



THE BLACK BOX TREASURES (#24)

There is an interesting term called the “black box theory”. It speaks about an object which can be analyzed in terms of its input and output, but there is no knowledge of its internal workings. Many of us probably don’t know that in our Archives here in Rome we have more than 200 black boxes. Some of those treasures have seen the light of day in many publications, but there are still others waiting to be seen...

(A brother who was worth millions #24)

We all know that every religious professes the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. So it was not a surprise that when Br. Casimir Zeglen presented his invention for the first time, some serious questions regarding the vow of poverty arose in his heart. The Constitution of the Congregation of the Resurrection from 1903 stated that, “the Religious are

forbidden to retain the personal administration of any of their property” (15). So in a possible scenario in which Br. Casimir’s bulletproof vest would succeed, how should he deal with money from the sale? As a religious brother can he be in charge of the possible future company?

Br. Zeglen wrote a letter to Fr. Charles Kobrzynski, C.R., superior of the Chicago Mission, sharing with him some concerns regarding the vow of poverty and the bulletproof vest (the letter was written probably on March 20, 1897). Fr. Charles showed that letter to the General who responded personally to Br. Casimir. The General’s name was Fr. Paul Smolikowski, C.R.

Today I would like to share the letter of Fr. Smolikowski with you (ACRR 31115). It’s not a final letter which was sent to the brother but a draft. In it we can see that Fr. Paul scratched a few sentences and made some corrections. However I translated all text and those who wish to analyze the changes I refer them to see the scan.

The letter is indeed beautiful. First, because Fr. Paul explains the spirit of the vow of poverty and then we can see from it the great wisdom of our Servant of God. Then he expressed his love to Br. Casimir saying “I am very happy about your invention, because in fact there is something providential with it, but if I had to choose these millions or the soul of a Brother, I would prefer to choose you, my Brother”. An interesting part of the letter can be found at the bottom of the last page where Fr. Paul wrote in Italian a few words to Zeglen’s superior saying that he gives him permission to go to Canada or Kentucky to seek advice from Fr. David Fennessy or Fr. Kloefer. Enjoy!

(Paul Smolikowski, C.R., Letter to Casimir Zeglen, C.R., dated April 3, 1897, ACRR 31115)

Dear Brother Casimir,

Fr. Simon gave me your letter from March, 20th to read. I am very pleased with this letter, because I see from it that despite these great temptations, you did not go crazy. Jesus said "For what shall it profit a man though he should win the whole world, if he lose his own soul?". I tell you truly, my dear Brother, I have always appreciated and loved you, and now I appreciate and love you even more when I see that you are not losing your vocation despite these extraordinary circumstances. And although I am very happy about your invention, because in fact there is something providential with it, but if I had to choose these millions or the soul of a Brother, I would prefer to choose you, my Brother. If I could get these millions for the Congregation but at the same time lose you, I would not like to have these millions.

As to the position of you, Brother, in the Congregation, things are as is: you, Brother, made a vow to God - whether the first or the second case it does not change - you, brother, are obliged to your vow of poverty. Our Rule allows us to possess (dominium radicale) but we cannot dispose of this in order to be free: It is possible to use from it with the permission of the Superior and this is not against the vow of poverty. I see that you love and understand it, my Brother and you want it.

It is also important that you stay attentive to those who might try to cheat, you, who did not cheat or hurt. It is crucial to ask for someone's advice. I will do what I can to make it easier for you - and I do not want to force you to do anything.

Well, I am proposing this to you Brother.

I am not for money even for the Congregation, I am not greedy - and I leave you, Brother, complete freedom in managing this invention, but let, my brother, do nothing without permission, but, dear Brother, often write to me. Having such great wealth is exposed to numerous dangers, not only of the soul but also of the body and of deceit. People can try to deceive you or exploit you, even try to kill [illegible words] etc. Well, it's all about having God's blessing ... and it will be if you, my beloved Brother, will continue to follow our religious roles. Here, everyone... [illegible words]

If Brother you want to talk to someone about the way of dealing with the patent it could be good to talk with either Fr. David Fennessy in Kentucky or with Fr. Kloepfer in Canada. Maybe it would be good for you to take a break and get out of Chicago to be able to think about it all peacefully. If you wish, you can go to Kentucky or Canada and talk with them and then let Fr. David or Fr. Wilhelm send me his opinion, and you your own... But it's only my advice to you, Brother, it is not an order. If you Brother like this idea then I'm sending my obedience to you. Of course, if you have another idea, please think about the whole thing very carefully. Please ask for advice from whomever you wish and please write me in detail about your future plans.

Your loving brother,
Fr. Paul Smolikowski

Because Br. Casimir Zeglen came to me with the issue of his patent, I give him my permission to go to Canada or Kentucky to seek advice from Fr. David or from Fr. Kloepfer.

Rzym, 3/4-97.

J+M+J.



[b. Hegler & Cie. sp.]

Drogi Bracie Karimierze,

Dał mi O. Symon do przeczytania list brata
z d. 20 Marca. Bardzo miś ten list uciwnyś
bo widzę z niego, że powinniśmy być wielkiś po-
kus, brat głowę nie stracił... Coż wam
powiemo, powiedział Chm, gdybyście i cały
świat porzucali a na dany swej umierbeli
powieśli." Szereś Kochanemu Brata po-
wiadom, że narowno Brata bardzo cenim
i kocham - i teraz teno bardziej cenim
i kocham, kiedy widzę że powolenia Brat
nie traci powinniśmy być nadmierzajnyś o-
kolicznici. A choi miś bardzo ciemy ten
Brata nymatorok - bo niewiście jest w
tym coś Opatruwiciowego, ale gdyby

{ i w obec protestantów i w obec katolików. A chociaż i tak, nie nymatorok zachow.
i dla Polaków w obec indywiduów -

Jakiś brat chce poradzić się tego j. k. w sprawie
 tego raportu i tego patentu - ~~to ja~~ ~~edok~~
 może może było rozmówić się albo z O. Davids
 Fenney albo z O. Klopfersam. - w Kentucky
 do b. Kennedy - może to było może do brata
 wyjechać się trochę z Chicago aby mieć może
 swobodniej pogrozić - Jakiś brat chce
 mieć brat projekt do Ken - albo do Kandy
 - rozmówić się - a wtedy może O. David lub
 O. Wilhelm napisać mi swoje zdanie -
 a brat swoje swoje - ale to tylko brata
 j. k. jako radę nie jako radę - ~~to~~ Jakiś
 brata to się podobno to na taki wypadek
 prosił brata obediency - Jakiś się to brata
 nie idzie - to może brat same może może
 wyjechać - poradzić się tego może - i napisać mi ob-
 eznie swoje projekty -

Cateys zeddania Kucharski Br

Kucharski Br
 X. Paweł Kucharski

Comd R. F. G. 7.

i zianco a me

nel affare del suo

patente. io lo

autorizzò di andare

o in Canada - o in

Kentucky - con i figliuoli

con M. Schmittler Smith

'o con M. . . .