest charter airports (together with Paris and Nice). As a result of all this, Lourdes may be considered a place of functional monoculture connected with the visits of pilgrims and tourists. In the specialised literature Lourdes is also frequently called a "hotel town" ("*ville-d'hotel*").

The centre, which receives numbers of visitors similar to that of Jasna Góra, is Fatima. Its development is connected with Mary's famous revelations in 1917. It receives around 4 million pilgrims a year. In comparison with Lourdes, Fatima developed at a much slower rate. It began to function as an international centre only in the mid-1960s. This was due its provincial location and very low accessibility to transportation. For several years the political system was also unfavourable to the development of pilgrimages. Now foreigners registered here come from over 100 countries. Pilgrims of Portuguese origin constitute a considerable group among the foreigners. Most of them come on 13 August in connection with the "National Pilgrimage of Portuguese Emigrants." What makes Fatima different from the majority of the major pilgrimage centres of Western Europe is the strong tradition of walking pilgrimages (over 30 thousand people a year). Fatima offers varied accommodation for nearly 5 thousand people (over 1000 beds for 1000 inhabitants).

Other important Marian centres in Europe (apart from Jasna Góra, which will be discussed later) do not have such a clearly international character, particularly on a world-wide scale. In centres such as Montserrat, Mariazell, Altötting, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Einsiedeln, the visiting foreigners are almost exclusively European pilgrims. The situation was a bit different before the war in former Yugoslavia in the case of Medjugorje, where a considerable percentage of pilgrims consisted of emigrants living in the United States.

Similarly, in the major centres connected with the Passion Cult or the Cult of the Saints, pilgrimage migrations of foreigners are limited to the continent. The exceptions are: the Holy Land with Jerusalem, where the faithful come from all over the world, Christians as well as Jews and Muslims, and Rome with the Vatican (the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, the seat of the Holy Father). In the past few years there has been a noticeable increase in pilgrimages to the tomb of St. James the Greater in Santiago de Compostela. There are attempts to revive the medieval "trails of St. James." One can also observe a growing interest in pilgrim-

Fig. 2
Main pilgrimage centres in Europe (1995)
(in millions of pilgrims)

ages to the centres of the Passion Cult, which since the fifteenth century has been expressed in numerous Calvaries. In certain Calvary centres Passion mysteries are still performed during the Holy Week to this day. Their origins go back to the late-Middle Ages. These celebrations always attract several thousands of people from various parts of Europe (and in the case of, for example, the Philippines, from Asia), coming for religious reasons or simply as tourists. Such an example in Poland is Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. In order to keep up the level of pilgrimages to Calvary centres, the Passion Cult was frequently connected with Marian Cult.

Among the major Marian centres of the world one can distinguish three groups described as “very large”, “large” and “medium”. In the first and most important group there are Lourdes, Jasna Góra and Fatima, receiving at least 4 million pilgrims a year. Already for the past few decades these centres have played a leading role among all pilgrimage centres (not only Christian). In the case of Lourdes and Fatima this shows in the well-developed religious function, which can be observed, for example, in the specific infrastructure of the town. Jasna Góra functioned under a different political situation. The Communist system did its best to separate the town of Częstochowa from the Jasna Góra sanctuary. It showed, for example, in a political “embargo” on state developments that could have served the pilgrims. At the same time, Jasna Góra is the “oldest” of all major Marian centres. The development of its direct “competitors” - Lourdes and Fatima - is connected with Mary’s revelations in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.

The second group (“large” centres) consists of the centres receiving between 1.5 and 2 million pilgrims a year. These are three North and South American centres (Guadalupe in Mexico, Lujan in Argentina and Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupre in Canada) and two European ones (Montserrat in Spain and the Paris sanctuary in Rue du Bac in France). Although each has a different history and different accessibility, they all attract millions of pilgrims each year.

Finally, the third group covers the centres which receive about one million pilgrims a year. These are mainly North and South American centres. The European centres belonging to this group are Altoetting, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Knock, Mariazell, Medjugorje, Syracuse.

3. Jasna Góra as a world pilgrimage centre

The present considerations have shown that Jasna Góra belongs to the largest and most important centres of religious Cult in the world. At the same time it is the most important pilgrimage centre in Central and Eastern Europe and the largest Christian sanctuary from France in the west to the Russian Far East.

The existing sources make it clear that already in the first half of the fifteenth century the Jasna Góra centre was of more than regional importance, nationally and internationally. From 1430 it was visited by pilgrims representing almost all nations of Central and Eastern Europe. With the passage of time, as a result of the development of new means of transport, pilgrims from other continents, particular-

ly North and South America, started to appear at Jasna Góra. Nowadays Jasna Góra receives between 4 and 5 million pilgrims a year, including 400 thousand foreigners from over 80 countries. Around 200 thousand pilgrims come on foot.

What are the reasons for the “*phenomenon of Jasna Góra*” that has nearly always had a world-wide importance? In the present paper we will make an attempt to discuss in a very general way some of its aspects that we consider most important.

3.1 The geographical location

The location of a given building shows the characteristics of the surrounding geographical area, as if condensed in one place. If it is a building with a specific function, such as the Jasna Góra sanctuary, the geographical location frequently determines its role in the region, in the country and even on the international scale.

Jasna Góra, where the Pauline monastery was built in the fourteenth century, is a limestone monadnock hill, 340 metres high, located on the south-western edge of the Cracow-Częstochowa Upland, not far from the Warta Valley, which divides the Upland into two parts: the Częstochowa Upland and Wieluń Upland. The edge of the Upland forms a rocky shelf. In the area of Włodowice and Żarki, 30 km south-east of Częstochowa, the shelf rises some 80 metres above the valley of the upper Warta River and drops towards the north-west. The shelf is divided by several valleys into isolated monadnock hills and hummocks with gentle slopes. The limestone hills become rare as the Upland reaches Częstochowa and Wieluń.

Today, reasons for the location of the sanctuary are not fully understood. As political borders changed here rather frequently over the centuries, the fame and influence of the sanctuary spread further and further. Numbers and well documented facts show that in the present day the sanctuary on Jasna Góra is a shrine of global importance. It seems that its geographical location in almost the very centre of Europe has been and still is an important factor of its development as a major international site of religious adoration. The location should allow the sanctuary to address problems which must be faced at the end of the Second Millennium of the history of Christendom.

The sanctuary's location on the limestone hill of Jasna Góra offers a wide view of the area in all directions. Towards the south and south-west Jasna Góra overlooks the Silesian Uplands. Towards the north and north-west there is a view of the Wieluń Upland, which gradually subsides to sink into the flats of the Polish Lowlands. The Częstochowa Upland, chequered with the limestone rocks of the Sokole Mountains, can be seen to the east and south-east.

The location of the sanctuary in the lower parts of the Cracow-Częstochowa Upland was favourable to transport both from south to north and east to west. It was visible and was easily accessible from all directions. It formed a “bright spot” against the dark background of the wooded landscape, which was still dominant here in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Such a location made it possible for the sanctuary to remain in direct contact with the Olsztyn Castle, situated on a limestone monadnock 15 km south-east of Jasna Góra.

With time, the monastery became less visible as the wooded landscape turned agricultural and then industrial. With the growth of Częstochowa and the construction of large housing estates, the structure of the sanctuary melted into the modern, anthropogenic landscape of the town. Only the imposing 105-metre spire of the monastery still attracts the eye from afar.

The location of Jasna Góra must be considered in the context of the geographical situation of the entire territory of Poland, a stretch of flats and uplands between the Baltic sea and the Carpathian Mountains. Poland's location on the European continent can be described by three adjectives: *frontier*, *central* and *transitional*. Poland is a frontier between the two large geographical regions - Eastern Europe and Western Europe. Poland is located centrally in the heart of Europe, which implies the possibility of being influenced by neighbouring regions as well as exerting influence in various geographical directions. Finally, the transitional location of Poland means that its territory is rich with an intermingling of all kinds of environment: different climates, different flora zones and landscapes, but also different cultures, religions and languages. Located in the centre of the continent, Poland comprises the natural and anthropogenic features of Western and Eastern Europe. The borders of Poland changed both in the east and in the west. However, its territory was always not only a buffer for different economic or political interests of the European countries but it was also a meeting point for the Christian cultures of Western and Eastern Europe. Located in the centre of Europe at the meeting point of great geographical regions of Western and Eastern Europe, the Jasna Góra sanctuary bears the characteristics of a transitional region. It is a place where Western and Eastern Christian cults meet and intermingle. The icon of the Mother of God in the Roman Catholic sanctuary seems to be the most important link and meeting point. The geographical location of Jasna Góra can be described as an *ecumenical location*. Due to its central location and its accessibility, the sanctuary can play the special role of a centre exerting influence in all geographical directions, particularly in the east and west of the One Europe, Christian in its foundations.

3.2 The importance of Jasna Góra in the Catholic Church

Nearly all Polish kings (except for Stanisław August Poniatowski) went on pilgrimages to Jasna Góra. In the cortege accompanying the king there were usually foreign church and lay dignitaries, who later popularised the Cult of the Black Madonna in their countries. The international fame of the Black Madonna was ensured particularly by the Jagiellonian dynasty, the famous defence against the Swedes (1655) and the Lvov vows of Jan Kazimierz (1 April 1656), in which he formally proclaimed Mary of Częstochowa to be the Queen of Poland. The importance of Jasna Góra in the Roman Catholic church was emphasised by King Jan III Sobieski, who visited the sanctuary before and after the victorious Vienna campaign and left his Turkish trophies as votive offerings (1683).

The importance of Jasna Góra has been appreciated by the popes, who contributed to the spreading of the Black Madonna Cult through the entire Catholic

church. Their “interest” in the Jasna Góra sanctuary took various forms. It showed in granting privileges (indulgence privileges and other) - for example by Martin V (1429) or Alexander VI (1496). In 1717 the picture of the Mother of God was solemnly crowned with papal diadems. It was the first act of coronation of Mary’s miraculous image that was performed outside Rome³. It is often stressed that in a way the coronation decree of Pope Clement XI made the Queen of Poland also the Queen of the World⁴. Many other popes contributed to the development of the Cult of Mary of Jasna Góra. On 13 April 1904 St. Pius X established the Feast of Mary of Częstochowa (celebrated for the first time on 29 August 1906) and on 21 April 1910 he offered golden crowns for the Miraculous Image (the coronation took place on 22 May 1910). Pope Pius XI (Achilles Ratti) went on a pilgrimage to Jasna Góra in August 1918 as the first nuncio in the Free Poland. A great worshipper of the Black Madonna, he placed a copy of the Jasna Góra Miraculous Image in the chapel of the papal summer residence in Castel Gandolfo. In 1924 he introduced the Feast of the Queen of Poland celebrated from 3 May 1925. Finally in 1931 he introduced the Feast of Mary of Jasna Góra with its own breviary office and Mass formula, and the fixed date of 26 August⁵. Replying to Mussolini’s announcement, “Poland is finished,” the next pope, Pius XII, said, “*It has not died and it will not because Poland believes, Poland is praying, Poland has Jasna Góra*”⁶. Appreciating the role of Mary of Jasna Góra in the history of Poland and of the Church, he gave his consent to the opening of the chapel of Mary of Częstochowa in the vaults of the Basilica of St. Peter’s in Rome (1953). Other symptomatic gestures of Pius XII were for example sending a telegram with a blessing for the participants of the ceremony of the Jasna Góra Vows of the Nation (26 August 1956), blessing the copy of the Jasna Góra Image which was to peregrinate around the country (14 May 1957), decorating the Mary of Częstochowa banner with the Pope’s medal during the celebrations in Rome in the Marian Year (1954). The Pope often said, “*Poland will always manage because Poland has Jasna Góra; it has its own Mary of Jasna Góra.*”⁷ John XXIII was a special friend of Jasna Góra. He was considered an exceptional worshipper of the Black Madonna. He went on a pilgrimage to Jasna Góra on 17 August 1929 while he was performing the duties of the Apostolic Visitor in Bulgaria. Blessing the copy of the Jasna Góra Image meant for Australia (8 October 1962), he affectionately said, “*Mary of Częstochowa has been my Dear One since youth. I am glad that the Cult of Mary of Częstochowa is developing not only in Poland but also in the world.*”⁸ An ardent worshipper of Mary of Jasna Góra, Pope Paul VI also went on a pilgrimage to Jasna Góra in 1923 when he was still a young priest working for the nunciature in Warsaw (1923). His wish to visit Jasna Góra in 1966 was denied by the Communist authorities of the time. The special links of John Paul II with Jasna Góra will be discussed separately in this paper. Here let us only remind the reader that the position of Jasna Góra in the Catholic Church was finally consolidated by Pope John Paul II with his visits (1979, 1983, 1987, 1991). It may be considered symbolic that the Polish Pope came to Jasna Góra for the Feast of the Mother of the Church (4 June) and addressed her with the title of the “*Jasna Góra Mother of the*

Church.” At the summit of Jasna Góra he then performed the Act of Dedicating himself, his country, the Church, all nations and continents to Mary⁹. The Holy Father invited the youth from all over the world to Jasna Góra to celebrate the Sixth World Youth Day (August 1991), and nearly all over the world Mary of Częstochowa is called “the Pope’s Madonna.” Moreover, every year the Jasna Góra sanctuary is visited by clergy, many bishops and cardinals among them, from almost all countries of the world.

The religious importance of a particular centre is also determined by the translocation (“transfer”) of the Cult of the worshipped object abroad. The more international its influence, the bigger its role in the Catholic Church. In the Christian world the largest “transfer” of the Cult is associated with Mary of Lourdes and Mary of Fatima. An important role is also ascribed to Jasna Góra, though we Poles are not always aware of this. At present, images of Mary of Częstochowa are worshipped in dozens of countries on all continents.

The translocation of the Cult of Mary of Jasna Góra is discussed in a separate paper in this volume. Therefore we will touch upon only some of the aspects of this process, which are indispensable to our further considerations. Let us remind the reader then that first images and altars of Mary of Częstochowa were worshipped in Europe already in the fifteenth century. However, the development of the Cult of the Black Madonna outside the Polish territories was mainly connected with political migrations (particularly after the November Uprising and the January Uprising) and economic migrations of Poles to the countries of Europe, the Americas or to Australia. One should also remember that in the nineteenth century, from 1813, the Orthodox Church in Russia introduced the liturgical Feast of the Częstochowa Icon on 6 March¹⁰. It is also celebrated in the Polish Orthodox Church and the Greek Catholic Church. The available sources encourage us to suppose, however, that already in the seventeenth century the image of the Jasna Góra Black Madonna belonged to the miraculous images of the Mother of God worshipped by the Orthodox Church. One of the oldest representations of Mary of Częstochowa as an icon, which has been preserved till now, was printed in 1698 by Kiev Lavra¹¹. Members of the Orthodox Church frequently pray for graces in front of the Mary of Częstochowa Icon¹².

At present, in Europe (outside Poland) there are about 50 churches, several chapels and almost 300 altars in other religious objects dedicated to Mary of Częstochowa. One of the more important moments in the development of the Cult of the Black Madonna was the enthronement of a copy of the Jasna Góra image by the Protestant community of Taize (1983), visited every year by several thousand young people from all over the world¹³.

The Cult of Mary of Jasna Góra is also observed on other continents. In North America there are over 30 religious places (of various importance) dedicated to Mary of Częstochowa, of which the best known is Doylestown, Pennsylvania in the United States (“the American Częstochowa”). In South America there are nearly 20 centres connected with the Cult of the Black Madonna, and somewhat fewer on

Fig. 3
Directions of the pilgrimages to Jasna Góra from Europe (1995)

the remaining continents. Here a special place is taken by the Mary of Częstochowa sanctuary in Berrima-Penrose Park in Australia.

It should be noted here that the majority of foreign pilgrims visiting Jasna Góra come from countries where the Cult of Mary of Częstochowa is well developed.

3.3 The sanctuary's location in the area of the intermingling influences of Western and Eastern Christendom

For several centuries Jasna Góra has been an important link in the process of intermingling influences of the two major currents of Christianity: Western Christianity (Catholicism) and Eastern Christianity (the Orthodox Church, Greek Catholicism). It has showed in the visits of members of the Eastern Churches to Jasna Góra. Z. S. Jabłoński, a historian of the history of pilgrimages to the Jasna Góra sanctuary, claims that the relatively low number of pilgrimages of members of the Orthodox Church had political reasons (long-lasting conflicts between Poland and the tsars) rather than religious¹⁴. Jasna Góra was, on the whole, visited only by diplomats, representatives of the tsar, members of the tsar's family, etc. Generally, all those who visited the Miraculous Image appreciated its more-than-Christian dimension. Some of them, for example Peter Tolstoy (who visited the sanctuary in the summer of 1697 during his journey to Western Europe), emphasised the similarity between the Jasna Góra Icon and Mary of Vladimir¹⁵. The contacts with the Orthodox Church became more evident during the period of the partition of Poland when the border of the Russian Empire, and with it the influence of the Orthodox Church, was shifted farther west than ever before or after. In Częstochowa, from 1813 under Russian occupation, the Catholic church of St. James was transformed into an Orthodox church. The number of Russian Orthodox visitors to Jasna Góra grew considerably between 1864 and 1914. Many of them came from very remote parts of Russia. The growing numbers became a pretext for voicing demands to open an Orthodox sanctuary in St. Anthony's chapel (1902)¹⁶. The links of the painting of the Black Madonna with Eastern Christian art¹⁷ are a separate issue which goes beyond the scope of the present paper. It is worth noting, however, that copies of the icon can be found in many Orthodox churches in Poland¹⁸.

In recognition of its religious importance and its specific location Jasna Góra began to be looked at as a spiritual capital of Europe which was to protect the continent from Russification.

Important Slavic thinkers of the nineteenth century saw Jasna Góra as a place capable of unifying all Slavs against the Russians. Many of them were members of the Orthodox or the Greek Catholic Church. Greek Catholic pilgrims came to Częstochowa regularly, though with varying intensities, from 1918. After the Second World War, Greek Catholic pilgrimages reappeared at Jasna Góra only in the 1980s and were most numerous during celebrations of the 1000th anniversary of the Christianization of Ruthenia. Dozens of Orthodox priests from Poland and abroad, as well as members of the Polish Episcopate headed by Primate Józef Glemp, took

part in a major celebration of the Millennium at Jasna Góra between 9 and 11 September 1988. Pope John Paul II sent a special message for the occasion. Links with Eastern Christianity were emphasised at Jasna Góra on 5 September 1971 in the Polish Bishops' "Act of Dedicating the World to the Protection of Mary the Mother of the Church" ("we also give to Your protection those our Neighbours who share with us a special love to You Mary, venerated by them for centuries in their famous Icons")¹⁹. The unique location of Jasna Góra bore fruit again in 1991 during the Sixth World Youth Day, when thousands of young pilgrims from the area of the former Soviet Union came to meet John Paul II. Many made the Polish part of their pilgrimage on foot. Some of them were members of the Orthodox Church while others were still searching for God. The World Youth Day in Częstochowa was the first large-scale meeting of young people from Eastern and Western Europe after the fall of Communism. The meetings, discussions and common prayers made the young people aware of the need for European integration.

Within the last five years pilgrimage numbers have grown in Russia, the Ukraine and Belorussia. A network of pilgrim routes will soon cover larger parts of the countries. In the Ukraine, Belorussia and Lithuania, the westward routes begin to merge with the routes of Catholic pilgrimages. The final merging of Orthodox and Catholic pilgrimage routes takes place in the eastern districts of Poland (the Orthodox centres at Grabarka and Jableczna are important points here) and in the Carpathian Mountains, especially in the regions of the Bieszczady and the Lower Beskid ranges. Most Orthodox pilgrimage routes "naturally" join the Catholic ones to converge at Jasna Góra. From Częstochowa the routes run further towards the west, the north and the south. It can be predicted on grounds of the above observations that the number of Orthodox visitors, coming to Jasna Góra for purely religious or religious-educational motives, will grow considerably in the years to come. These developments make Jasna Góra an important international ecumenical centre.

3.4. The Marian Cult and patriotism

Jasna Góra has always been in the mainstream of Polish history and its name has been associated with major historical events. The significance of the Cult of the Black Madonna can be confirmed by the names that were given to her: "Mother" (Grzegorz of Sambor, fifteenth century), "The Queen of Poland" (Wespazjan Hieronim Kochowski, seventeenth century, members of the Bar Confederacy, eighteenth century). According to S. J. Rożej the tendency to link the Cult of Mary of Jasna Góra with the fate of the Polish nation is an early development²⁰. Introduced by W. H. Kochowski and popularised by the Bar confederates, the title of "Mary the Mother of Poland", associated with the Black Madonna, will return again and again.

Jasna Góra played an especially important role during the period of Poland's partitions (1772-1918) as it contributed greatly to uplifting the national spirit of Polish society. Pilgrimages were then important forms of manifesting one's religious as well as patriotic feelings. In the nineteenth century Jasna Góra became a symbol of national identity and unity for all Poles. It fulfilled a similar function again after the Second World War when Poland was under Communist rule. No wonder

that the occupation authorities as well as the Communists did everything they could to ban or at least limit the number of pilgrimages to the sanctuary.

Such a direct coupling of the religious and the national consciousness has not been known on such a large scale in any other Christian country. Foreign historians clearly emphasise that "... *Poland's true heart, which neither the Teutonic Knights, nor the Tsar's Cossacks, nor the Nazi hordes, nor the Soviet troops, nor even General Jaruzelski's Martial Law managed to break, beats on Jasna Góra in Częstochowa*"²¹. The unique nature of Jasna Góra has always inspired foreign visitors to come to Częstochowa. Still in the nineteenth century the Slavs were encouraged to make pilgrimages to Jasna Góra, which for many of them was the spiritual capital of the Slavic Peoples²². Leaders of Slavic national movements intended to use the pilgrimages to Jasna Góra as an important element in the process of Slavic integration. The Cult of the Black Madonna, with its national and patriotic elements, has been carried to many distant regions of the world by exiles of Tsarist Russia, Stalin's political prisoners sent to remote Siberia and the Far East, and by emigrants who left the country for political or economic reasons. The local communities which received Polish immigrants usually accepted the Cult of the Black Madonna and understood its national importance during specific periods of Poland's history. In many cases their contact with the Cult of the Black Madonna encouraged members of those communities to make a pilgrimage to Jasna Góra.

Jasna Góra played a very special role during the communist years. Walking pilgrimages to the sanctuary became a symbol of the identification between the Church and the nation²³. As in any other period of lack of political independence the pilgrimages to Jasna Góra became a form of religious and patriotic manifestation of the nation's protest against the Communist system. John Paul II said about Jasna Góra, "*It is a place of special evangelization. Great events in the life of Poland are somehow always linked with the place*"²⁴. During his first papal visit to Jasna Góra in 1979 he said that "*Jasna Góra is not only a pilgrimage destination of Poles from Poland and from all over the world. Jasna Góra is the nation's sanctuary. One must strain one's ears in this holy place to hear the heart of the nation beating in the Heart of the Mother*"²⁵. Soon citizens of other countries from the so called "Communist bloc" joined in the protest by taking part in walking pilgrimages to the sanctuary. Jasna Góra was then visited by many pilgrims from former Czechoslovakia and Hungary, who later organised pilgrimages to Marian sanctuaries in their own countries. Orthodox pilgrims from the former Soviet Union often came illegally. Thus pilgrimages to Jasna Góra again helped to integrate people of Central and Eastern Europe and became an important form of their protest against the communist enslavement of this part of the world. It should be noted here that Jasna Góra was then visited by numerous politicians from the "free world". They were governed not only by religious motives, but also by a desire to publicly manifest their support for the ideas of freedom and independence voiced at Jasna Góra by pilgrims from almost all the countries of Eastern and Central Europe.

3.5. The Polish Diaspora and Jasna Góra

We have already mentioned the strong links of Polish emigrants in various parts of the world with the Cult of Mary of Częstochowa. To venerate the copies of the Black Madonna image brought from Poland the Polish emigrants founded places called Częstochowa, Virgin Mary (the oldest Polish parishes in Texas, USA), Jasna Góra and others. The image was placed in the local church, and then in their own shrines. During the millennium celebrations the picture of Mary of Częstochowa was in almost every Polish church in the world. The Cult of the Jasna Góra image was also developed by Polish missionaries, who usually took a copy of the Black Madonna image which had often been blessed at Jasna Góra. On the one hand the Cult of Mary of Jasna Góra was a very important element in the integration of Polish communities around the world. On the other hand it preserved the link of Polish emigrants with their native country. Sometimes it is even claimed that were it not for Mary of Częstochowa and her Cult, there would not be our great Polish Diaspora²⁶. The words of Teodor Kubina, a Częstochowa bishop and a priest of Polish emigrants, are a kind of synthesis of the great role of the Black Madonna Cult in the integration of the Polish Diaspora in the world. He wrote, *"[Mary of Częstochowa] was for us a real living power, which not only strengthened our holy faith, but also our Polish nationality. She really was our Queen, who ruled us across borders and seas. And Jasna Góra, Her capital on the Polish land, was really like a heart, from which the living blood of faith and the Polish spirit was running to the divided body of the nation and to the Polish emigrants scattered all over the world. In this way Mary of Częstochowa worked among us in the times of our enslavement, and we accepted this with faith and gratitude both on the Polish land under foreign oppression and among Polish emigrants all over the world. Thus, thanks to Virgin Mary, our kind Mother, we not only preserved our Polish nationality, but, even before Poland became independent, we had also created a great spiritual Polish Diaspora, where we developed all our strength so that when the historic moment, which was long expected and chosen by God, finally came, we were ready and able to revive Poland and to rebuild a new independent state"*²⁷. For Polish communities abroad Mary of Częstochowa was not only the "Queen of the Polish Kingdom" but also the "Queen of Polish emigrants." An important role in the integration of the Polish Diaspora with the mother country was played by the First and Second Congress of Polish Emigrants in Częstochowa in 1929 and 1934. Currently, Polish emigrants constitute 25-30 per cent of the overall number of pilgrims from abroad. They frequently stay at Jasna Góra for a few days, taking part in retreats organised especially for them. Some Polish parishes abroad organise pilgrimages to the Jasna Góra sanctuary quite frequently (every year or every other year). Many groups of Polish emigrants take part in walking pilgrimages.

3.6 The tradition of walking pilgrimages

The tradition of walking pilgrimages goes back to the beginning of the history of the Jasna Góra sanctuary. The network of pilgrimage trails leading to Jasna Góra started to develop gradually. In the seventeenth century the tradition of regular walking pilgrimages to Częstochowa began to develop and their number grew in the following century. Among them is the Warsaw Pilgrimage taking place every year from 1711 to the present day. Walking pilgrimages have developed (in terms of their number and scope) particularly in the past twenty years. Due to their scope, they are a kind of phenomenon, not only in the Christian world. In post-industrial Europe this form of pilgrimage had almost completely disappeared until their development.

Generally, walking pilgrimages to Jasna Góra bring approximately 5 per cent of all pilgrims, which makes Częstochowa one of the leading centres in this aspect on the international scale. In the Christian world walking pilgrimages play such an important role primarily in Latin America, particularly in Guadalupe (Mexico). In Europe, however, Jasna Góra has been playing the role of a centre encouraging the development or reactivation of walking pilgrimages. Effects are already to be seen in countries where walking pilgrimages reappeared after many years (e.g. France, Austria, Germany, Italy, Spain). The ideas from Jasna Góra have also reached countries overseas, where walking pilgrimages had almost no tradition, for example Doylestown (the “American Częstochowa”) and Berrima-Penrose Park in Australia. The large scale of pilgrimages to Jasna Góra put them among the most important migrations in Poland as well as in Europe. It should also be observed that walking pilgrimages have become a powerful, though informal, factor of social, national, cultural, generational, cross-generational and European integration. In view of a United Europe this function of pilgrimages to Jasna Góra is increasingly appreciated. One should also realise that most of the main walking pilgrimages have a European character although they are formally Polish. Since the early 1980s ten to fifteen thousand pilgrims, mostly the young, from 25 countries have been taking part in August walking pilgrimages to Jasna Góra. They often come to Poland solely with this purpose. They come mainly from France, Italy, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Spain, Germany, Belgium, Russia and the Ukraine. The highest number of foreigners joins the following pilgrimages: from Warsaw, Gdańsk, Cracow, Przemyśl, Podlasie and Podhale. For the past few years there have been walking pilgrimages from outside Poland, i.e. from Vranov in Slovakia and Bystrica near Hostyn (Czech Republic). The number of walking pilgrimages from abroad is expected to increase in the near future.

4. Tourist infrastructure

Częstochowa, one of the major pilgrimage centres in the world, offers very limited accommodation facilities, i.e. 20 locations with 2400 beds (excluding private rooms for rent). The number of beds per 10 thousand inhabitants is lower than 10, the Polish average being 13). To compare, in other important pilgrimage centres the numbers are: in Lourdes 5000 beds per 1000 inhabitants, in Fatima about

1000, in Mecca and Medina about 100 beds in each (a different climate, highly varied demands). In Częstochowa there is only 0.5 bed per 1000 registered pilgrims, whereas the ratio in Lourdes is 18.0. The lack of well developed accommodation facilities of varied standards is one of the main reasons why the majority of pilgrims stay here for a few hours only. The average period of time spent by pilgrims in Częstochowa is only 4.5 hours, while in Lourdes it is 3 days and in Fatima 2.5 days. Only 10 per cent of pilgrims coming to Częstochowa stay overnight. In recent years an important role has been played by the Pilgrims' House, which receives over 15 per cent of the pilgrims registered in the town. On the days of major religious celebrations, campsites are very popular, particularly among pilgrims on foot.

The number of cheap places to eat is insufficient and therefore the majority of pilgrims, particularly those staying for a few hours, bring their own provisions, e.g. on the days of the major August celebrations ca 75 per cent of the pilgrims, in the remaining periods over 60 per cent.

It should be clearly stressed that in order to prolong the stay of Polish and foreign pilgrims (which is quite important from the point of view of the economy of the town and the income of its inhabitants) much should be done to develop the tourist infrastructure and the accompanying facilities.

5. Jasna Góra at the threshold of the Third Millennium

The position of Poland and Jasna Góra in world pilgrimage migrations is significant, though not always noticed and recognised. Pilgrimage traditions survived in spite of a complicated history with periods in which mass forms of religious devotion were hampered by political conditions. At present the pilgrimages to Jasna Góra have become a unique phenomenon, whose influence can be noted in many countries, especially European. The spreading influence shows up in the growing numbers of foreign pilgrims coming to Częstochowa, but also in the fact that pilgrimage experiences of Jasna Góra are made use of in organising pilgrimages (especially walking pilgrimages) in other countries. Walking pilgrimages to Jasna Góra have become a unique religious and social phenomenon in the entire Christian world. The experiences of Jasna Góra are used by pilgrimage organisers in many countries. The position of the sanctuary in the history of Poland, as well as in the history of a large part of the European continent, is so high that Jasna Góra is still regarded as the spiritual centre of Poland and one of such major centres in Europe. Since the end of the 1970s many Marian sanctuaries in Europe (among them as large and important ones as Fatima and Lourdes) have established close links with Jasna Góra ("twin sanctuaries"). The World Youth Day in Częstochowa in 1991 finally made the whole world realise that pilgrimages are not only a religious phenomenon, but that they also have a social and cultural dimension. They develop in spite of existing borders and political divisions and will in the end lead to, or at least facilitate, the process of European integration. There is even a plan to make the 13th of August a special day on which the Slavic and other kindred nations will make their common pilgrimage to Jasna Góra.

Practically all pilgrimages coming to Poland have Jasna Góra on their itinerary, while for most of them the sanctuary is the final destination of their journey. Further growth of pilgrim numbers, especially of those coming from abroad, will be made very difficult by the lack of adequate tourist infrastructure, primarily the lack of accommodation facilities. The standards of the infrastructure are totally inadequate to the position held by Jasna Góra as a pilgrimage centre. Steps must be undertaken to make Częstochowa more easily accessible in terms of transportation. Investing in air transport seems to be a must if Częstochowa is to keep its place as a major centre of religious Cult in the world.

The European dimension of pilgrimages to Jasna Góra should also be kept in mind. The sanctuary plays an important role in the system of the cultural routes of Europe, especially the monastic route and the Marian route. Just as in the nineteenth century pilgrimages to Jasna Góra were seen as an important element of Slavic integration, today the pilgrimages are perceived as contributing to the process of European integration.

Plans of future routes running through Częstochowa show that the sanctuary may fulfil an important role in forming a Europe without frontiers by attracting foreign pilgrimages and religious tourism, especially on the East-West migration route. It must be remembered that Jasna Góra belongs to the relatively small number of major world pilgrimage centres and that it is the most important centre of religious Cult in Central and Eastern Europe. It is also the largest Christian sanctuary in the vast stretch of land between France in the west and the Russian Far East. There is a spiritual link between Jasna Góra and other Marian sanctuaries, of which John Paul II said, "*there is a certain continuity here, from La Salette, through Lourdes to Fatima. And deep in the remote past - our Polish Jasna Góra*"²⁸. But the recent increase in the number of pilgrims coming to Jasna Góra proves that the sanctuary's role as a spiritual capital located on the border between Western and Eastern Christianity belongs to the future rather than to the past. We are not always aware of that great mission that Jasna Góra will have to fulfil at the threshold of the Third Millennium. In the opinion of the present authors, the mission commenced in 1991 with the Sixth World Youth Day, which was attended by young people (not only Catholics) from many foreign countries. At the Holy Father's invitation some 1.7 million pilgrims, most of them from Europe, came to Częstochowa. The large group of young pilgrims from the former Soviet Union was an important message not to be missed. The Jasna Góra meeting will certainly remain an important event in the world history of pilgrimages. It is generally accepted that the Sixth World Youth Day confirmed the international position of Jasna Góra and Częstochowa.

One more reflection related to the event is worth mentioning here. In the year 1000, at the beginnings of Polish Christianity and Polish nationhood, the German Emperor Otto III came to Poland to visit the grave of St. Adalbert. Those were the beginnings of the Christian pilgrimage tradition in Poland. And today, at the end of the same millennium, almost two million young people come here from all over the world and turned to the Polish Holy Father for support of their aims and their efforts to enter the Third Millennium as one huge community, free from divisions

and political borders. By spanning the millennium of Polish history the two important religious pilgrimages are a proof that the pilgrimage tradition is an important element in the continuity of Polish and European culture.

John Paul II frequently talks about the end of the Second Millennium of Christianity, about the dangers of modern times, the need for a new evangelization, the building of a Civilisation of Love, the unity of all Christians and the springtime of the Church that is to come soon. He always strongly emphasises the role that Mary has to play at this turning-point in history, "*Christ will be triumphant through Her, because He wants the triumphs of the Church in the contemporary and the future world to be associated with Her*"²⁹. Located in the heart of Europe between the two Christian worlds, the Marian sanctuary on Jasna Góra seems to be fulfilling an especially important role today. This specific Marian feature of the sanctuary is invoked in the prayer entrusting the Polish Church to Mary, "*We entrust to you, Queen of the world, our presence in the family of nations. Make our contacts with other nations serve the process of peace and development*"³⁰. In his inaugural address to the Sixth World Youth Day, the Holy Father said that the sanctuary "*has become an integral part of the history of one nation, but at the same time it opens its doors to all nations and peoples of Europe and the world*"³¹. It seems that the same Holy Place is referred to in the appeal of the Second Vatican Council, which entreats "*all Christians, both Eastern and Western, to offer earnest, constant, even daily prayers to God to make them one again with the help of Mary the Mother of God*"³². In 1995 the Information Centre of Jasna Góra registered the arrival of 1709 foreign groups made up of 57,598 visitors. They were not only Catholics, but also Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, Mormons, adherents of Judaism, Muslims, Buddhists, atheists...³³.

Notes:

¹ A. Jackowski, *Współczesne migracje pielgrzymkowe w Polsce* in: A. Jackowski et al., *Przestrzeń i sacrum. Geografia kultury religijnej w Polsce i jej przemiany w okresie od XVII do XX w. na przykładzie ośrodków kultu i migracji pielgrzymkowych*, Kraków 1995, pp. 45-46; A. Jackowski, *Zarys geografii pielgrzymek*, Kraków 1991, pp. 22-24.

² Jan Paweł II, *Rozważania podczas modlitwy Anioł Pański 21VI 1987r.* in: *Tysiąc wielką chlubą naszego narodu*, Wydawnictwo Zakonu Paulinów, Częstochowa-Jasna Góra 1991, p. 215.

³ Z.S. Jabłoński, *Rzeczywistość Jasnej Góry ważniejszymi wydarzeniami pisana* in: *Tysiąc wielką chlubą naszego narodu*, ed., K. Kunz, Częstochowa - Jasna Góra 1991, pp. 278-279, 283.

⁴ Z. Podgórzec, *Kult obrazów Maryi w Polsce* in: *Kult maryjny w Kościele Rzymskokatolickim w Polsce i Rosyjskim Kościele prawosławnym*, Warszawa - Moskwa 1989, p. 26

⁵ *Tysiąc wielką chlubą naszego narodu*, ed., K. Kunz, Częstochowa - Jasna Góra 1991, pp. 127-128.

⁶ *Tysiąc wielką chlubą naszego narodu*, op. cit., p. 128.

⁷ *Tysiąc wielką chlubą naszego narodu*, op. cit., p. 130.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 134.

⁹ *Matka Odkupiciela Matką Kościoła. Dokumenty*, Warszawa 1990, pp. 169, 172, 180.

¹⁰ Z.S. Jabłoński, *Jasna Góra jest w Europie* in: *Tysiąc wielką chlubą naszego narodu*, Częstochowa - Jasna Góra 1991, p. 247.

- ¹¹ W. Kurpnik, *Związki obrazu Matki Boskiej Jasnogórskiej z malarstwem ikonowym* in: *Tyś wielką chlubą ...* op. cit., pp. 319 - 321, 329.
- ¹² Z. Podgórzec, *Kult obrazów Maryi w Polsce ...*, op. cit., p.27.
- ¹³ Z.S. Jabłoński, *Jasna Góra w Europie*, op. cit., p. 251.
- ¹⁴ Z.S. Jabłoński, *Jasna Góra w Europie*, op. cit., p. 237.
- ¹⁵ Z.S. Jabłoński, *Jasna Góra w Europie*, op. cit., p.237.
- ¹⁶ These demands were part of a wider Russification project, see Z.S. Jabłoński, *Jasna Góra jest w Europie*, op. cit., p. 237.
- ¹⁷ W. Kurpnik, *Związki obrazu Matki Boskiej Jasnogórskiej z malarstwem ikonowym* in: *Tyś wielką chlubą naszego narodu, Częstochowa-Jasna Góra 1991*, pp. 319-333.
- ¹⁸ Z Podgórzec, *Kult obrazów Maryi w Polsce*, op. cit., p. 27.
- ¹⁹ *Matka Odkupiciela...*, op. cit., p. 73.
- ²⁰ *Panno Święta co Jasnej Bronisz Góry. Antologia polskiej twórczości poetyckiej o Matce Bożej Jasnogórskiej*, ed., S.J. Rozej, Pallotinum, Poznań 1982. S.J. Rozej's chapter *Matka Boska Jasnogórska w polskiej twórczości poetyckiej*, p. 14.
- ²¹ J. Chelini, H. Branthomme, *Drogi Boże. Historia Pielgrzymek Chrzescijańskich*, Warszawa 1996, p. 276.
- ²² (E.A. Iwanowski) Helleniusz, *Matka Boska na Jasnej Górze Częstochowskiej Królowa korony polskiej. Pamiątka z pielgrzymki odbytej roku pańskiego 1848*, Paris 1852, pp. 37-41.
- ²³ J. Mariański, *Nadobowiążkowe praktyki religijne* in: *Religijność Polaków 1991*, Warszawa 1993, p. 87.
- ²⁴ Jan Paweł II, *Przekroczyć próg nadziei*, Lublin 1994, p. 158.
- ²⁵ *Matka odkupiciela...*, op. cit., p. 167.
- ²⁶ T. Kubina, *Cud wiary i polskości wśród wychodźstwa polskiego*, Częstochowa 1935, pp. 48-49.
- ²⁷ T. Kubina, op. cit., pp. 49-50
- ²⁸ Jan Paweł II, *Przekroczyć próg nadziei*, Lublin 1994, p. 162.
- ²⁹ Op. cit., p. 161.
- ³⁰ *Modlitwa Kościoła w Polsce, w której zawiera Maryi swoją misję w nowej sytuacji dziejowej* in: *Zawierzenie Maryi ku przyszłości*, ed., Z.S. Jabłoński OSPPE, Jasna Góra-Częstochowa 1994, p. 11.
- ³¹ *VI Światowy Dzień Młodzieży*, Wydawnictwo Zakonu Paulinów, Jasna Góra 1992, p. 27.
- ³² DKW 30.
- ³³ O. M. Socha OSPPE, *Nasza Służba na Jasnej Górze*, "Jasna Góra" 5/1996, p. 23.