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GREGORY IN CONSTANTINOPLE AS A
RESPONSALIS OF POPE PELAGIUS II

Beginning from the time of Leo the Great the bishops of Rome had their permanent representatives on the imperial court in Constantinople¹. It was not the only place where the papal nuncio named „apocrisiarius” or „responsalis” resided but the role played by the one who dwelled in Constantinople was exceptional. Thanks to a very long stay in the center of political, economic and cultural life of the Empire, the pope’s nuncio had a chance to learn the mechanisms of power, the form of government and the people who were in authority. He had many opportunities to contact with the emperor, the empress and their family. He could gain their support and friendship. That was the reason why, very often, this post was a step on the way to become the bishop of Rome². From the times of Justinien the pope could take his office only after having been accepted by the emperor³. Relations with important, influential officials of the court were a good basis for civil, political or ecclesiastical career. Responsalis had the possibility to get to know the cultural heritage, especially the theological thought of the East. Due to his duties responsalis did not lose sight of Church affairs and very often found himself involved in hot disputes and religious controversies. Nuncios could learn personally the patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch and Alexandria. Being representatives of pope’s interests at the emperor’s side they participated in matters

¹ F. Dvorník *Bizancjum a prymat Rzymu*, Warszawa 1985, p. 41; F. K. Seppelt, K. Löffler, *Dzieje papieży od początków Kościoła do czasów dzisiejszych*, Poznań 1936, p. 86. This nuncio was Julian from Kos. It is obvious that before this date the popes used to send their nuncios to Constantinople but they were not their permanent representatives.

² From among apocrisiarius popes-to-be we would mention Vigilius (537–555), Pelagius I (556–561) and Gregory himself.

³ „L’élection pontificale, depuis Justinien, était soumise a la ratification de l’empereur qui donnait la praeceptio or iussio de consacrer l’élue”. A. Flich, V. Martin, *Histoire de l’Eglise depuis origine jusqu’à nos jours*, t. 5, Paris 1947, p. 24.

of great concern. The scope of the affairs which were interesting for popes and their representatives was growing as the emperor's power in Italy was weakening. Bishops of Rome were forced to take over his duties. Thus their range of interests incorporated clearly political matters, e.g. the defence of Italy against barbarian attacks and gaining supporters for Italy and organizing supplies of food. Pope's responsalis in Constantinople had the task of asking for military support against the invaders. He had to be a mediator between the emperor and the bishop of Rome. The latter tried to take advantage of the weakness of the imperial power in Italy, so his nuncio's mission was very delicate – he had to be very skillful and tactful. An equally important duty of apocrisiarius was to inform the pope about everything taking place in the East not only about things concerning the Church but also about matters concerning politics.

The mentioned above duties demanded of the person nominated to the post of apocrisiarius cleverness, intelligence, perseverance, energy, observancy, experience, and ease in getting in touch with people. He had to be peremptory and flexible at the same time. Pope Pelagius II (579–590) had to know very well what features of character his representative should have. Soon after the beginning of his pontificate he decided that Gregory would represent the interests of the Church and the papacy in Constantinople⁴. Gregory lived at that time in a monastery in Italy which he himself had founded. At the moment of the nomination he was about 39 years old⁵, being a man in his prime physically and intellectually. We do not know much about Gregory's education, but as he was born in a noble family⁶, he was probably given very good one. His experience in public services and good knowledge of law could be especially helpful at his post. At first Gregory was preparing himself for a civil career and before starting life of

⁴ It is very likely that Gregory was sent to Constantinople in 579, the same year in which Pelagius II started his pontificate. He often mentioned his stay in Constantinople in his letters without giving concrete dates. *Gregorii I Papae Registrum epistolarum* (hereafter Ep.), ed. P. Ewald, L. M. Hartmann, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (hereafter MGH), *Epistolae in Quart*, t. 1–2, Berolini 1957, Ep. I, 4; III, 29; V, 53a; VII, 4; IX, 46. Polish translation of Gregory's letters: *Grzegorz Wielki, Listy*, przeł. J. Czuj, t. 1–4, Warszawa 1954–1955.

⁵ According to J. Czuj Gregory was born about 540 (*Papież Grzegorz Wielki*, Warszawa 1948, p. 7); others biographers of Gregory give the same date.

⁶ About Gregory's origin see among others: *Joannis Diaconi Sancti Gregorii Magni Vita*, I, 1, (hereafter *Joan. Diac. Vita*) *Patrologiae cursus completus... Series latina...* accurate J. P. Migne (hereafter PL), t. 75; *Pauli Diaconi Gregorii Magni Vita*, 2, PL, t. 75 (hereafter *Pauli Vita*); Gregorius Turonensis, *Historia Francorum*, X, 1, MGH, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, Hannoverae 1884–1885; P. Cannata, *Gregorio I*, [in:] *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, t. VII, p. 223; L. Cracco-Rugni, *Grégoire le Grand et le monde byzantin*, [in:] *Colloques internationaux du CNRS*, Paris 1987, p. 83–84. The thesis of the ancients about the aristocratic origin of Gregory is accepted by almost all his biographers in modern times.

a monk he was a praefect or praetor of Rome⁷. This very important post gave him a chance to show energy and gain sympathy of Romans which affected his later vicissitudes. Finally he himself stopped his promising civilian career. After his father's death Gregory decided to settle in one of the monasteries which he had founded⁸. It is not certain if he was a monk. It is possible that he lived in the monastery profiting as a founder⁹. During that time he probably deepened his theological knowledge and became known as a man very strict to himself, a personification of traditional Christian virtues¹⁰. It is possible that due to this style of life he called the pope's attention as was nominated a deacon. The biographer of Gregory – John the Deacon claims that it was done by pope Benedict but most of the scholars think that the nomination was the work of Pelagius II¹¹. If the latter is true it had to take place shortly before the beginning of the mission in Constantinople. Historian L. Uspenski is convinced that at the moment of coming to the capital of the Empire Gregory was already an archdeacon. L. Uspenski argues that it was customary to send an archdeacon to Constantinople and that Gregory himself would comply with this rule when he became a pope¹². As a proof Uspenski quotes a letter from the later period in which Gregory, already a pope, supposedly wrote, that he was sending his apocrisiarius, archdeacon Boniface, to emperor Phocas, as the custom required¹³. Boniface, however, is called the deacon in the letter; besides the whole excerpt seems ambiguous. We are not certain whether the words „as the custom requires” refer to the act of sending a papal responsalis or to his rank. During his pontificate Gregory had four representatives in Constantinople and none of them was archdeacon¹⁴.

⁷ On Gregory's career see among others: Cannata, *op. cit.*, p. 225–233; Czuj, *op. cit.*, p. 8–10; M. Deanesly, *A History of Early Medieval Europe*, New York 1956, p. 178–180; H. H. Howorth, *Saint Gregory the Great*, London 1911, p. 7–9.

⁸ *Joan. Diac. Vita*, I, 6; *Pauli Vita*, 5.

⁹ Gregory wrote that he was much indebted to the monastery in which he had put on a robe of a monk and in which he had been an abbot – Ep. I, 14a. In spite of this Howorth (*op. cit.*, p. 11–12) emphasized that there is no sufficient proof that Gregory was a monk. We only know that he used to live monk-like life.

¹⁰ *Joan. Diac. Vita*, I, 7; *Pauli Vita*, *loc. cit.*

¹¹ *Joan. Diac. Vita*, I, 25; *Pauli Vita*, 2; Cannata, *op. cit.*, p. 231; P. Battifol, *Grégoire le Grand*, Paris 1928, p. 47; G. R. Evans, *The thought of Gregory the Great*, Cambridge 1986, p. 5; Flich, Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

¹² T. Uspenski, *Cerkovno-politiceskaja de jatelnost papy Grigorija I Dvojeslawa*, Kazan 1901, p. 56. Also according to Howorth (*op. cit.*, p. 13) Gregory was an archdeacon and he was referred to like that by patriarch Eulogius.

¹³ Ep. XIII, 41.

¹⁴ Gregory's representatives in Constantinople were in turn: Honoratus, Sabinianus, Anatolius, Bonifacius. Gregory in his letters called them all deacons. Ep. II, 36; III, 51; V, 6; V, 45; VII, 27; IX, 187; IX, 201; IX, 237; XI, 25; XI, 29; XIII, 43; XIV, 8.

Which is more important, the letter which pope Pelagius II sent to his apocrisiarius was addressed to „deacon”¹⁵. It is difficult to suppose that he consciously used the wrong title. Also Gregory's donation to the monastery of St. Andrew from 587 year mentions of him as a deacon¹⁶. This document originates from the time after his stay in Constantinople we can assume therefore that he did not become archdeacon during his mission. Eulogius, the patriarch of Alexandria must have been wrong when he wrote about Gregory as an archdeacon¹⁷.

Apart from the experience which he gained in civil services, the papal responsalis had knowledge and features of character helpful in his difficult mission. R. A. Markus characterizes him in this way: „...a particularly sensitive and intelligent Westerner, moreover a Westerner who had lived in Constantinople and remained in touch with the capital as well as with several other great ecclesiastical centres of the Eastern Mediterranean”¹⁸. The time which he spent in the monastery and as a deacon in Rome enabled him to undertake theological studies and to become familiar with the problems of the Church. Undoubtedly Pelagius II must have been convinced of Gregory's loyalty and devotion to papacy and Italy.

In spite of his values, Gregory had some disadvantages which made his activity in the capital of the Empire more difficult. He tells us that he did not know Greek, the language used in Constantinople at that time. If it were true, it could have been a big problem. Making decision of sending Gregory to the Constantinople Pelagius II could have hoped that educated people spoke Latin there but still the lack of knowledge of Greek could restrain his apocrisiarius' contact with people in the East. The most important duty of the latter was to inform the pope about everything happening in the East so the limiting of the circle of people with whom he had contacts to those speaking Latin could have been a big problem. We must stress here that it is very doubtful that Gregory knew no Greek at all. Pelagius II must have realized, that if the information were to be reliable, it should be obtained from various sources not only from the people close to the imperial court. Moreover, the pope and his nuncio were interested not only in Constantinople but in Alexandria and Antioch as well. It must be noticed that even in the capital of the Empire there was

¹⁵ Pelagius papa II, *Epistolae et decreta*, PL, t. 72, col. 703–790, Ep. II, *Ad Gregorium diaconum*.

¹⁶ *Appendix I*, [in:] *Gregorii I Papae Registrum epistolarum*, MGH, *Epistolae in Quart*, t. 2, p. 437–439.

¹⁷ Howorth, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁸ R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great's Europe*, [in:] *From Augustine to the Gregory the Great*, London 1983, p. 21.

a lack of good translators at that time. Gregory wrote about it himself¹⁹. It seems very likely that in other cities of the Empire the situation was even worse. It is difficult to suppose that Pelagius II did not appreciate the knowledge of Greek and that he had sent to Constantinople a man, who did not speak this language. Many historians call in question Gregory's ignorance²⁰. They argue that at the first level of traditional Roman education pupils were taught Greek²¹. It would be very strange if Gregory did not know that language to a small extent, at least. In subsequent period of time he could have stopped learning it because of the lack of time and because he might have thought that the knowledge of the language less and less popular in Italy was useless. However, when he settled down in his monastery and devoted himself to theological studies he might have come across some works of eastern authors written in Greek. We can assume from his own later letters and works that he knew some Greek works and, which is very important, some of these were not translated into Latin²². It is possible that he learnt them via other people – pope Pelagius

¹⁹ Ep. VII, 27; X, 21. About the knowledge of Latin in Orient see J. M. Sansterre, *Les moines grecs et orientaux à Rome aux époques byzantine et carolingienne (milieu du VI^e fin du IX^e s.)*, t. 1, Bruxelles 1983, p. 64–65. A strong center of latin culture was in Constantinople until VI century. A latin monastery existed in Chalcedon. See M. Salamon, *Priscianus und sein Schülerkreis*, „Philologus” 1979, t. 123, p. 91–96; idem, *Jordanes w środowisku Konstantynopola połowy VI wieku. Uwagi wstępne*, „Balcanica Posnanensia” 1990, t. 5, p. 405–415.

²⁰ C. Dagnes, *L'Eglise universelle et le monde orientale chez saint Grégoire le Grand*, „Istina” 1975, p. 465; idem, *Grégoire le Grand et le monde oriental*, „Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa” 1981, t. 17, p. 244–245 („Son ignorance semble plus politique que réelle” – *ibidem*, p. 245); J. Petersen, *Did Gregory the Great know Greek?* [in:] *Studies in Church History*, ed. D. Baker, t. 13: *The Orthodox Churches and the West*, Oxford 1976, p. 121–132. H. Petersmann, *Quid S. Gregorius Magnus papa romanique eius aetatis de lingua sua senserint*, [in:] *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo*, t. 2, Roma 1991, p. 137–148; H. Grisar underlined that at the times of Gregory there were strong byzantine influences in Italy (*San Gregorio Magno (590–604)*, Roma 1928, p. 170). A different opinion is voiced by M. B. Dunn (*The Style of the Letters of Saint Gregory the Great*, Washington 1931, p. 3). The author is convinced that the fact that Gregory did not know Greek „is perfectly in keeping with the normal education of a sixth century Roman boy”.

²¹ Petersen, *op. cit.*, p. 132–133. A different opinions is voiced by P. Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques en Occident. De Macrobie à Cassiodore*, Paris 1948, p. 388–392 and by Sansterre, *op. cit.*, p. 67–68. The latter wrote that Italy „rompit avec la langue greque dans la seconde moitié do VI^e s.” (*ibidem*, p. 67), but he admitted at the same time that „Il n'était pas rare, à l'époque, de voir des moines grecs et orientaux se rendre à Rome” (*ibidem*, p. 54).

²² Cracco-Rugini, *op. cit.*, p. 84; J. Czuj, *Wstęp*, [in:] *Grzegorz Wielki, Księga reguły pasterskiej*, POK, t. 22, Warszawa 1948, p. XVI; H. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, part I, t. 1, p. 211, 221, 222. Petersen, *op. cit.*, p. 121–133. The latter underlined that Gregory occasionally used Greek words (*ibidem*, p. 125–126), he expressed his opinion about translation from Greek into Latin (*ibidem*, p. 125), in a homily concerning Ezechiel (PL, t. 76, I, VII,

or Gregory's friends in Constantinople. But it is also possible that Gregory himself had some passive command of Greek and could read and understand texts in that language. For the reasons unknown to us he strongly denied knowing Greek. He did so, which is interesting, after returning to Rome from his long stay in Constantinople. He insisted on not having written anything in that language²³. He refused to answer letters which had been written to him in Greek²⁴. In a similar way, he cut himself off from any eastern patterns and denied to have brought some customs from the East to Rome²⁵. His statement must raise serious doubts. It would be strange, however, if after a long, at least 6 year, stay in the city in which almost only Greek was spoken he would not have been able to understand if not to speak it. In any case, the fact that some people wrote letters in Greek to him and also attributed the authorship of some theological Greek writings to him, proves that already the contemporaries of Gregory were convinced that he was able to speak it. It is likely that he did not know it very well and almost impossible that he did not know it at all.

Another shortcoming of Gregory as apocrisiarius could be his love for the monastic life and his dislike of the „worldly affairs”²⁶. This feature of character could mean limiting contacts with the emperor's court and so minimalisation of the possibility of gaining valuable and objective information. It is very difficult to estimate however the validity of his declaration. As a pope he often complained of the necessity of taking care of secular matters but despite this he is considered to be one of the most energetic leaders in the history of the Church.

Coming to Constantinople Gregory took a group of monks from the monastery which he had founded with him²⁷. Among them there was Maximianus, later called off by Pelagius II in order to take over the post of abbot of St. Andrew monastery²⁸. The decision of Gregory to take the

col. 852) he implied that he was able to compare the original text of Septuaginta with different translations. See also Cracco-Rugini, *op. cit.*, p. 84–85; Dagens, *Grégoire...*, s. 250–252; J. M. Peterson, „*Homo omnino latinus?*” *The Theological and Cultural Background of Pope Gregory the Great*, „*Speculum*” 1987, t. 62/3, p. 529–551; *idem*, *Greek Influences upon Gregory the Great's Exegesis of Luke 15, 1–10 in Homelia in Evang. II, 34*, [in:] *Grégoire le Grand. Colloques internationaux du CNRS*, Paris 1986, p. 521–529.

²³ Ep. XI, 55. The letter tackles a very interesting subject of some of Gregory's works being falsified by monk Andrew.

²⁴ Ep. III, 63. Gregory blames Domenica for having written to him in Greek even though she knows Latin.

²⁵ Ep. IX, 26.

²⁶ Ep. I, 3; I, 4; I, 5; I, 6; V, 53a and many others.

²⁷ Ep. V, 53a; *Joan. Diac. Vita*, I, 26; *Pauli Vita*, 7; *Vita auctore anonymo sed synchrono ex pluribus vetustis codicibus MSS* [in:] *Acta SS Martii II (XII Martii)*, p. 130.

²⁸ *Joan. Diac. Vita*, I, 33; Pelagius II, Ep. I; *Grégoire le Grand, Dialogues*, t. 2, ed. A. de Vogüé, P. Antin, Paris 1979, III, 36. His calling off took place about 584–585.

monks with him was probably caused by his fear of being isolated in the emperor's city. It is possible that among these monks there were some persons who spoke Greek very well and knew writings of eastern authors and they could help Gregory not only in spiritual matters but also in his daily contacts with the imperial court. Gregory could enjoy his leisure time among them after very exhausting duties at the imperial court and lead a quiet, contemplative life which he loved²⁹. For him they were a part of his country, an oasis in the Greek, strange world, which Gregory did not understand and did not like. Taking the monks with him proves that Gregory knew he was not being sent on a single mission but that he was expected to become a permanent representative of Rome in Constantinople. This fact is significant for understanding the purpose of his stay in the capital of the Empire.

The departure of Pelagius' apocrisiarius to the capital of the Empire took place probably in 579³⁰. Emperor Tiberius (578–582) accepted Gregory warmly. The nuncio lived in the Placidia palace³¹ and started to deal with many problems entrusted to him by Pelagius. According to L. Uspienski one of the most important tasks was to gain the emperor's acceptance of the consecration of Pelagius II³². As it has been said before from the times of Justinien it was a custom that the emperor should accept the choice and consecration of the pope. Pelagius became the bishop of Rome without such acceptance, Uspienski maintains therefore that Gregory's task was to obtain it. This argument does not seem convincing. Firstly, there is no source, which could confirm it. Secondly, Gregory, as it has been said, was sent to Constantinople as a permanent representative of the pope, not as one to perform one task only. It is difficult to suppose that the emperor could have accepted the responsarius of the pope whom himself he did not accept. On the other hand, Pelagius II would not have risked sending his apocrisiarius if there had been a danger that he could be rejected. Most probably he gained the emperor's acceptance before sending Gregory to him.

²⁹ Ep. V, 53a. See also note 26.

³⁰ This date is given, among others, by Cannata, *op. cit.*, p. 251; Czuj, *op. cit.*, p. 12 and 14 (Gregory was to return to Rome in 587 having spent 7 years in Constantinople); Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 5; Flich, Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 22; F. Gregorovius, *Istoria goroda Rima v srednje veka*, t. 1, Petersburg 1886, p. 229; F. Halkin, *Le pape St. Grégoire le Grand dans l'hagiographie byzantine*, „Orientalia Christiana Periodica” 1955, t. 21, p. 109; Uspienski, *op. cit.*, p. 57; E. Morggraff, *Gregorii Magni Vita*, Berolini [no date is given by the publisher], p. 3.

³¹ Grisar, *op. cit.*, p. 15; R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantin*, Paris 1950, p. 135, 379–380; V. Paronetto, *Gregorio Magno. Un maestro alle origini cristiane d'Europa*, Roma 1985, p. 29; J. Richards, *Il console di Dio. La vita e i tempi di Gregorio Magno*, Florenzia 1984, p. 59; T. Tarducci, *Storia di San Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo*, Roma 1909, p. 38.

³² Uspienski, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

It is unquestionable that the most important task of Gregory's mission was to ask for military and financial aid for Italy, threatened more and more by the Lombards³³. We know about it from the letter of Pelagius II to his representative. This letter was written in 584 or 585³⁴, therefore in the last part of Gregory's mission. But the danger of a barbarian invasion of Italy was so great that it is doubtless that Gregory tried to gain support from the emperor from the very beginning of his stay in Constantinople³⁵. His efforts were not successful and probably that was the reason why the pope wanted to support him with his personal letter. He stressed in it that he had asked the exarch of Ravenna for aid, but the latter answered, that his forces were too small to defend Ravenna and under no circumstances could he send help to Rome. In this city, as we know from the quoted letter, there was neither a garrison nor a commander of his own. The pope asked the emperor to send *magister militum* or *dux* to Rome³⁶. Gregory's duty was to deliver the pope's letter to the emperor which he did. The Empire, no matter what the apologists of Gregory the Great say³⁷, did not lose its interest in the western provinces and the successors of Justinian did not forget his work³⁸. The greatest danger for the Byzantine Empire however, came from the north in the form of barbarian invasions and from the east where it waged wars against the Persians. The possible loss of Italy, which was a very distant province of the Empire, was not a threat to its existence, yet the invasions from the north and east carried such a danger. Trying to preserve the state, the emperors were forced to limit their aid for Italy to the minimum; all forces were sent to defend the eastern part of the Empire. While in the West they brought into practice „passive defence”³⁹ and tried to push one barbarian against another. They applied to Franks asking for support and paid them for fighting against

³³ *Joan. Diac. Vita*, I, 51; Pelagius II, Ep. I; Howorth, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

³⁴ The letter of Pelagius mentioned above seems to urge Gregory to be more active in getting help for Italy. The pope does not explain the situation in Italy in details – probably this was not necessary.

³⁵ See note 33.

³⁶ Pelagius II, Ep. I.

³⁷ Batiffol, *op. cit.*, p. 198–200; Howorth, *op. cit.*, p. 93–95.

³⁸ T. S. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers. Imperial Administration and Aristocratic Power in Byzantine Italy A. D. 554–800*, Rome 1984, p. 148; Ch. Diehl, G. Marçais, *Le monde oriental de 395 à 1081*, Paris 1944, p. 124, 127; G. Ostrogorski, *Dzieje Bizancjum*, Warszawa 1967, p. 89. The latter gives proofs of Maurice's interest in the West (eg. the plans of dividing power between the sons of the emperor after his death or the existence of the exarchates of Ravenna and Carthage). C. M. Patrono, *Dei conflitti tra l'imperatore Maurizio Tiberio e il papa Gregorio Magno*, „Rivista di Storia Antica” 1909, t. 13, p. 50; J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West 400–1000*, London 1957, p. 43.

³⁹ This, very accurate term, is used by Deanesly, *op. cit.*, p. 213. See also the opinion of N. Cheetham, *Keepers of the Keys*, London 1982, p. 39.

the Lombards⁴⁰. This was all which Gregory could obtain, not because of the emperor's unwillingness to help or lack of energy, but because of objective inability to help more. It is possible that the emperor sent some orders to the exarch of Ravenna and told him to intensify his efforts, because in the letter of Pelagius II to the Istrian bishops from 586 we read that thanks to the activity of exarch Smaragdus time of peace came to Italy⁴¹. Later events proved however that the exarch's situation did not change radically in result of Gregory's intervention at the court and the forces of the exarchate were still insufficient to stand up to the invaders. It is very likely, that the failure of this mission deepened Gregory's dislike of the East. It is very characteristic that in spite of his very long stay at Bosphorus, he never understood the interests and threats to the eastern part of the Empire. Although he declared that he was a loyal subject of the emperor, he did not want or could not understand his politics. He never thought in terms of the whole Empire, limiting his interests to the problems of Italy or of the West at best. Being a pope, he did not show in his letters interest in the Byzantine affairs. He was not interested in the wars with the Avars and the Persians and never congratulated the emperor on his successes in these wars⁴². Furthermore, he demanded from the emperor not only military support against the barbarians but also active participation in fight against heresies and schisms. He himself had very little to offer in return. It is true that Gregory, like his predecessor, gave money for the defense of Italy, but in this case he acted in the interest of Rome and St. Peter's patrimonium⁴³. He evidently was not delighted with being the emperor's „treasurer” and clearly expected refund of the expenses⁴⁴. This attitude of Gregory is often explained by his Roman patriotism⁴⁵ but

⁴⁰ A. Flich, *La papauté au temps de Grégoire le Grand*, [in:] *Histoire du monde*, t. VII, 2, Paris 1929, p. 87; S. G. Lozinski, *Istoria papstwa*, Moskwa 1986, p. 40. The campaigns of Francs against Lombards took place, among others, in the years 582, 584 and 585. Ch. Diehl, *Etudes sur l'administration byzantine dans l'Exarchat de Ravenne (568-751)*, Paris 1888, p. 202-211; P. Goubert, *Byzance avant l'Islam*, t. II/2, Paris 1965, p. 22-27, 81-82. It is possible that Gregory met at Constantinople ambassadors sent by Frankish king Chilperic from Neustria - F. Mourret, *L'Eglise et le monde barbare* [= *Histoire générale de l'Eglise*, t. 3], Paris 1921, p. 64.

⁴¹ Pelagius II, Ep. III.

⁴² For example, he did not react to Byzantiniens successes in Armenia in 591. Ostrogorski, *op. cit.*, p. 89. Only once did he express his interest in the affairs of the East when a chance of converting the Persians was noticed.

⁴³ Howorth, *op. cit.*, p. 101; M. D. Knowles, D. Obolensky, *Historia Kościola*, t. 2, Warszawa 1988, p. 51.

⁴⁴ Ep. V, 39 to the empress Constantine. Gregory also wrote a letter to treasurer Domnellus complaining that the exarch did not pay back to him the money which he had borrowed from the pope for the soldiers pay - Ep. IX, 240.

⁴⁵ Dagens, *L'Eglise...*, p. 460; Battifol, *op. cit.*, p. 198-200.

it is strange that the man who spent many years in Constantinople did not understand that the Persians were more dangerous for the Empire than the Lombards. While he might have felt sorry because of the neglecting of the interests of Italy he should not have attributed this neglect to the ill will of the emperor. Gregory's lack of understanding of the problems of the Byzantines proves in a very particular fashion that the distance between the two parts of the Empire was growing. It is possible that Gregory was conscious of this process and that was the reason why he concentrated on the matters of the West trying to take advantage of the weakness of the emperor's power in Italy in order to widen the influences of bishop of Rome. He accused the emperor of being uninterested in the vicissitudes of Italy and failed to notice his effort to help Rome.

Gregory was interested to a certain degree in eastern theological thought. He considered his duty to confirm in the East the conviction that the only true interpretation of faith was given by the Roman Church⁴⁶. That is why he helped persons who were accused of heresy when he thought this accusation was false. He opposed the views of Eutychius, the patriarch of Constantinople, connected with the resurrection of the bodies. The quarrel between them led to a public debate in front of emperor Tiberius⁴⁷. During this discussion Gregory drew arguments taken directly from the Holy Scripture against his opponents⁴⁸. This could result both from his conviction that it is superior to the writings of theologians and from Gregory's ignorance of theological works, especially written by eastern authors. There is no need to discuss this dispute from the point of view of theological arguments here because it was done by other authors⁴⁹. We should only say that this discussion concentrated around the problem of the body after resurrection – will it be material, the same as before death or, as Eutychius thought, will it be subtler, impossible to touch⁵⁰. If the discussion really took place (which is questioned by some historians who suggest that Gregory opposed the patriarch's opinion only in his *Moralia*)⁵¹ it must have been conducted either in Latin which was probably spoken by the patriarch

⁴⁶ Gregory was convinced about that. That the East really did not accept the papal supremacy is another question.

⁴⁷ *Joan. Diac. Vita*, I, 28–30; *Sancti Gregorii Magni Moraliū libri sive Expositio in librum Job*, XIV, 74, PL 75 (hereafter *Moralia*).

⁴⁸ *Joan. Diac. Vita*, I, 28.

⁴⁹ A very detailed analysis of this discussion was made by Y. M. Duval in the article: *La discussion entre l'apocrisiare Grégoire et le patriarche Eutychios au sujet de la résurrection de la chair*, [in:] *Grégoire le Grand. Colloques internationaux du CNRS*, Paris 1986, p. 347–367.

⁵⁰ *Joan. Diac. Vita*, I, 28; *Moralia*, loc. cit.; *Bedae Opera historica*. With English translation by J. E. King, Cambridge Mass. Harvard Univ. Press 16, t. 1–2, London 1954, II, 1 (later *Bedae Opera*).

⁵¹ Duval, *op. cit.*, p. 357–359.

and the emperor or via some interpreter. Even if Gregory knew some Greek he surely was not able to lead theological dispute in it. According to John the Deacon the emperor recognized the superiority of the pope's apocrisiarius and had the book by Eutychius burnt⁵². Shortly after this public discussion both opponents were struck by a disease but Gregory recovered while the patriarch died⁵³, which was interpreted as a proof that Heavens supported Gregory and that he was right. The news about Gregory's serious illness is not unlikely. We know that his health was never very good. His style of life, fasting and mortification contributed to this. Patriarch Eutychius really died when Gregory was in Constantinople in 582. The dispute which is the subject of our interest must have been conducted therefore shortly before that date. It is very difficult to measure how much influence had the illness of the two opponents on the intensity of the quarrel⁵⁴. It is impossible to say why the emperor acknowledged Gregory's superiority. He could have been convinced by his arguments but it is also possible that he accepted Rome's primacy in doctrinal matters. He may have supported the pope's nuncio knowing that he would have a chance to become the bishop of Rome after the death of Pelagius II.

The stay in Constantinople allowed Gregory to meet not only the emperor and his family but also the high officials and dignitaries of the court. As a pope, during his pontificate, he kept corresponding with the people whom he had met in Constantinople. But these contacts were confined only to a small group of people closely connected with the emperor's court. They were persons of very high rank and social position, well educated. Probably some of them spoke Latin which could make it easier for them making friends with the responsarius. It is very characteristic that Gregory, consciously or not, tried to be in touch almost exclusively with the influential persons who could give him support during his mission and after its end. An exception to this rule were people coming from Italy, who abandoned it frightened by the Lombards, like the patrician Rusticana⁵⁵. Among Gregory's acquaintances there were first of all members of the emperors' families – the daughter of emperor Tiberius and the wife of his successor Maurice – Constantine⁵⁶, Maurice's sister Teoctiste⁵⁷, his relative

⁵² *Joan. Diac. Vita*, I, 28.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, I, 30. It took place in 582. J. W. Barker, *Justinian and the Later Roman Empire*, London 1966, *Historical Lists*, p. 279.

⁵⁴ Howorth (*op. cit.*, p. 22–23) thinks that their illness made their discussion more violent and bitter.

⁵⁵ To Rusticana Gregory wrote many times – Ep. II, 27; IV, 44; VIII, 22; XI, 26; XIII, 26. She is mentioned in Ep. IX, 83; XI, 25.

⁵⁶ Ep. IV, 30; V, 38; V, 39; VII, 23; VII, 26.

⁵⁷ Ep. I, 5; VII, 23; XI, 27.

Domitianus, bishop of Melitena⁵⁸. A big group of Gregory's acquaintances consisted of dignitaries of the imperial court, eg. emperor's doctors Theodore⁵⁹ and Theotimus⁶⁰, prefect of the East – Priscos⁶¹, prefect of praetorium Panthaleon⁶² and Narzes – *comes* of the imperial court⁶³. It is possible that it was in Constantinople that Gregory met the future praetor of Sicily – Justin⁶⁴ as well as Teoctiste⁶⁵, Strategios⁶⁶, Aristobulos⁶⁷.

As it has been mentioned in the moment of Gregory's arrival to Constantinople the throne of Byzantium was occupied by Tiberius. Gregory met his successor, Maurice, when he was *comes excubitorum*⁶⁸. The nuncio was a witness of his ascending to the throne and he was the godfather of his firstborn son⁶⁹. This fact is often quoted as the proof that the friendship between the emperor and the pope's apocrisiarius was real and great. This statement however, must be treated with great caution. Maurice could have had many other reasons to choose Gregory as his son's godfather. One of them could be the support of the Capital of the Apostles for him and his successor. As it has been said it was not unique that the pope's nuncio would become the bishop of Rome after his return to his city. Maurice later not only accepted but supported the choice of Gregory to this post, so it is very likely that during Gregory's stay in Constantinople he considered such a possibility. On the other hand the nuncio may have treated his friendship with people from Constantinople instrumentally. As a pope he corresponded almost only with the relatives of Maurice and with high officials in his court. The fact that he did not write to the members of Tiberius' family whom he certainly must have known is very striking⁷⁰. It is very probable that they were not useful for him. Similarly, after the „Phocas revolution” not only he did not write to Maurice's widow, empress Constantine, but he was not even interested in her vicissitudes. He did not send any letters after 602 to the people connected with the over-

⁵⁸ Ep. III, 62; V, 43.

⁵⁹ Ep. III, 64; V, 46; VII, 25; VII, 27.

⁶⁰ Ep. III, 65.

⁶¹ Ep. III, 51.

⁶² Ep. IV, 32.

⁶³ Ep. I, 6; III, 63; V, 46; VI, 14; VII, 27.

⁶⁴ Ep. I, 2.

⁶⁵ Ep. VI, 17.

⁶⁶ Ep. VIII, 22; XI, 26; XIII, 26. These letters are addressed to Rusticana but Gregory mentioned Strategios in them.

⁶⁷ Ep. I, 28.

⁶⁸ Ep. III, 61 (Gregory describes Maurice's career). Tarducci, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁶⁹ *Joan. Diac. Vita*, I, 40. The baptism took place about 585. Czuj, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁷⁰ The only exception was empress Constantine.

thrown emperor who survived the Phocas revolt⁷¹. His enthusiastic letters to the usurper and his wife prove that he was always looking for such a friendship which could be useful for his activity for the benefit of the Church. He gave priority to the interests of the latter over the loyalty to the people whom he called friends and over the necessity of condemning the sin of murder.

There are no sources to prove that during his mission to Constantinople Gregory took advantage of his friends in order to exert pressure on the emperor's decisions, yet, because we know that later he often did so, we can assume that he did the same when he was a papal ambassador.

For Gregory the most important and valuable was the acquaintance with the three succeeding patriarchs of Constantinople. The dispute with Eutychius who occupied the bishop's throne at the moment of Gregory's arrival, has been discussed above. The nuncio was also in touch with John, „the deacon of the great church”⁷² and with Cyriacus⁷³. Later they both became patriarchs of the capital of the Empire. The contact with them was even easier because they lived in Constantinople, were members of higher clergy and were interested in monastic life. They shared this interest with Gregory and it was probably one of the reasons that the apocrisarius

⁷¹ At least they are not included in *Registri epistularum*.

⁷² Ep. I, 4; I, 24; III, 52; V, 44; VI, 15. John the Faster is mentioned in many sources other than Gregory's letters: *Anastasio Bibliothecarii Interpretatio Chronologiae S. Nicephori*, PL, t. 129, col. 544; Nicephori Callisti, *Ecclesiasticae Historiae*, t. VIII, part. XXXIV, *Patrologiae cursus completus... Series graeca...*, (accurante J. P. Migne hereafter PG), 147, col. 395-398; idem *Enarratio*, PG, t. 147, col. 445; *Joannes Ephesinus Historia ecclesiastica*, pars tertia, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* (hereafter CSCO) 104 S.S., t. 53, book III, chapter XLI-XLII; book V, chapter XV; *Chronologia consularis et caesarea*, PL, t. 127, col. 792; *Pavli Historica*, XVII, PL, t. 95, col. 1008; *S. Isidori hisp. ep. De viris illustribus XXXIX*, PL, t. 83; Zonaras, *Annales*, book XIV, chapters XI-XIII, PG, t. 134-135; Cedrenus, *Historiarum compendium*, PG, t. 121, col. 753-756, 759-760; Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographie*, PG, t. 108, ad a. 574, 582, 583; Theophylactus Simocatta, *Historia*, ed. de Boor, Lipsiae 1887, book I, I, 1; I, X, 1-12; I, XI, 16-21; book VII, VI, 1-5; J. B. Pitra, *Iuris ecclesiastici graecorum historia et monumenta*, t. 2, Romae 1868 (writings of John the Faster); The papers dealing with John worth mentioning here include, among others: R. Janin, *Jean IV*, [in:] *Dict. de theol. cath.* 8, 1, col. 828-829; P. Goubert, *Patriarches d'Antioche et d'Alexandrie contemporains de S. Grégoire le Grand*, „Revue des Etudes Byzantines” 1967, t. 25, p. 74-76.

⁷³ Ep. VII, 4; VII, 28; XIII, 43. Other sources mentioning Cyriac: Nicephori Callisti, *op. cit.*, t. XVIII, chapter LX; idem, *Enarratio*, PG, 147, col. 445; *Anastasio Bibliothecarii...*, PL, 129, col. 554; Theophanes, *op. cit.*, ad a. 587, 590, 594, 598; Theophylactus Sim., *op. cit.*, book VIII, IX, 1-21; *Pavli Diaconi Historica*, PL, t. 95, col. 1018, 1021; Cedrenus, *Historiarum compendium*, 121-122, col. 763, 771, 778; *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. L. Dindorfus, t. 1: *Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae* (hereafter CSHB), t. 6, p. 693. See also V. Grumel, *Cyriac*, [in:] *Dict. d'histoire et géographie eccl.*, t. 13, col. 1167-1168.

became a friend of theirs, especially of John, and he was very glad when the latter was chosen bishop of Constantinople after Eutychius' death⁷⁴. During all the time when Gregory was the pope's responsalis his relations with John were very good. They deteriorated only during his pontificate on account of the quarrel about the title of the „ecumenical patriarch”⁷⁵. Among the churchmen met by Gregory in Constantinople we should mention the patriarch of Antioch – Anastasius – deposited from his throne by Justin II⁷⁶. From the later correspondence we know that Gregory was friendly towards him and probably tried to convince the emperor to give his post back to him. This was done by Maurice but only after the death of patriarch Gregory⁷⁷. Another very important person who was a friend of the pope's apocrisarius was the bishop of Sevilla, Leander, who came to Constantinople as an ambassador of Hermenegild who rebelled against his father, king of Visigoths, on religious ground. Hermenegild, probably under the influence of Leander, sympathized with catholicism and he tried to introduce it in his country against his father's opinion. The latter was a follower of arian religion⁷⁸. Gregory met Leander about the year 583⁷⁹. It is difficult to weight the influence which Gregory could exert on the bishop of Sevilla but we can be almost sure that he promoted his mission and tried to help him to gain the emperor's support. He was always an adherent of winning new tribes for the Christian faith and surely Wisigoths were not an exception to that rule. During his pontificate he tried to convert the Lombards and sent christianizing mission to the Angles. The idea of the restitution of catholicism in Spain was pleasant to him, especially because it's realization would strengthen the position of the pope in the West. Hermenegild was, as a matter of fact, a rebel against his own

⁷⁴ Ep. I, 4.

⁷⁵ Gregory's letters from the time of his pontificate express the opinion that John had changed very much and became haughty. Ep. V, 44.

⁷⁶ Ep. I, 7; I, 24; V, 41, VII, 24; VII, 31; VIII, 2. Other sources mentioned Anastase: Agapios from Marbourg, *Histoire universelle*, ed. Vasiliev, *Patrologia Orientalis* (hereafter PO), t. 8, p. 447(187); Theophanes, *op. cit.*, ad a. 587; Nicephori Callisti, *op. cit.*, t. XVIII, chapter XXVI; *Chronicon Paschale*, p. 692; Ewagriusz Scholastyk, *Historia Kościoła*, przeł. S. Kazikowski, Warszawa 1990, book IV, chapter XL; book V; book VI, XXIV. See also R. Janin, *Anastase*, [in:] *Dict. d'histoire et géographie eccl.*, t. 2, col. 1460.

⁷⁷ It is very significant that Gregory sent synodical letters simultaneously to Athanasius and to patriarch Gregory, who at that time was holding the bishopric in Antioch.

⁷⁸ Ep. V, 52a. About the situation in Spain see among others: *Joannis Biclarensis Chronicon*, PL, t. 72, col. 886; *Pavli Diaconi De gestis Langobardorum*, III, XXI, PL, t. 95, col. 525; *Spain under the Visigoths*, [in:] *The Cambridge Medieval History*, t. 2, p. 159–193; D. M. Leclercq, *L'Espagne chrétienne*, Paris 1906, p. 275–289; J. M. Fontaine, *Isidore de Seville et la culture*, Paris 1959, t. 1, p. 5–7, 33; t. 2, p. 740–741, 842.

⁷⁹ *Joannis Biclarensis Chronicon*, *loc. cit.*; Fontaine, *op. cit.*, p. 5; Leclercq, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

father, but Gregory, when he saw real political advantages, could close his eyes to this. After becoming the pope he still had very good relations with Leander. Gregory owed his friend an inspiration to write one of his first theological works which gave him a place among the Doctors of the Church. It was a commentary to the book of Job known as *Moralia in Job*⁸⁰. It is worth saying that while attending the pope's ambassador's duties which forced him to live among „the affairs of the world” Gregory found time to explain difficult fragments of the Holy Scripture to his brothers. Probably among the monks whom he took with him from Italy he found safety and rest. It seems that he never liked the imperial court and could not trust Byzantines. Probably he did not feel at home in Constantinople. The commentaries to the Job uttered during the meetings with monks were later written down⁸¹.

The lack of the sources makes impossible to analyse deeper Gregory's work as a nuncio. We have only a few very short and chance mentions of his activity in Constantinople. One of them proves that he tried to guarantee the privileges of Naples. His efforts were successful – the emperor Maurice gave special orders in this matter⁸².

We know neither exactly when Gregory returned to Rome nor the reasons for his coming back. It is likely to have happened in 585 or 586⁸³. The date 584 which is accepted by some historians⁸⁴ should be rejected because in 585 Gregory was in the capital where he was a godfather to Maurice's son⁸⁵. It is certain that the reason for Gregory being recalled

⁸⁰ J. Danielou, H. J. Marrou, *Historia Kościoła*, t. 1: *Od początków do 600 r.*, Warszawa 1984, p. 325.

⁸¹ C. Dagnes thinks that „... Grégoire, ce Romain qui partage les inquiétudes de ses compatriotes, c'est senti étranger dans la ville imperiale. Il y a vecu à la manière d'un exilé, se liant peu avec les Orientaux, restant dans un milieu romain”. Dagnes, *Grégoire...*, p. 244. *Moralia* Gregory wrote at the request of this monks and Leander. Ep. 53a; *Gregorii Magni Moralia XIV*, 74; *Vita auctore...*, p. 131; *S. Isidori De viris...*, XL, PL, t. 83, col. 1102. J. Fontaine, *Augustin, Grégoire et Isidore: esquisse d'une recherche sur le style des Moralia in Iob*, [in:] *Grégoire le Grand. Colloques internationaux du CNRS*, Paris 1986, s. 499–509. Gregory's other works from this period are discussed in Dunn, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁸² Ep. IX, 46.

⁸³ The date 585 is given by: Flich, Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 55; Dagens, *L'Eglise...*, p. 463; Uspienski, *op. cit.*, p. 60; Morggraff, *op. cit.*, p. 4; F. Halkin, *Le pape Grégoire le Grand dans l'hagiographie byzantin*, „*Orientalia Christiana Periodica*” 1955, t. 21, p. 109. The date 586 by: Cannata, *op. cit.*, p. 231, 285–286; Flich, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

⁸⁴ J. Chantrel, *Histoire populaire des papes des premiers siècles*, t. 1, Paris 1865, p. 561; F. Mourret, *L'Eglise...*, p. 68. The latter suggests that Gregory came back to Italy „en compagnie de l'exarque” Smaragdus (*ibidem*, *loc. cit.*). He is wrong – Smaragdus took over his office during Gregory's stay in Constantinople – Pelagius II, Ep. I. Also the date given by J. Czuj (the end of 587) seems to be unacceptable (*op. cit.*, p. 14).

⁸⁵ Czuj, *loc. cit.*

was not his being in disfavor, because after his return to Rome he became one of Pelagius' reliable collaborators. Paul the Deacon attributes to him the authorship of some of the letters sent by the pope to the bishops of Istria. The aim of the letters was to put an end to the Istrian schism⁸⁶. Within this context it seems possible that Pelagius called Gregory in because he could rely on him and because he wanted him to be his adviser and, maybe, successor. The recalling of Gregory may also have been due to some extent to his inability to settle the most important matters, especially the problem of the emperor's support for Italy. Seeing his helplessness and feeling bad in Constantinople Gregory himself could ask the pope for permission to return to his home country and quiet monastic life. It is also possible that Gregory hoped that he would become the pope's adviser or the pope himself after the death of Pelagius II. In the capital of the Empire they parted with him surely in sorrow because all testify that he played his role very well and was a good mediator between the pope and the emperor. As far as we know during his mission there was not any tension between the Capital of the Apostles and the civil governor of the Empire, though there were many causes for frictions. Moreover, in Constantinople they knew Gregory's character, they knew how to influence him and what to expect of him. The change on the nuncio's post was always unpredictable. On the other hand, it was probably known that Gregory was a possible candidate for the bishop's throne after Pelagius' death and that is why it was important to gain his benevolence. So he got many gifts before leaving the emperor's city. Among other things he received valuable relics of saints Luke and Andrew⁸⁷. These were the parts of their bodies which Gregory accepted willingly. That is why we could be surprised with the fact that later he criticized strongly the custom of splitting the saint's body to get relics and he refused to send such relics to empress Constantine⁸⁸.

Since Gregory was a very intelligent and practical man, able to judge people and situations, he profited greatly from his stay in Constantinople. His most important achievement was the winning of the emperor's support in which also the emperor himself was interested. In the situation when the emperor was losing his influence on the West and when the role played by the papacy was growing, the most important thing for the emperor was to have a pope loyal to the Empire. This could be the reason why the pope's apocrisarius became popes themselves supported by the emperors

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*; Pelagius II, Ep. III, IV, V; J. Czuj, *Dodatek III*, [in:] *Grzegorz Wielki, Listy*, t. 4; *Pavli Diaconi De gestis Langobardorum*, III, XX; Howorth, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁸⁷ P. Maraval, *Grégoire le Grand et les lieux saints d'Orient*, [in:] *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo*, t. 1, Roma 1991, p. 70; Uspienski, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁸⁸ Ep. IV, 30. Maraval, *loc. cit.*

who had known them before. There is no doubt that Maurice knew very well that Gregory was highly respected by both the pope and the Romans and that he was a foreseen candidate for the bishopric. So it was natural that he strove for his benevolence. In return for this he gave his support.

Thanks to direct, personal contacts with the emperor, Gregory could learn not only his character but also his views, the attitude to the Church and the people who had impact on him. When we consider the style of his letters to Maurice we can be sure that he knew very well that this emperor was not a new Justinien and that he did not like to use brutal methods towards the Church. Thus, he knew, how far he could go with criticism without risking the emperor's anger. The style of Gregory's letters to the brutal usurper Phocas is absolutely different⁸⁹. W. Ullmann certainly was right when he wrote that Gregory „did not wish to provoke the wrath of the emperor”⁹⁰. The opinion of the historians concerning the relation between pope Gregory the Great and emperor Maurice are different and range from very severe and unjust Rahner's statement that Gregory was absolutely submissive to the emperor⁹¹, through the views pointing out that he respected Maurice⁹², to the argument that humbleness of the style of his letters to the emperor was only the result of the etiquette used in those times⁹³. It seems that all these opinions are too one-sided. Gregory did not oppose the emperor's authority but he was not submissive, either. He would be very critical, however, at the same time he would declare his submission and try not to offend Maurice. The problem of the relationship between the pope and the emperor goes beyond the scope of this article and demands a separate investigation. It is only proper to say that the long stay in Constantinople probably taught Gregory prudence and contributed to the development of his innate talent for diplomacy.

As a pope Gregory was able to make profit from the acquaintances made in Constantinople. He asked his friends to help both his responsalises⁹⁴ and persons who, according to him, could be treated unjustly by the emperor or patriarch of Constantinople⁹⁵. When it was necessary to persuade the emperor to take some difficult decision Gregory did not take the official way and acted through the mediation of persons who were intimate with the emperor and whom he trusted, eg. his wife Constantine⁹⁶ doctor

⁸⁹ Ep. XII, 34; XIII, 41.

⁹⁰ W. Ullmann, *Medieval political Thought*, London 1975, p. 50.

⁹¹ H. Rahner, *Kościół i państwo we wczesnym chrześcijaństwie*, Warszawa 1986, p. 223.

⁹² Markus, *op. cit.*, 23 and 29; M. Pacaut, *La théocratie. L'Eglise et le pouvoir au Moyen Age*, Paris 1957, p. 28-29.

⁹³ Batiffol, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

⁹⁴ Ep. III, 51; VII, 27.

⁹⁵ Ep. III, 63.

⁹⁶ Ep. V, 38; V, 39.

Theodore⁹⁷, Narzes⁹⁸. These measures were not always successful but they proved that Gregory was very well informed about personal relationships, informal influences and dependences in the court. In the light of the above, Gregory's disinclination for „the matters of the world” declared by him, seems very doubtful. He knew very well who was worth keeping contact with. Gregory was a very good and intelligent observer of the court life so he must have been a frequent guest of the emperor. Sometimes he tried to avail of his influence in order to support different people in their attempts to get honor titles and posts⁹⁹. We should emphasize that he did this very seldom. On the whole, the pope acted via his acquaintances for the sake of the Church's interest or to help the wronged ones. He supported the exertions of bishop of Melitena Domitianus, the emperor's relative, who tried to convert the Persians¹⁰⁰. It is a pity that we do not know how Gregory acted towards the brutal fight led against the heretics by this bishop. But considering his own activity in order to minimize donatists' influences in Africa we could be almost sure that he would praise his friend's doings. The mission in Constantinople gave Gregory an opportunity to establish opinion about the weakness of the Empire and the impossibility to gain support for Italy from it. It does not seem to have been the case that he fully took advantage of this opportunity. Nevertheless, he did not limit himself to the asking for help only but tried to concentrate the power in his hands irrespectively of his official declarations that he was the emperor's loyal subordinate and that he accepted the supremacy of the exarch of Ravenna¹⁰¹. All this proves that he must have been conscious, to a certain degree, of the hopelessness of his appeals to Constantinople for military support. That is why he wanted to take the responsibility for the defence of Italy and even initiated peace negotiations with the Lombards over the emperor's officials' heads¹⁰².

⁹⁷ Ep. III, 64.

⁹⁸ Ep. I, 6; VI, 14; VII, 27.

⁹⁹ Gregory supported Venance's attempts to get a post (Ep. II, 36) but he rejected the request of exprefect Quertinus to do the same thing (Ep. IX, 6).

¹⁰⁰ Ep. III, 62.

¹⁰¹ According to Ullmann's opinion (*op. cit.*, p. 49): „... the only sensible conclusion he reached was that it would be dangerous and foolhardy for the Roman Church to persist in its protestations and remonstrations against the emperor's government [...] But, and in this lay Gregory's juristic acumen and foresightedness, none of the disadvantages would exist if the popes were to press their own governmental theory in regions in which the emperor's government and jurisdiction were ineffective Hence Gregory's turning to the West by sending mission to Gaul and England”. D. Attwater maintains that: „the experience gained at Constantinople enabled him to strengthen the authority of Roman see in the East as well as the West” (*The Dictionary of Saints*, London 1985, p. 155).

¹⁰² Gregory even concluded a treaty with the Lombards not taking into account the opinion of the exarch of Ravenna. He exposed himself to the emperor's anger. Ep. V, 36.

Although during his stay in Constantinople he dealt with leading theological disputes and defended persons accused of heresy, he did not make his knowledge more profound regarding theological eastern thought and did not get acquainted with local religious problems. Later, when he became the bishop of Rome, he was forced to ask his friends for help in cases which concerned matters demanding knowledge of eastern heresies¹⁰³.

The stay in Constantinople did not weaken Gregory's prejudices against its inhabitants but, on the contrary, made them deeper. The pope considered the people of the East to be shrewd in the bad meaning of this word, cunning, while the Greek codes of Church laws were, according to him, not reliable¹⁰⁴. We do not know if Gregory read those codes in the original himself or whether he considered them as bad *a priori* or if he formed his opinions on the basis of the reports of other people. His conviction that the Roman codes are superior to the Greek ones concurred with his belief that the Capital of the Apostles had the right for primacy and with his very often demonstrated pride of being a Roman¹⁰⁵. His dislike of Byzantium is so evident that it has inclined some researchers to attribute to him the desire to fight against the Empire¹⁰⁶ or his wish to undertake actions aimed at not letting the „byzantinisation” of Italy¹⁰⁷. Opinions like these seem to be too far-fetched but it is a fact that Gregory's attitude surely caused that his relations with the imperial court got worse. It is especially visible during his whole pontificate. On the other hand we do not have any information which could prove that during his stay in Constantinople he had any dispute with the emperor or with somebody from his surrounding. It is possible that taking care of good relationships with the court he avoided, at that time, too radical utterances and did not openly voice his opinion. Only after the return to Rome, when he could feel safe did he dare to criticize very sharply not only the particular moves of the emperor or his officials, but the Greek world as well. Gregory's negative opinion about the inhabitants of Byzantium seems to be in conflict with his friendship with people from Constantinople, provided, however, that this friendship was the result of real feeling and not political cunning. Unfortunately we cannot be certain which of these is true. He wrote genuinely personal and warm letters to a relatively small number of people¹⁰⁸. The other letters in spite of a very kind form, do not go beyond the official

¹⁰³ Ep. X, 14. Gregory asked his nuncio for explanations concerning eastern heresies.

¹⁰⁴ Ep. VI, 14.

¹⁰⁵ Ep. III, 63 – the letter quoted above in which Gregory refused to answer the letter of Domenica only because it was written in Greek.

¹⁰⁶ Ch. R. Montalembert, *Les moines d'Occident*, t. 2, Paris 1860, p. 111.

¹⁰⁷ L. Cracco-Rugini, *op. cit.*, p. 86–87.

¹⁰⁸ Eg. letters to Gregoria, Eusebia, John, Andrew and to several other persons.

formulas used in those times. We can notice that his letters to Maurice did not differ from those written to other monarchs whom Gregory did not know personally eg. to them queen of Franks – Brunhild¹⁰⁹, queen Theodelinda¹¹⁰ or to the king of Visigoths Rekkared¹¹¹. Only once during his 12-years-long pontificate was he interested personally in the vicissitudes of Maurice's sons¹¹². The eldest was his godson. Even though in many letters he called for prayers for the emperor's family he did not hesitate to demonstrate delight in Maurice's being overthrown by Phocas¹¹³. He sent his congratulations to the man who murdered many people including his own godson. He was not interested what happened to empress Constantine and her daughters after Maurice's death. This puts his warm friendship with the emperor in question¹¹⁴. We could rather think that both the pope and the emperor acknowledged the necessity of keeping moderately proper contacts and covering up the contradictions because they needed each other. We can also assume that the relationships between Gregory and empress Constantine were not always good¹¹⁵.

Gregory's pontificate occurred in the period, when the two parts of the old Empire were slowly drifting apart. Even R. Markus who stressed close ties between the Papacy and the Empire¹¹⁶ admitted that in the West the feeling of separation from the Byzantium existed and was increasing¹¹⁷. It is difficult to agree with the opinion of C. Dagens that Gregory distinguished only the Empire from the barbarians but not the West from the East¹¹⁸. It is obvious that he did not use such terms and did not intend to lead a regular battle against the Byzantium. In fact, through critical statements about „Greeks” as well as through real acts undertaken without the consultation with the emperor eg. in relation to Lombards and through the demonstrative lack of interest in what was happening in the East he

¹⁰⁹ Ep. VI, 5; VI, 55; VI, 57; VIII, 4; IX, 212; IX, 213; XI, 46; XI, 48-49; XIII, 7. See also letters to the other monarchs of Franks: VI, 6; VI, 49; IX, 215 and 226; XI, 47; XI, 50-51; XIII, 9.

¹¹⁰ Ep. IV, 4; IV, 33; IX, 67; XIV, 12. See also the letter to Agilulf IX, 66.

¹¹¹ Ep. IX, 227a, 228 and 229.

¹¹² Ep. VII, 23.

¹¹³ Ep. XIII, 34.

¹¹⁴ This was questioned already by Batiffol: „Il ne semble pas qu'il ait été très avant dans la confiance de l'empereur Maurice: nous verrons de quels menagements on devait user avec ce prince renfermé, jaloux de son omnipotence, et destiné à laisser si peut de regrets” (*op. cit.*, p. 41).

¹¹⁵ See note 88.

¹¹⁶ Markus, *op. cit.*, p. 22-23. „Gregory's political language is more at home in the comparatively homogenous and more thoroughly integrated society of Byzantine Christendom than in the societies of Western Europe”.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

¹¹⁸ Dagens, *L'Eglise...*, p. 458.

gave a proof that the return to the old unity became at least problematic. To be just we must stress that in Constantinople equally little attention was devoted to the problems of Italy¹¹⁹.

Gregory profited from the friendships struck up in Constantinople while settling many problems. He referred to them trying to gain withdrawal of the emperor's law forbidding persons being in public service to enter the monastery¹²⁰ and when he was fighting against the use the title „ecumenical” by patriarchs of Constantinople¹²¹. In such situations he preferred to refer to the common past rather than to his authority. It is possible that, as J. Czuj thinks, Gregory had learnt such tactics during his mission to Constantinople. He followed the same pattern of behavior successfully later on in the relationships with the barbarian monarchs. Many people whom Gregory met in Constantinople were mediators in his contacts with the emperor. He asked empress Constantine for help on the occasion of the quarrel about the title „ecumenical patriarch”¹²² and for advancement of his efforts connected with the activity against pagans in Sardinia¹²³. He used the fact that Priscos got back to the emperor's favor and asked him for help to Sabinianus – Gregory's responsalis in Constantinople¹²⁴. This case is very characteristic because it testifies on the one hand that Gregory was very well informed about everything happening in the capital of the Empire and, on the other hand, that he had drawn conclusions from his own stay in Constantinople and he appreciated how important the help which influential persons could give to the pope's nuncio would be.

For protection for another of his apocrisiariusus Gregory applied to the Narzes¹²⁵ to whom he wrote also asking for help in the interest of „our brothers”¹²⁶. Unfortunately we do not know who „our brothers” were and what actions were to be undertaken by Narzes. Then, in turn, he recommended Narzes, mentioned above, at his own request to the care of the emperor's personal doctor, very influential Theodore¹²⁷. Narzes must have believed that Gregory's abilities were very big as he tried to gain protection of one

¹¹⁹ In Byzantine sources there are only small references to the Lombards. About the home affairs of Italy and about the role of the papacy eastern authors seem to know nothing.

¹²⁰ Ep. III, 61 and 64.

¹²¹ Ep. V, 44; V, 45; VII, 7; VII, 24; VII, 28; VII, 30; VII, 31; VIII, 29; IX, 156; XIII, 43. T. Wolińska, *Spór o tytuł patriarchy ekumenicznego pomiędzy papieżem Grzegorzem Wielkim a biskupami Konstantynopola w świetle walki o prymat w Kościele powszechnym*, „Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis” 1993, Folia historica 48, p. 114–121.

¹²² Ep. V, 39.

¹²³ Ep. V, 38.

¹²⁴ Ep. III, 51.

¹²⁵ Ep. VII, 27.

¹²⁶ Ep. I, 6.

¹²⁷ Ep. III, 63.

of the most important personages in the court by means of pope's mediation via Rome¹²⁸. Gregory himself appreciated Theodore's influence because he asked him for help when he tried to cancel the mentioned law concerning rules of entering the monastery¹²⁹. Bishop of Melitena, Domitianus, a relative of the emperor Maurice, had a high rank in the court and it was he who Sabinianus, Gregory's apocrisiarius, was to report different problems to¹³⁰. As the letter concerning this question was written during the quarrel with the patriarch John the Faster about the title of „ecumenical patriarch” it is possible that Gregory wanted to get Domitianus support in this cause. In turn Philip, the commander of the emperor's guard was asked by the pope to support his exertions to gain military support to Italy against the Lombards¹³¹.

Although the majority of Gregory's letters were written in order to settle specific matters, we have also others, which are very personal. Among these we can mention the letters to Gregoria – lady of the court¹³², to Eusebia¹³³, to exconsul and quaestor John whom Gregory owed much¹³⁴, to Andrew¹³⁵, to Aristobulos¹³⁶, to emperor's sister Teoctiste¹³⁷. Gregory was on friendly terms with doctor Theodore mentioned above¹³⁸ and probably with another doctor – Theotimus¹³⁹. Gregory was also close to patrician Rusticiana and her family¹⁴⁰. These people had left Italy in fear of the Lombards' invasions. It is possible that Gregory's family was related to that of Rusticiana. When he was in Constantinople the family of the latter reminded him of his homeland which made the friendship very warm. On the other hand, Gregory blamed her for having left Italy and wanted her to come back. The friendship commenced in Constantinople occasionally brought concrete profits, for example, both the emperor and his collaborators like Theodor, sent money in order to pay ransom for the captives of the Lombards¹⁴¹.

¹²⁸ Theodore must have been one of Maurice's most reliable men and he carried out political missions ordered by him. Nicephori Callisti, *op. cit.*, book VIII, XXIX.

¹²⁹ Ep. III, 64.

¹³⁰ Ep. V, 43.

¹³¹ Ep. I, 31.

¹³² Ep. VII, 22.

¹³³ Ep. XIII, 35. She is mentioned in Ep. II, 27; II, 57; VIII, 22.

¹³⁴ Ep. I, 30.

¹³⁵ Ep. I, 29; VII, 26; VII, 23 and, maybe IX, 101 (yet it is difficult to judge if the same person is concerned in these letters).

¹³⁶ Ep. I, 28.

¹³⁷ Ep. I, 5; VII, 23; XI, 27.

¹³⁸ Ep. V, 46. The gift sent by Gregory – a duck with two ducklings proves that the pope was very familiar with him.

¹³⁹ Ep. III, 65.

¹⁴⁰ Ep. II, 27; IV, 44; VIII, 22; XI, 26; XIII, 26.

¹⁴¹ Ep. VII, 25.

Considering the facts which we know it is very difficult to say to what extent Gregory's words of friendship sent to his familiars in Constantinople were sincere. In many letters there are friendly, warm elements which could testify to his emotional engagement. At the same time, the attention is attracted by the fact that Gregory did not write regularly to many friends; he could be silent for a long time and then write only when he needed their help. In some cases he would write only a few letters to his acquaintances in the course of his whole pontificate¹⁴². Only Rusticana and her family were an exception. Apart from these the pope corresponded only with the members of emperor Maurice's family and with high officials in the court. There are no signs of his correspondence with persons from the circle of emperor Tiberius whom Gregory surely must have known during his stay in Constantinople with the exception of Tiberius' daughter, empress Constantine, but she was the wife of his successor and she had real political influences. As it has been said above after the „Phocas revolution” his contacts with her and with many other people who were collaborators of Maurice were suddenly broken up. It is difficult to resist the suspicion that the pope considered useful keeping contacts only with those who were in favor of the monarch and could be helpful to him in his activities for the sake of the Church.

While it is obvious that Gregory's stay in Constantinople was very important for both himself and the whole West, the East took no notice of it at all.¹⁴³ It is striking that eastern authors never mentioned his mission even more so as the same sources devote much place to Antioch and Alexandria and to the work of their bishops. Deep silence in the sources covers not only Gregory himself but the West as a whole. The only exceptions are very brief and rare references to the Lombards' invasions. It proves that the interest in problems of Italy in Byzantium was getting less and less important. As it has been written above a similar process could be observed in Italy – the gap between the two parts of the Empire was getting bigger and bigger. Only emperors of Byzance still considered their duty to take care of the western part of the state, but their real possibilities were too small to keep the union.

Little was known about Gregory himself in Byzantium however, thanks to his writings being translated into Greek, his name was very popular there¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴² See notes 133–140 and also Ep. I, 6 (Gregory sent greetings to a group of people from Constantinople but later he never mentioned any of those persons).

¹⁴³ It is worth mentioning, however, that in *Liber Pontificalis* there is no information that Gregory was an apocrisiarius (see PL, t. 128, col. 645–646).

¹⁴⁴ Dagens, *Grégoire...*, p. 248–250; Halkin, *op. cit.*, passim; R. Lizzi, *La traduzione greca delle opere di Gregorio Magno: dalla Regula pastoralis ai Dialogi*, [in:] *Gregorio Magno...*, t. 2, p. 41–57.

Teresa Wolińska

GRZEGORZ – APOKRYZJARIUSZ PAPIEŻA PELAGIUSZA W KONSTANTYNOPOLU

Niniejszy artykuł prezentuje działalność Grzegorza, późniejszego papieża, jako nuncjusza papieskiego w Konstantynopolu. Czas jego misji przypada na lata ok. 579–584/5. Grzegorz reprezentował na dworze cesarskim interesy papieża Pelagiusza II (579–590).

Wybrany na tak wysokie stanowisko z racji swego doświadczenia w służbie publicznej i walorów duchowych Grzegorz dobrze spełniał powierzone sobie obowiązki. Utrzymywał szerokie kontakty nie tylko z cesarzami i członkami ich rodzin, ale także z urzędnikami, dostojnikami dworu cesarskiego i ludźmi Kościoła, szczególnie patriarchami Konstantynopola. Próbował skutecznie uzyskać od cesarza Tyberiusza, a potem jego następcy Maurycjusza pomoc wojskową dla Rzymu zagrożonego przez Longobardów. Przedmiotem zainteresowania nuncjusza papieskiego, zwanego z grecka apokryzjariuszem, były także sprawy dogmatyczne, czego dowodem jest m. in. dysputa, jaką przeprowadził przed obliczem cesarza z patriarchą Eutychemem na temat zmartwychwstania ciał. Demonstrując niechęć do życia na dworze cesarskim i do „spraw światowych” otaczał się mnichami, których zabrał ze sobą z Italii i dla których wygłaszał komentarze do *Pisma św.* Nie przeszkadzało mu to być bardzo wnikliwym obserwatorem stosunków panujących w stolicy cesarstwa analizującym zakres wpływów poszczególnych postaci sceny politycznej i zależności istniejące pomiędzy nimi. Szerokość kontaktów Grzegorza w Konstantynopolu oraz dokładna analiza jego dzieł pozwalają podać w wątpliwość deklarowaną przez niego nieznamość greki. Być może nie znał tego języka tak dobrze, by się nim swobodnie posługiwać, ale rozumiał go z całą pewnością.

Po powrocie do Rzymu i wyborze na biskupa tego miasta Grzegorz bardzo często wykorzystywał swą znajomość miasta i dworu cesarskiego. Wielokrotnie zwracał się o pomoc w różnych sprawach do poznanych w Konstantynopolu osób, dając przy tym dowód bardzo dobrej orientacji w mechanizmach sprawowania władzy i wzajemnych zależnościach między wpływowymi dostojnikami i urzędnikami dworskimi. Większość swych znajomych traktował dość instrumentalnie i utrzymywał z nimi kontakty jedynie wówczas, gdy byli mu potrzebni.

O ile dla Zachodu i dla samego Grzegorza pobyt w Konstantynopolu miał bardzo duże znaczenie, to na Wschodzie nie zwrócono wcale uwagi na papieskiego nuncjusza. Nie wspomina o nim żadne współczesne źródło bizantyńskie.