

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE POST-1989 PERIOD OF POLAND

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Abstract

Post-1989 transformation process of Poland as well as other Central and East European Countries implies, beyond an institutional-legal adjustment, the normative reconstruction of the domestic environment according to the democratic-liberal principles of Western Europe. Transforming socio-political and economic identity of a state is a very difficult task and requires, first of all, the attainment and adoption of the new principles by the constituent actors of the state. In other words, the actors in the social, political and economic realm of the country whether individuals or institutions should learn the essential principles of the new system and, then, adapt themselves to this system normatively. This study aims to unfold that to what extent a prominent national-religious actor in Poland, namely Roman Catholic Church, has achieved such an adaption in the course of the post-1989 democratic-liberal transformation of the country. There is no comparative approach in the article. However, bearing in mind the religious-social actors and structures in Turkey that experiences a similar changing process like Poland on the way of EU integration, the story of the Roman Catholic Church is expected to be useful for the reader in Turkey.

Keywords: Poland, Roman Catholic Church, democracy, transformation.

Öz

Polonya'nın 1989 sonrası değişim süreci, kurumsal-hukuki bir uyarılamanın yapılmasının ötesinde, ülkenin, Batı Avrupa'nın demokratik-liberal prensipleri doğrultusunda normatif yönden yeniden inşasını vurgulamaktadır. Bir ülkenin sosyo-politik ve ekonomik kimliğini değiştirme çok zor bir iştir ve herşeyden önce yeni prensiplerin, devleti oluşturan aktörler tarafından benimsenmesini gerektirir. Başka bir deyişle, ülkenin sosyal, politik ya da ekonomik alanında yer alan kişi ve kurumlar, yeni sistemin temel prensiplerini öğrenmeli ve kendilerini normatif olarak bu sisteme adapte etmelidirler. Bu çalışma, Polonya'da önemli bir milli ve

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dini kurum olan Roman Katolik Kilisesi'nin, ülkenin 1989 sonrası demokratik-liberal değişim sürecinde (Avrupalılaşıma), ne dereceye kadar böyle bir adaptasyonu gerçekleştirebildiğini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Makalede herhangi bir mukayese yapılmamış olmakla birlikte, Roman Katolik Kilisesi'nin hikayesinin, AB yolunda Polonya ile benzer bir değişim sürecini yaşayan Türkiye' deki dini-sosyal yapılar hatırlandığında, okuyucu için yararlı olacağı ümit edilmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Polonya, Roman Katolik Kilisesi, demokrasi, değişim.

INTRODUCTION

The post-Cold War transformation process of Poland has been considered as the construction of a civic-democratic model of a nation-state, which proposes that a state should be based upon such principles as democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights and liberal market economy. This is particularly because Poland re-directed her route to Western Europe to realise her historical dream of unification with the political system of this part of the continent and all those principles are at the same time the building blocks of ongoing European integration process. As the concept transformation implies, this process of change is multi-faceted and multi-levelled. It is a matter of institutional-legal-procedural and normative-cultural changes at macro (systemic, constitutional), meso (societal) and micro (individual) levels. In this circumstance, to achieve this domestic transformation, actors (individuals or organisations) in the country participate in a social learning process through interaction with newly introduced norms and, then, these norms constrain, change and re-define the interests and preferences of those actors (Checkel, 1999a; 1999b). That is to say they (ought to) re-evaluate their places and roles in and, therefore, adapt themselves to the new system. Not only in the post-1989 period but also throughout history, the Roman Catholic Church has always become one of the most prominents of those actors of social and political developments in Poland. As with the other actors, the Church has been experiencing the political and economic transformation in the country and it has been expected to re-evaluate and adapt itself to the new paradigms of the era too.

The aim of this study is to focus on the political and doctrinal role and influence of the Roman Catholic Church in the post-1989 period of Poland. However, this task cannot be complete without mentioning the impact of the Church on the history of the country. Therefore, the first section of the article gives a historical account of the Church in Poland and, then, in the second

section, it scrutinises the place and role of this significant societal actor in the era of post-1989 democratic transformation.

I. A PROMINENT ACTOR IN THE HISTORY OF POLAND

Although the first evidence of Polish existence in her current lands can be traced back to earlier times, it is generally accepted in the Polish history that the written record of the Polish nation starts with the adoption of Catholic Christianity by King Mieszko I of the Piast Dynasty for himself and for his kingdom in the year AD 966. Beyond a symbolic meaning, the choice of this date as a landmark denotes the fact that not only in recent centuries but also since the medieval period, Christianity had been significant in the development of Polish political culture within the sphere of Latin Christendom, not Byzantium; had ensured that she would emerge as *antemurale christianitatis*; and, through this mission, had shaped her relations with the Western part of the continent.

There is no doubt that this pro-European view has, for centuries, been preserved and promoted primarily by the elites. Since as early as the 15th century, Polish intellectuals have configured Poland's place in the cultural sphere of Western Europe basically through Latin Christendom. Despite the influential reformation of the late 16th and early 17th centuries that resulted in considerable amount of conversion from catholicism, a successful Counter-Reformation was completed by 1632. This movement restored religious unity to a large degree, strengthened the Church and united the country against potential enemies.

In 1795, Poland ceased to exist due to the completion of its partition among Prussia, Russia, and Austria (Habsburg Empire), and disappeared as a sovereign state until the end of World War I. However, the loss of statehood did not mean that nationalist values had found no ground to sustain their use on these territories. In the lack of 'state's patriotism', 'nation's patriotism' focusing on cultural values and national identity with romantic overtones functioned as the driving force of collective consciousness (Szczepanski, 1987). In this circumstance, during the long lasting partition period, given the lack of substantial state organisations and a broad civil society that could preserve and convey the national identity and consciousness, a more established institution, namely the Roman Catholic Church, fulfilled this function (Wehling, 1996; Prizel, 1998). The fact that it was the only institution allowed to use the Polish language even after the partition emphasises this function of the Church (Kennedy and Simon, 1983). In spite of the partition of the Poles, the monolithic existence of the Church and its practices connected the people of

partitioned regions. The ideology of romantic nationalism, then, was coloured by a messianic spirit that Poles as ‘the Christ of nations’ were suffering for the salvation of other nations. After over a century of non-independence, the subsequent establishment of Poland was realised soon after World War I. In this interwar state, the Church continued to become a significant social institution in the life of the Polish people.

After World War II, Poland remained under the influence of a completely different political, economic and social discourse of communist ideology through the ‘big brotherhood’ of the Soviet Union. In the light of communist ideals and principles, Poles depended upon the absolute power of the Polish United Workers’ Party and its nomenclature to direct all the activities of society, to impose the official discourse and to create absolute loyalty to the state. On the other hand, Polish society’s own political values, mainly emanating from the national legacy of resistance to oppression, and anti-state orientation stood as a counter-culture. It was this culture and opposition movement hinged upon this culture that is widely accepted as one of the main factors bringing the end of communism a few decades later not only in the country but also in the whole region.

At the beginning and during the whole period, the Roman Catholic Church had a very prominent role in promoting and supporting the opposition movement. Despite the flagging of people’s interest in religion due to industrialisation and the materialist teaching system (the accessibility of education was one of the crucial successes of the communist government), the significant position of the Church as the protector of national identity against oppressive enemies continued to strengthen during the communist period. This is firstly because the ethnic homogenisation of Poland after the Second World War at the same time meant that the population remained exclusively Catholic (more than 90 per cent of the population) and strengthened the role of the Church as the representative of the Polish nation. Secondly, the increase in the Church’s popularity concurred with the legitimacy-seeking efforts of the regime and a real *modus vivendi* emerged after 1956. Beginning in 1957, the launch of a massive programme including teaching campaigns, pilgrimages, Christian weeks and seminaries supported by the Catholic press to celebrate the 1966 millennium of Christianity in Poland led to both the revitalisation of Polish self-consciousness and the enhancement of the Church’s prestige in the eyes of the secular intelligentsia as well as traditionalists (Prizel, 1998: 92). Especially after the Church’s backing of students in the 1968 uprising, very diverse groups of intellectuals, even non-believers, approached the Church as a bulwark against the communist regime.

Although they sometimes attempted to restrict its activities and weaken its interaction with society, e.g. re-forbidding religious instruction in schools in 1961, the communist governments could not subvert this very popular and rooted institution completely. Contrary to this, the communist governments repeatedly invoked the Church to mitigate upheavals whenever a deep crisis in state-society relations occurred.

The activities of the Church continued to spread during the 1970s and the number of its clergy reached more than 20,000 (Karpinski, 1997). This dominance of the Church and its national-religious vision culminated in the election of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła to the Papacy in October 1978 and his visit in June 1979. So much so that Ash (1990, 133) proposes the date of the Pope's visit to Poland, rather than 1956 or 1968, as a symbol of the 'beginning of the end' for communism in Eastern Europe, in which for the first time a 'massive, sustained, yet supremely peaceful and self-disciplined manifestation of social unity' had been seen.

The 1970s were the increasing years of opposition activities in Poland and these activities finally culminated in the foundation of Solidarity as a result of the summer 1980 strikes. Solidarity, formally titled the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union Solidarity, brought not only the workers but also the intellectual and religious milieus under the same umbrella and became the symbol of the movement of freedom and human rights not only in Poland but also in the whole Communist Bloc. Among the characteristics of Solidarity, its affinity to the Church and religious-traditionalist discourse was observable especially in daily life. Very clear examples of this tendency can be seen among the strikers in the shipyards of Gdansk in 1980 and then during the Solidarity years (Davies, 1984; Plewa, 1992): the use of national and religious icons and emblems; singing of religious and patriotic songs during the strikes; and even Lech Wałęsa's use of a pen with a miniature statue of the Pope whilst signing the agreement with the government.

However, an important point helpful to interpret the developments after 1989 should be stressed here. Different agents of the opposition including the Church were all endorsing the movement basically for more democracy and human rights. If the Helsinki document was one source of the civic social movement for human rights and freedom, the evangelic discourse of the Church was the other, inspired from the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, and this provided a basis for the rapprochement of dissident groups in the 1970s (Stokes, 1993:33; Kubik, 1994: 252; Wloch, 1996). That is why some authors (Szklarski, 1997:63) set Solidarity and the Church together as the representatives of civic interests. Therefore, people's enthusiasm for the Church was basically because of its representative and also oppositional function against the Communist

order, rather than because of strong religious motives. The high abortion and divorce rates as well as the low birth rates in that time bear out that people were selective while practising the rules of the Roman Catholic Church (Glen, 2001; Miller, 1997:71). The first author continues that Solidarity in its programme referred to the Roman Catholic discourses not to give a special place to religious values in the polity but to strengthen its democratic framework based on the rights of citizens. For instance, John Paul II's Encyclical on Labour was cited to strengthen social justice rather than religious and family values. In the same vein, the above-mentioned religious discourse was only one characteristic of the whole Solidarity movement. Various ideological viewpoints were frequently marked out in the documents of Solidarity together such as "the best traditions the nation, ethical principles of Christianity, political call of democracy, and socialist social thought were four basic sources of Solidarity's inspiration..." (Kozlowski, 1994). Symbolic-romantic-spiritual overtones of nationalism within the Solidarity discourse, in short, as a popular political culture, should be judged as a very significant but additional factor to increase the cohesion and mobilisation of the masses instead of as the core aim of the social movement.

During martial law and thereafter, the Church continued to serve both as a shelter for the regime's opponents and as a subsidiary to the authorities in mitigating unrest and finding solutions. In consequence of this, it found a seat as a mediator between the two groups in the Round Table negotiations that led the country to 1989 elections.

II. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE ERA OF DEMOCRATIC-LIBERAL TRANSFORMATION

The ultimate aim of the European unification project launched after the Second World War is to be a fully-fledged political community and as already mentioned in the introduction section, the building principles of this project are civic-democratic values, rule of law, human rights, multiculturalism and market economy. According to many scholars as well as to the official discourse of the EU, despite the prominence of cross-national differences between any sources of differentiation, a common European citizenship within a supra-national (or post-national) context should be constructed on a shared political future and aims, hinging upon all those political and economic values (Habermas, 1992;1994; Heater 1990;1992; Keane, 1992; Laffan, 1996; Delanty 1995; Waever, 1995;1996; Rose, 1996; Weiler, 1997a;1997b; Emerson, 1998; Shore, 2000; Kostakapoulou, 2001). This multiculturalist and democratic discourse is at the same time implies a secularist understanding that does not favour any particular religious form but aims to establish a common political culture that

impedes the antagonisms emerging from all those differences and makes possible the peaceful co-existence of people as equal subjects under the common title of European citizenship. The Constitution of the EU in Article I-52 states that the Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States.

While the EU aims to construct such a political culture at a supra-national level, there is another fact that should be underscored before going to the Polish domestic realm. First secularisation and then modernism and post-modernism as a condition as well as a way of thinking, day by day, have diverted or weakened the link between people and religion (Christianity) in the West European countries as well as in the other developed countries. Comparison of the responses to a Eurobarometer survey question asked both in 1973 and 1991 in EC9 countries underlines this argument for the near past (Table 1) (Reif, 1993: 137). As seen, belonging to a religion has considerably declined in the EC countries within two decades. Even if identification with Christianity continues, affiliation to a Church and religious practice has declined and some Churches have even had trouble in maintaining their buildings and recruiting clergy (Mallion, 2000: 53). A theology specialist at Cambridge University, Stephen Plant confirms this fact. As in the past, the picture of Europe can be different in different European countries depending upon the sort of Christianity dominant in that country (Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox). However, Europe in general, according to Plant, had responded to modern times differently from Latin America, Africa and Asia as becoming more developed but less religious (cited in Hill, 2005). In addition, the role of the Churches and other religious communities in the present realm of democratic-pluralist EU seems to be interest articulation and lobbying through their representatives in Brussels. The Churches engage in daily social regulation less and less and claiming the Christian heritage of the continent as the source of today's EU values seems to be only tool for them to ascertain a stronger place for Christianity in the construction of the Union (Foret and Schelesinger, 2003).

Table-1: Religious Affiliation in the European Community, 1973 and 1991Question: Do you consider yourself as belonging to a particular religion? ¹

Year	F	B	NL	G(W)	I	L	DK	IR	GB	EC9
1973	11	14	38	5	0	6	16	1	24	11
1991	30	28	51	23	10	6	21	4	35	22
%91-%73	+19	+14	+13	+18	+10	+0	+5	+3	+9	+11

¹Entries are the percentages of interviewees who regard themselves as *not* belonging to a particular religion.

Source: CEC (1973) **European Community Study**; CEC (1991) **Eurobarometer 36**.

All these explanations about the constructing principles of the EU, religiousness in Western Europe and the situation of the Churches in the current structure of the Union have been given because of some reasons: First of all, in this section the venture of a strong religious body, the Roman Catholic Church of Poland in the era of democratisation and liberalisation will be told. Secondly, contrary to democratic-pluralist direction of the EU, this Church has some different dreams for the EU as well for its own country. Finally, unlike the aforementioned western European populations, Poland was a country where 96 per cent of population were describing themselves as believers and members of the Catholic Church and about 90 per cent of them were participating in religious practices regularly or occasionally (CBOS, 2001/4). The fall of communism excited and activated other Churches in other Central and East European Countries as well to fulfil the value vacuum by religious discourse and to gain their powers as in the pre-communist times i.e. Hungary, Czech Republic, Croatia. However, such a strong position of Church and homogenous and high rate of religiosity have not been seen not only in the western sphere of the continent but also in the eastern one. Thus, as one author (Grabowska, 1994) argued, without considering the place of the Church in the country, any comparison between Poland and any other country whether in the region or not would be misleading. Again, to her, the involvement of the Church in the political and social issues after 1989 seems more intensive than both its engagement in the history and the engagement of any of its counterparts in Western countries. Whether these arguments are true or not, exploration of the dynamics of the post-Cold War Poland necessitates the monitoring of the stance of the Church while Polish political identity goes through a critical metamorphosis.

Beyond any doubt, the Roman Catholic Church, as the most powerful institution and highest moral authority in the country, became one of the determiners of the change of regime in the late 1980s. Moreover, the Church arrived in the new state with an autonomous position and more privileges that were granted by the ex-regime through the 'Statute on the Relationship between the Catholic Church and the State' in May 1989.

A church and its mostly voluntary services are, by definition, part of civil society. On the other hand, one of the most important aspects of post-Communist transformation was to develop a civil society through the separation between governmental and private spheres. Therefore, the anticipated role from the Church in the new era was to demonstrate and strengthen its such civil society function. The economic conditions of the transition period, especially during the initial years put the masses in desperate situation and this was in a sense a convenient circumstance for the Church to help all those people in need through its services and to show its social and volunteer function. However, despite the considerable financial sources of the Church, such kind of social activities was quite limited and had no significant impact on fighting with the inherited or newly-emerged social problems (Miller, 1997). The observation of an author (Wilkerson, 1999) depicts this: "Another high government official told me he had called into his office some of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church to enlist their help in fighting drugs and alcohol. They refused! He bitterly complained about the lack of social concern by the Catholic Church in Poland. Only a few Evangelicals had offered to help; also, some of the young Catholic priests who are becoming disillusioned with high bishops living like royalty, living in palatial residences, while the poor and addicted suffer."

Furthermore, as the only non-governmental institution of the communist era and the most respected societal agent in the country with its country-wide facilities, the Church could be a leading figure in the new period for the structural and cultural development of new civil society organisations. Nonetheless, despite the fact that within this pluralist environment of the new state, thousands of self-organising formations of different size, level, aim and activity have come into being, development of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) was not satisfactory according to a report prepared by an influential civil society organisation in Eastern Europe (CSDF, 2000: 34). Of course, the attitude of the Church and its clergies cannot be denoted as the mere reason for this. However, it should be pointed out that the Church had somewhat an arrogant stance rather than helpful towards other civil society enterprises of the new era and did not want to be called simply an agent of civil society (Horvat, 2004).

Thus, instead of strengthening its identity as a civil society actor, increasing social services and assistance to the public and developing its ties with other NGOs, the Roman Catholic Church has appeared to a great extent in the post-1989 period as a politically-motivated force that strives to impose unrestricted religious freedom and Catholic discourse. After the emergence of an axiological vacuum with the removal of the communist ideology and practice that was comprising almost every aspect of an individual's life, as the most respected and also institutionalised societal agent, the Church and religious axiology did not hesitate to attempt to fill this vacuum (Wnuk-Lipinski, 1994: 158). The mission of the Church was manifested by Cardinal Jozef Glemp, the Polish Primate, in 1992 (Millard, 1999: 126) as follows: "We are not prepared to be pushed into a corner to wait patiently for the time when we shall again be needed...we are needed now to transmit to the Nation the spiritual values which are vital to it in this unusually difficult period". As part of this manifestation, an interwar type of democratic Poland based upon Polish nationalism and Catholicism was frequently promoted within the Church milieu. To carry out this mission, the Church did not wait long to start action and from the initial years of transition, using its influence on Solidarity governments that were mainly affiliated to the national-traditional mission, advanced its policies on a political ground. The Church was no longer above the political battlefield but now a component of it.

As a matter of fact, beyond this domestic task, the Roman Catholic Church burdened itself with a wider mission of realising a unified Catholic Europe (Byrnes, 1997). In spite of growing opposition and antipathy during the transformation against the very involvement of the Church in the politics of the country, the rationale for the persistence of the Church in pushing its policies somewhat militantly, according to the author, lies in this wider mission. It means that to claim Christian values and rules for a European-wide realm and to create a Poland sitting at the centre of this new Europe (as a continuation of her so-called historical role), the basics of Catholic Christianity had first to be revitalised in the country. Whether this wider mission in such a stronger form has been the main driving force or not, the involvement of the Church from constitution-making to elections, in every aspect of political life, has been seen to a large extent.

On the other hand, the new era brought some – probably more - negative conditions for the Church. The dynamics of this new period were extremely different from any in the past with respect to pluralism (including free media) and democratic establishment. New patterns of liberal-individualistic orientations (and their misleading practice, pathologies and emergent spontaneous orientations) undermined the moral values and cohesion of the society on which the Church had established its specific position. "Both the

value system and institutional arrangements propagated by the Church are aimed at establishing in Poland a new public morale and normative foundations of community whose principles are very often opposed to liberal-democratic ideals and civil society” (Dziubka, 1999: 225).

Besides, the Church lost its function as a harbour or umbrella. It no longer carried the distinction of being the legitimate voice of public claims. There was no need for different social and political groups to maintain or to ally their activities under the auspices of the Church. The Church also ceased its role as mediator between state and society and took a side in the political debates over shaping the new state. The end of the communist threat also shrank Western support for this crucial anti-communist institution, and ‘militant Catholicism’ and the Church has lost its influence in the new pluralist-democratic frame of the European order (Szczepanski, 1991: 67).

As noted, despite all these negative dynamics, the Church has made its influence felt in certain public policy areas. Specifically it insisted on its own perspectives on the issues of religious education, abortion and partial censorship, legalised them in a *fait accompli* method using its impact on the allied parties, and this generated prolonged discussions in the country.

The Church and its allied parties on the right wing were also involved in the constitution-making process and proposed their alternative ‘citizen’s draft’, which referred to nationalist-religious principles very often and enunciated church-state togetherness. According to Bidwell¹, because of the insistent and pugnacious efforts of this alliance, the final draft that came into force on 2nd April 1997 as the new Polish Constitution² signified ‘God’ in the preamble as ‘the source of truth, justice, good and beauty’ and also appealed to the Christian heritage of the Nation. Furthermore, the Constitution included some other demands of the Roman Catholic Church, e.g. religious education in schools. However, as some authors (Eberts, 1998: 834) pointed out, the preamble was also covering non-believers who could derive the above-mentioned values from other sources and was not referring specifically to ‘Catholicism’ or ‘the Church’ as the carrier of Christian heritage. Furthermore, article 25/2 states the impartiality of the public authorities on their personal convictions with respect to religious or philosophical matters. As with the preamble, Article 25/3 declares respective independence and autonomy, not separation, between the state and churches and other religious organisations.

As seen, these provisions do not specify the Roman Catholic Church. However, as Eberts (1998) noted, the constitution mentions another document, namely the Concordat - an agreement between Poland and the Holy See that gives a privileged position to the Roman Catholic Church within the state and

among the other denominations. Truly, the Concordat, signed in 1993 but waited until 1998 for ratification, expands state obligations towards the Roman Catholic Church (subsidies and financial support), gives a large autonomy to the Church for the pursuit of religious education in public schools, accepts canon law marriages as civil marriages and so on (Eberts, 1998).

Another channel through which the Church could take part in designing the new state was getting involved in the election campaigns by supporting certain parties and candidates. However, this politicisation of the Church was unable to attract positive backing from society. Apart from the first semi-free election of 1989 that was basically approval or disapproval of the Communist regime, in the 1991 and 1993 parliamentary elections and 1995 presidential election, the Poles tended to vote for the candidates who were not endorsed by the Church officially or non-officially. Among the reasons that carried the succeeding Communist parties to power only four years after the revolution, disapproval of the Church and its allied parties in regard to their forced and fanatical strategies played an important role (Kozłowski, 1994).³ After experiencing these defeats, the Church followed a more prudent method for the 1997 election, and the pro-Church Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS) became the first party with a small margin where it was uncertain whether the success could be attributable to the support of the Church (Eberts, 1998). Perhaps the answer to this question was clarified in the 2000 presidential elections, in which Jan Łopuszanski, a radical Catholic, and the legendary Lech Wałęsa, always the favourite candidate of Catholic milieus, gained only 0.79 and 1.01 per cent of the votes respectively. Finally, the winner of the last parliamentary elections in 2001 was the post-communist SLD with 41 per cent of the votes. These results show at least how the public ignored, if not rejected, the Church's getting involved in political life to impose its views in shaping the new Poland.

Some public opinion results support this argument. According to the results of a survey carried out during autumn 1994 and again in spring 1995, the Church ranked behind the army, the police, radio, and television broadcasting in terms of trustworthiness whereas it was the most trusted institution in the country during the 1970s and 1980s. The trustworthiness of the Church had fallen to 50 per cent whereas it was 90 per cent before the regime change (Taras, 1995: 200). The decline of positive attitudes towards the Church continued in the following years. According to a survey (CBOS, 1999/5),⁴ the percentage of the respondents believing that the Church had a significant influence on the affairs of the country increased from two fifths in 1988 to two thirds in 1999. The same survey reveals that the respondents were not happy with the involvement of the Church and 61 per cent of them said that this influence should have been reduced while only 5 per cent supported an increase in its influence.

As a matter of fact, to the losers of the economic-material life in the new system, the religious-nationalist discourse as well as other symbolic-populist arguments had a possibility to offer some superior emotions for the self-righteousness and something of their own. Nevertheless, not only the Church's direct involvement in the political arena but also the language and methods of this involvement, somewhat cryptic, uncompromising and *fait accompli*, have increased popular discontent over the Church. This was the first time that the Catholic Church had encountered huge criticism directed from different segments of society; that is why it defined all these as attacks on or disrespect for the Church (Janina, 1996: 159). Contrary to the new democratic and pluralist orientation of the era, as Michael (1991: 151) argued, there were some analogies between the techniques which the Church applied to assert its views and the old regime: threats to withhold sacraments, efforts to manipulate xenophobic and anti-Semitic sentiments and endeavours to overlook public opinion. In the same vein, the language of the Church in the new era was also criticised so that, as Adam Michnik (cited by Paradowska, 1991: 96) put it, the supporters of abortion were compared with the inventors of concentration camps, or the removal of a minister through a democratic mechanism was put side by side with the imprisonment of Cardinal Wyszyński in the Stalinist period. A well-educated Polish lady, who describes herself as a good Catholic, affirmed this fact with very plain words: "the Church was imposing and forcing its views, rather than persuading. The people of this country would accept anything but coercion or imposition." That is why, according to her, "so many people even in the rural districts were taking a dislike to the activities of the Church."⁵ At most, the Church was endorsing democracy provided that democracy helps to realise its own objectives (Eberts, 1998: 836).

It has been said that the idea of Christianising Europe was a very significant target for the Church. Under the driving force of this feverishly embraced target, specifically in the initial years of the transformation, the Church milieu had an inflexible opposition to the already existent and developing structure of the EU, which was defined by the Pope John Paul II as 'the civilisation of desire and consumption' (cited in Byrnes, 1997: 34). In the following years, however, a relative softening in the rigid opposition of the Church and the Church-backed parties against European integration was observed. Instead of an uncompromising rejection of EU integration, the argument that the Polish Church should play a positive role through European integration in the 're-Christianisation' of Europe became prevalent among the bishops (Millard, 1999: 210). While Bishop Bronisław Pieronek, spokesman for the episcopate, revealed this evolution of official Church views: "Europe should be accepted as a wonderful opportunity, a difficult challenge and a great apostolic assignment for the Church", the Primate of Poland, Joseph Glemp, supported him: "The Church is not afraid of a united Europe, quite the reverse,

it looks on this process with hope” (Stadtmuller, 2000: 36). Nonetheless, the fluctuating declarations of the Church milieu put many Poles in an ambiguous position in the matter of the Church’s stance to EU integration of the country. A survey question to articulate this was responded to by 16 per cent as ‘neither supports nor against’ and by 28 per cent as ‘don’t know’ (Roguska, 2001: 145).

CONCLUSION

Transformation of any political culture necessitates a long time and the Roman Catholic Church has become at the very centre of the formation of Polish political culture for centuries. Considering these facts, the examination of orientational restructuring of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland with respect to the civic-democratic paradigm of post-1989 period has shown that the Church has not been successful till now in adjusting itself to the requisites of democracy and civic statehood.

Furthermore, the weakening of the Church’s popularity in the post-communist period has not taken place in a peaceful (compromising) and healthy way (for both the Church milieus and pro-democratic elites). That is why it could not have helped in the construction of democratic culture but made a non-ignorable contribution to the intensification of uncertainty in the country and the confusion of individual minds.

In the same vein, it is true that modernisation and post-modernisation weaken (or even deform) the ties between an individual and his/her religious affinities. The Poles have been confronted with the bombardment of different facets of western (post-) modernism and globalism within a very short time, while the religious axiology was at the same time striving for supremacy in the country. In this manner, either, the outcome was not something encouraging for the construction of democratic citizenship and stable development of democratic culture in the country but duality and axiological disorder.

Despite the relative changing of the strategy about the EU as well as on domestic political issues and despite the weakening popularity of the Church in the new period, the Church does not seem to have given up its position on and aspiration to design society on its own principles, and it will be likely to make its influence felt in the years to come. There is no doubt that such an influence or the tension between new secular-democratic groups and denominational ones will not take the country to an impasse or riot. Along with this, especially after the accession of Poland to the EU membership, it cannot be expected that the Church will return to its explicit and strict antagonism to the Union. However, the Church will definitely persist its ambition to preserve and spread the

Catholic discourse and values. It will continue to criticise consumerism, free media and some other novelties of democratic-liberal system. If the economic and political expectations of the Poles are not fulfilled from the keenly-awaited EU membership, if the negative economic conditions do not change despite this membership, then, the efforts and influence of the Church might be felt more in the coming years, specifically among the small farmers who seem to be closer to the Catholic traditions. Of course, there is another condition to get this result. The Church has to understand that the parameters of the new democratic-pluralist culture are quite different and, thus, it has to change its strategy and way of dialogue with other social institutions and wider public.

In Western democracies, the roles of the main state or society institutions, e.g. army, religious organisations, NGOs, are determined and well understood by all. In the course of further EU integration, presumably, every domestic institution in these Western member states re-evaluated and re-designed its objects and communications but this did not provoke any role conflicts or severe disputes within the operation of the domestic structure due to the already established role distribution and the stabilised and internalised democratic-liberal principles. With their stabilised and internalised democratic-civic culture, they are expected to take part in the social construction of supranational EU community. In Poland, anyhow, the Church before all else will continue to be the actors in role and power conflicts. These conflicts also have an inevitable retarding effect on the construction of democratic citizenship in Poland and, therefore, on the establishment of a political identity in the EU.

NOTLAR

¹ Interview with Professor Sybill Bidwell, University of Wrocław, 05. 04. 2003. Also she claims that such a development in Poland encouraged the proponents in putting Christianity as a reference to the draft constitution of the EU.

² For the English version of the Constitution:
<http://www.sejm.gov.pl/english/konstytucja/kon1.htm>

³ For an opposite view, see the article; Wade, Larry L., Peter Lavelle and Alexander J. Growth. According to the article, the post-communist Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), the first party in 1993 elections, had received the highest votes from the northern districts and the lowest votes from the southern ones but the number of practising Christians was two times more in the latter than in the former. The Church presence had continued to reinforce the positions of right and centre but not left.

⁴ CBOS (1999/5). Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej (Public Opinion Research Center) is publicly funded and one of the most prominent independent research centres in Poland.

⁵ Interview with Katarzyna Szota, a PhD student at the University of Warsaw at the time of the interview, 24. 10. 2001.

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