

The project has two objectives. The first is a study on the activity of the Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs and its influence on shaping of the policy of the Holy See towards the governments of European states in the years 1814-1870. The Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, established by Pius VII after the Napoleonic wars, was the pope's advisory body. It examined all kinds of disputes between the Church and the state authorities and pointed out which attitude should adopt the Holy See. The members of the Congregation were chosen among the most eminent Roman cardinals. From its setting up until 1870 the Congregation held 395 sessions and examined about 1200 cases. The second objective of the project is to analyse cases discussed during the Congregation meetings: matters of state-church disputes, principal causes of conflicts, differences and similarities of the situation in Catholic and non-Catholic countries, evaluation criteria used by the cardinals, and what did the Congregation demand, accept, tolerate and reject.

The research will be based on archival records of the Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, such as relations, reports, opinions of consultants, proceedings, etc. They are kept in the archives of the Secretariat of State in Vatican and the Vatican Secret Archives. Wherefore the execution of the project requires several months stay in Rome, necessary for the archival research and the ongoing library query in the field of specialist literature. The prospective dissertation will include elements of political history, socio-religious history, history of law and history of mentality. The author will make use of comparative studies, prosopography (showing the cardinals – members of the Congregation as a specific group and a milieu) and statistical analyses of data concerning political and religious geography, and chronology.

The chronological framework is formed by the Congress of Vienna that proclaimed the restoration of the old order in Europe (1814-1815) and the incorporation of Rome into the new Kingdom of Italy (1870), because of what the Pope ceased to join his office of Head of the Catholic Church with functions of secular monarch. This period was vitally important for the state-church relations because of the ongoing and difficult for both sides process of gradual transition from a model of confessional state (with dominant religion enjoying legal privileges) to separation of the Churches and religious communities from State.

The relations between the Church and the State remain still an important and live issue of the Polish and European culture. Its great significance is reflected in the ongoing public debate (in parliamentary disputes and in media as well) regarding the best legal solutions for the Church participation in public and civic life, the place of religion in the public space, and alike. These issues have recently assumed even a greater importance in the context of the confrontation between the European civilization and the Islamic world. However, this subject is too often neglected in historical research – especially in Poland. There is a lack of both specialists and reliable scientific studies that could be of concern to decision makers and people responsible for shaping the public opinion. The proposed project would be a step toward filling this gap.