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The election and coronation of Pius XII in the view of «Kurjer Białostocki»

Based on the «Courier Białystok» events related to the election and coronation of the new Primate of the Catholic Church, Pope Pius XII is considered.

Keywords: Pope, Pius XII, Eugenio Maria Giuseppe Giovanni Pacelli, Kurier Białostocki

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Вибір і коронація Пія XII у світлі «Кур'єру Бялостоцького»

У статті на основі «Кур'єру Бялостоцького» простежуються події, пов'язані з підбором і коронацією нового Предстоятеля Католицької церкви папи Пія XII.

Ключові слова: Папа, Пій XII, Еудженіо Марія Джузеппе Джованні Пачеллі, кур'єр Білосток

It should be noted that the issue was taken in unparsed scientific field and the source research was carried out on the basis of modern historical descriptions of Pius XII. The subject was raised by: P. Blet, K. Deschner, P. Hauser, S. Peeking, J. Kelly, K. Panus, Z. Zieliński, J. Cornwell.

The editorial office of the «Courier Białystok»¹ was located in Białystok². Initially at 10 Pieracki Street⁴. Then, it was moved to a different address, namely the 1 Kupiecka Street. The newspaper cost 10 grosz, the price did not change, and its layout underwent slight modifications.

The first mention of the raised topic appeared on the «Courier's» pages on March 1, 1939. In an article entitled «The conclave deliberations have begun»⁴ citing on the Vatican statements of 28 February 1939, the readers were informed of the general meeting of cardinals planned for the following day, during which it was agreed to elect a new pope within 4 – 5 days. He was to take office after Pius XI, who got seriously ill in January of 1939 and died on 10 February 1939 in Vatican⁵.

The Conclave was to listen to a morning mass in the Pauline Chapel, celebrated by the dean of the College of Cardinals St. Gennaro Granito Pignatelli di Belmonte⁶. Then the Cardinals, after the ceremonial entering to the conclave in the Sistine Chapel, had to take an oath to respect the Apostolic

Constitution, governing the election of the pope. The oath also had to be taken by priests accompanying the Cardinals as secretaries. These activities were also required from the authorized personnel of the conclave, who swore in the face of deacons in a separate room. Duke Ludovico Chigi della Rovere Albani were to attend the event.

The article entitled «The conclave began yesterday»⁷ published in No. 2 of the newspaper, confirmed the earlier news reports and complemented them with new information. Gennaro Granito Pignatelli di Belmonte celebrated a mass for inspiration by the Holy Spirit, after which a prayer «Oratio de eligendo summo pontifice» was said and the whole congregation set out for the meeting. In the afternoon there was a solemn entering of cardinals to the conclave, assisted by the noble guard and the diplomatic corps accredited to the papal headquarters in Vatican⁸.

Then the Prefect of the Holy See issued a decree of closing the conclave, internally and externally. It was as follows: «The Eminences, Cardinals the first among bishops, priests and deacons together with the camerlengo of the Holy Roman Church are asked to gather in the afternoon on March 1, 1939 in the room of paraments. There will be also present the Secretary of the Sacred College, the Prefect of the Ceremony of the Holy See, fulfilling functions of a notary and two ecclesiastical dignitaries who will be witnesses. Closing of exterior and interior will take place after all the paperwork and confirmation signatures, demanded by the conclave, will be done. Yesterday, a special commission of cardinals undertook a thorough examination of whether an isolation from the outside world of the premises intended for the conclave was sufficient. The research was satisfactory»⁹.

In the same issue of «Courier Białystok» readers were informed about the arrival of the «Neptune» steamer to Naples. On board, there were cardinals from the United States of America, Argentina and Brazil, who took part in the conclave. The author of the text provided surnames, names and functions performed, without given names. These were verified. They were: William Henry O'Connell – Archbishop of Boston, Santiago Copello – Archbishop of Buenos Aires, and Sebastião da Silveira Cintra, the archbishop of Cathedral of St. Sebastian of Rio de Janeiro. It is worth noting that in total, the conclave was attended by 62 cardinals from around the world, including one from Poland – August Hlond, the Polish primate, Archbishop, Metropolitan Bishop of Poznan and Gniezno¹⁰. Their average age was 67 years old, the youngest was 50 years old and the oldest one was 87 years old¹¹.

In the latter part of the article, a smoke over the Sistine Chapel was announced to appear at 11:30 a.m., on March 2 1939. In the chapel, there was an iron stove, located away from the main altar, separated with gratings. It was used to burn cards returned by the cardinals after the voting. Next to the stove, there was a wooden box in which there were paper bags and shavings prepared to burn. These activities were connected with the tradition of the conclave. White or black smoke coming out from the chimney informed whether a Pope was elected or not¹².

An article in the 3rd issue was much more extensive than the previous ones¹³. It described the election of the new Pope. In addition, it summarized his biography, providing only the most important functions he performed. On March 2 there were three ballots. The first one was carried out between 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., the second lasted from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. Both votings did not have a positive result. The reports said that this event was followed by the crowds of Italians and foreigners gathered in St. Peter's Square. At 5:30 p.m. a white smoke appeared over the Sistine Chapel. The gathered people allegedly shouted «Habemus Pontificem» in honor of the newly elected pope. Radio news reports were sent to many countries around the world, including Poland. Polish Radio broadcasting from the Vatican sent the country a message: «Laudetur Jesus Christ – Vatican Radio. At this time there appeared a white smoke over the Sistine Chapel. The Pope has been chosen»¹⁴. It is worth noting that this event also emitted by the television¹⁵.

Shortly after doors to the balcony of the basilica were opened, the Swiss Guards members appeared¹⁶. Through the lane created by them went out onto the balcony the Cardinal of St. Peter's Basilica Protodeacon Camillo Caccia Dominioni¹⁷ – the first among the deacons. At 6:10 p.m. he revealed the name of the next Pope. It was the Cardinal Secretary of State of the Holy See, Eugenio Maria Giuseppe Giovanni Pacelli, who took the name Pius XII.

«Annuntio Vobis Gaudium Magnum Habemus papam, eminentissimum ac reverendissimum dominum Eugenium, sanctae Romanae ecclesiae Cardinal Pacelli»¹⁸. («I announce you the news of great joy that we have a pope, the most venerable and the most reverend Mr. Eugene, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church Pacelli»).

According to the «Courier», the new Pope was born on March 2, 1875 in Rome. However, this information needed to be corrected, because E. Pacelli was born a year later¹⁹. Despite this fact, it can be noted that the election day

is also the anniversary of his birth. In 1911 he was appointed deputy Cardinal Secretary of State, 6 years later he was appointed Nuncio of Bavaria and in 1920 Nuncio of Germany. In 1929 he was dismissed to Rome and appointed a cardinal, then the Secretary of State, a position he held after Cardinal Pietro Gasparri²⁰ until his Papal election. It has to be noted that the conclave was held and made an election in one day²¹. Press reports were complemented with a photograph of Pius XII.

In connection with the event, the same issue contained brief information about the celebration of the papal election day in Białystok. On March 2 1939 at 17:30, bells tolled²² in churches of St. Roch and Farny²³.

In terms of the topic of this paper, important information was placed in the issue No 4. It was announced that the ceremony of coronation of Pius XII was scheduled for March 12, on Sunday. Whereas, on March 3rd members of the Sacred College honoured him in the Sistine Chapel. Then the Pope assisted in the «Te Deum» prayer, reviewed the guards' parade and students from Capranica Seminary, where he received his first education.

At 12:08 a.m. Pius XII delivered a message by the Vatican Radio. He asked all the nations to preserve peace based on compassion and justice. The 4.5 minutes long appeal of the Pope was ended with the apostolic blessing for the whole world. Then the Vatican band played «Tu Es Petrus», the Holy Father returned to the chapel and after putting on pontifical robes he gave in to long prayers. Then he took his place on the papal throne to receive the adoration of the Cardinals. After the ceremony the Pope went to a side room, where he took off his pontifical vestments, put on a coat and a cape, and went to the apartment in which he used to serve as the Cardinal Secretary of the State.

On the same day, late in the evening, on Pius XII's command the gates of the conclave were opened. It was done by the marshal and the governor of the conclave. The cardinals and the conclave participants left the Vatican walls. Unfortunately, their names were not given.

It is worth quoting information from the issue No 4, on the events at the conclave soon after the election of the new Pope²⁴. When E. Pacelli received the nomination, he was officially asked by the Cardinal Dean, whether he accepted the election. It was done in the presence of the Sacred College, supervisors of the order, prelates and deacons. When the affirmative answer was made, all the canopies located above the Cardinals' seats were folded,

but the one located over the chair of the Elect. Another question concerned the name E. Pacelli was going to take.

In the meantime, a formal act of election and accepting of the papal throne was prepared. Pius XII, assisted by the conclave members went to the side room to change his cardinals' robes and costumes in to pontifical vestments. There he put on white stockings, red shoes and a white cassock. The First Deacon put on the shoulders of the Pope a red cape, embroidered with gold and enriched with ermines. Then the Elect went to the Sistine Chapel and sat in a chair near the main altar.

In front of Pius XII began a parade consisting of cardinals arranged by seniority. They kneeled before the Pope, giving a kiss on his foot and his hand. After paying homage, the Holy Father blessed those gathered in the chapel. The announcement of election of the new Pope was ended with the St. Peter's Cathedral bells tolling and the Papal anthem played on silver trumpets by the Swiss Guards.

The article held different time information of E. Pacelli's election, namely 6:25 p.m. In the issue No 3 the information said that the Pope was elected at 6:10 p.m. The time difference was 15 minutes. However, the military troops and the police gathered at St. Peter's Square to maintain the order presented arms, and the crowd fell silent, knelt and said a «Te Deum» prayer. On the front page of the newspaper a photograph of Pius XII blessing the people gathered in front of the cathedral was provided.

In addition, the «Courier» held a message of Polish President Ignacy Mościcki to the Pope. Because of the uniqueness of the text it was quoted at length: «Having learned with deep emotion that Your Holiness has been appointed with grace of the Supreme to the throne of Peter, I hasten to express, at the foot of the throne of Your Holiness, the deepest feelings of reverence and filial devotion of Poland; faithful and always bounded with the church. Together with the entire Polish nation, I give my warmest wishes of glory and long apostolic reign of Your Holiness»²⁵.

Further information relating to Pius XII was in the issue No 6 and concerned blessings that were given to Augustus Hlond, participating in the conclave. The cardinal approached the Holy Father with the intention of taking an oath of obedience, saying: «Please accept, Your Holiness the filial tribute of the most faithful Poland, – Pope answered him saying, – I bless with all my heart the episcopate, the authorities of the state and the entire Polish nation»²⁶.

It is worth mentioning that in the issue No 7, there was an announcement of departure of the Polish representation for the ceremony of coronation of Pius XII²⁷. On the order of the President of Poland I. Mościcki, Jan Szembek – Undersecretary of the State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was to have this honor. His stay was intended to be carried out as of an extraordinary ambassador, and the trip to Rome was scheduled for Wednesday, on March 8.

Interesting news from Paris refer to the issue No 8²⁸. According to the French ecclesiastical circles, Pius XII was to take part in the World Eucharistic Congress in Nice in 1940. The bishop of Nice Paul Rémond²⁹ announced the arrival of the Pope at the event, provided that the political situation would enable it. This would have been the first papal trip abroad since Napoleon I, who was crowned at Notre-Dame by Pius VII³⁰.

In the next issue of the «Courier» (No 9), the date of the coronation of Pius XII was announced again for March 12³¹. Furthermore, big preparations for this event were reported. Namely, a balcony was prepared, where the ceremony was to be held. The balcony rose to a height of 20 meters and was visible from each side the square in front of the basilica, also from the other side of the river Tiber, after the arterial roads leading to the square were reconstructed. It was planned to use the tiara during the coronation, with which Pius IX was crowned in 1846³². The first part of the event was to take place inside of the Basilica of St. Peter. The participation of more than 20 foreign diplomatic missions was anticipated, including, for the first time, the representative of the government of the United States of America. It was headed by the US ambassador in London on the order of Franklin Delano Roosevelt³³. 250 000 applications for admission cards were received. Additional news item informed about convening a meeting by Pius XII, during which it was planned to appoint new cardinals. There was a photograph placed on page 3, of the Pope in pontifical robes and a crowd gathered in front of the Vatican palace.

The issue No 10 held names of people who could take the post of the Secretary of the State of the Holy See. They were: Francesco Marmaggi, Luigi Maglione, Federico Tedeschini, and Alfredo Ottaviani³⁴. According to the author of the newspaper article, F. Marmaggi had the biggest chances. The Cardinal was a Roman citizen, he was 63 years old at that time and he had a long experience from his service in Bucharest, Prague and Warsaw. In addition, attention was drawn to his affiliations with Pius XII. But the issue No 11 of the «Courier» communicated about the choice

of L. Maglione for this position. His biography and a photograph were also published.

An extensive article was included in the issue No 13, which described a course of the coronation of the Pope. On March 12, 1939 the St. Peter's Basilica was opened at 6:00 a.m. People began to gather at the twilight to witness the coronation of Pius XII. The military and the police secured the order, and the Red Cross was providing medical assistance. A great success was enjoyed by the sellers of folding chairs and of «holy» illustrations.

It should be described how interior of the basilica was prepared. The Pope's throne of white color was set deep inside of the main nave, with the back pointing to the main altar, which was covered. In the vicinity of the throne there were stands for the foreign diplomatic missions accredited to the Holy See, the Order of the Knights of Malta, members of royal families and the press. The guard was performed by the Swiss Guards.

From the Vatican palaces a papal procession set off, composed of the Master of Ceremonies, the Prosecutor of Religious Colleges, the preacher, the confessor of the papal court, the chaplain, the jeweler and two guards carrying the Pope's tiara, Chaplains of Honor, lawyers of the Papal Gathering, the members of the Troop of Papal Cross, the Pope carried on a sedan-chair, bishops, archbishops, cardinals and chamberlains. Pius XII was dressed in a white coronation cover and the precious miter.

At approximately 10:00 a.m. the papal procession entered the basilica. At that time the applause and cheers started, drowning out the chorus. Simultaneously, all the windows' curtains were drawn and the interior was illuminated by electric light and candles. After coming to the confession, bishops and cardinals took their place along the passage between the throne of the pope, and the main altar. In the meantime, Pius XII dismounted the sedan-chair and headed to the throne, where he celebrated the mass. He was assisted by cardinals who said their prayers regarding the coronation. The Pope ascended the steps of the altar, where his miter was removed and kisses on his cheek and on his chest were placed.

The Holy Father sat on the throne and received the last adoration. The cardinals, who were embraced by the Pope twice, kissed the Pope's hand and stole. On the other hand, archbishops, bishops and patriarchs kissed the Pope's feet and knee. After paying the tribute, Pius XII celebrated the remainder of the mass, in which he consecrated the bread and wine. He gave the Holy Communion to the deacon and subdeacon. Finally, the Pope put on

his miter again, he moved in front of the main altar to say prayers and grant blessings. Then Pius XII was approached by the Archpriest of the Basilica, who handed him a bag made of white silk, in which there were 25 coins from the times of the Pope Julius II³⁵. It was a tradition of charity for a well sung mass. Upon completion, the papal procession went to the balcony outside the main entrance of the basilica.

St. Peter's Square was filled with worshipers. Carabinieri in their dress uniforms performed the honor guard, the Royal Lancers in gilded helmets, Sardinian Grenadiers in battle gear, Bersaglieri, the police officers and sailors. At about 13:00 the Holy Father appeared, taking place on the throne at the balcony. After several prayers, the miter was removed from the Pope's head. The tiara was put on the Pope's head by Camillo Caccia Dominioni, who said: «Receive this tiara adorned with three crowns and know that you are the father of princes and kings, ruler of the whole earth, to whom be the honor and glory, for ever and ever, amen»³⁶. After the coronation, the Pope said prayers three times and blessed the city and the world, and the crowd received a plenary indulgence. The article was complemented with a photo of the Pope, and the issue No 14 included a photograph of the balcony on which Pius XII was crowned.

As we can see, «*Courier Białystok*» kept readers of Białystok area informed of events related to the election and coronation of the new Pope in Vatican. These information items were accurately described, by which we can trace the various stages of the election of Pius XII. Concluding, it should be without any doubt that «*Courier Białystok*» should take place among other valuable sources that can be successfully used in historical research concerning the history of the church, but not only.

¹ Kurier – a daily newspaper, underlining it in the title. Sobol E. Mały słownik języka polskiego – Warszawa – 2000. – P. 388;

Sobol E. Słownik wyrazów obcych – Warszawa – 2002. – P. 624.

² Białystok is now located in the north – eastern part of Poland, it is the capital of the Podlaskie Voivodeship.

⁴ The name comes from the name of Bronisław Pieracki, a politician. During the interwar period he was the Minister of Internal Affairs. Today the name is not being used. Petrozolin-[Skowrońska B. Nowa encyklopedia powszechna – Warszawa, 1996. – No 4. – P. 865; Hauser P. Żerka S. Słownik polityków polskich XX wieku – Poznań, 1998. – P. 271].

- ⁴ Kurjer Białostocki. – 1939. – No 1. – 1 marca. – P. 1.
- ⁵ Pius PP. XI. Achille Ratti (6.II.1922-10.II.1939) [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en.html; w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/it/biography/documents/hf_p-xi_bio_20070330_biography.html.
- ⁶ The Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church Biographical Dictionary / Pope Pius X (1903-1914) [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: webdept.fiu.edu/~mirandas/bios1911.htm#Granito.
- ⁷ Kurjer Białostocki. – 1939. – No 2. – 2 marca. – P. 1.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Wczoraj rozpoczęło się konklawe // Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Życie kard. Augusta Hlonda [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: www.hlond.tchr.org/kandydaci-na-oltarze/sluga-bozy-kard-august-hlond/zyciorys.
- ¹¹ The Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: webdept.fiu.edu/~mirandas/conclave-xx.htm#1939.
- ¹² Biały dym nad Watykanem: Jak powstaje? [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: www.national-geographic.pl/magazyn-ng/nauka/bialy-dym-nad-watykanem-jak-powstaje.
- ¹³ Na tronie Piotrowym Pius XII // Kurjer Białostocki. – 1939. – No 3. – 3 marca. – P. 1.
- ¹⁴ Habemus papam // Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Papa Pio XII – Habemus Papam [Video]. – Access mode: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOORk3JMrA; www.youtube.com/watch?v=xRfvjvSLKXA.
- ¹⁶ The Swiss Guards – Cohors pedestris Helvetiorum and Sacra custodia Pontificis – Vatican military unit. It was established by Julius II as a bodyguard in force of 200 Swiss mercenaries. Its task was to ensure the protection of the Pope and to maintain order. Members of the guard could become Swiss Catholics between the ages of 18 to 25 years who have undertaken at least 2 years of service. During the period of Pius XII, the guards had 150 soldiers. Verlag B. ABC chrześcijaństwa – Warszawa – 2006. – P. 147.
- ¹⁷ Papa Pio XII – Habemus Papam [Video].
- ¹⁸ Habemus papam // Kurjer Białostocki – 1939. – No 3. – 3 marca. – P. 1.
- ¹⁹ Deschner K. Polityka papieska w XX wieku – Gdynia, 1997. – No 2. P. 11; Panuś K. Wielcy ludzie kościoła. Pius XII – Kraków, 2008. – P. 9.
- ²⁰ Bishop Search [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bgasp.html.
- ²¹ Zieliński Z. Dzieje papieży // Poznań, 2001. – No 6. – P. 18, 21-39; Kelly J. Encyklopedia papieży – Warszawa, 2006. – P. 446-447; Blet P. Pius XII i druga wojna światowa w tajnych archiwach watykańskich – Katowice – 2000. – P. 25; Deschner K. Polityka papieska w XX wieku – Gdynia – 1997. – No 2. – P. 12.

- ²² Habemus papam, uderzyły wczoraj wszystkie dzwony w Białymstoku // Kurjer Białostocki. – 1939. – No 3. – 3 marca. – P. 4.
- ²³ Parafia Św Rocha w Białymstoku [Zasób elektroniczny]. – Dostęp: www.swroch.bialystok.opoka.org.pl/historia.html.
- ²⁴ Pierwsze błogosławieństwo «orbi et urbi» // Kurjer Białostocki. – 1939. – No 4. – 4 marca. – P. 1.
- ²⁵ Depesza P. Prezydenta Rzplitej do papieża Piusa XII // Ibidid.
- ²⁶ Pierwsze błogosławieństwo Ojca św. Piusa XII dla Polski // Kurjer Białostocki. – 1939. – No 6. – 6 marca. – P. 1.
- ²⁷ Reprezentant P. Prezydenta R. P. na uroczystościach koronacji Piusa XII // Kurjer Białostocki. – 1939. – No 7. – 7 marca. – P. 1.
- ²⁸ Pierwszy wyjazd Piusa XII za granicę? // Kurjer Białostocki. – 1939/. – No 8. – 8 marca. – P. 2.
- ²⁹ Archbishop Paul-Jules-Narcisse Rémond [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bremo.html.
- ³⁰ Pope Pius VII [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: www.newadvent.org/cathen/12132a.htm.
- ³¹ Niezliczone tłumy wezmą udział w koronacji Piusa XII // Kurjer Białostocki. 1939. – No 9. – 9 marca. – P. 1.
- ³² Niezliczone tłumy wezmą udział w koronacji Piusa XII // Kurjer Białostocki. 1939. – No 9. – 9 marca. – P. 1.
- ³³ 20 misyj zagranicznych przybędzie na koronację Ojca św // Kurjer Białostocki. – No 10. – 10 marca. – P. 1.
- ³⁴ Francesco Cardinal Marmaggi [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bmarmaggi.html.
- ³⁵ Pope Julius II [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: www.newadvent.org/cathen/08562a.htm.
- ³⁶ Ojciec św. Pius XII zasiadł na tronie papieskim // Kurjer Białostocki. – No 13. – 13 marca. – P. 1.