

# **The Current Attitude of Catholics in Poland to European Integration**

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## **Introduction**

I'm going to just start off by talking briefly about the role that the Polish Catholic Church has played in Polish history, culture, national identity and contemporary politics and society, a bit of contextual information. And then I'm going to move on to talk about the Church's attitude towards the issue of European integration. I'm going to start by looking in quite broad terms at what have been the underlying drivers of the Polish Catholic Church's approach to the issue of European integration. Then I'm going to move on to talk in a bit more detail about how that attitude has changed, particularly how it changed in the run up to the EU accession referendum in Poland in June 2003 where it played quite an important role; indeed arguably the single most important intervention in that process was actually by a clergyman. I'm then going to move on to talk about some more contemporary matters: about the issues and concerns that the Polish Catholic Church has raised and continues to raise in the post-accession period. A lot of this is obviously talking about the Church hierarchy – the bishops and the leadership of the Church – so I'm then going to talk a little bit more about the attitudes of the laity and of the rank-and-file clergy towards European integration and Poland's membership of the EU. Finally I'm going to talk about a phenomenon that some of you might be familiar with: a media conglomerate and a milieu of organisations clustered around a Catholic nationalist broadcaster called Radio Maryja, which is a very interesting and a very unusual case of how a Eurosceptic movement that is critical or outrightly hostile to European integration is inspired by the social teachings of the Catholic Church or what you might call Political Catholicism. I'll also touch a little bit on the Eurozone crisis and how the Church has related to it.

## **Background Context**

So let's start off by just providing a little bit of background and context: the role the Catholic Church has played in Polish history, culture, national identity, contemporary politics and society. As I'm sure all of you are aware, for centuries, Poland is and has been a predominantly Catholic country; something like 90-95 per cent of the population when asked profess an allegiance to the Catholic faith. So going back into history, right from when Poland adopted Latin Christianity in 966, the Polish Church has played an extremely important religious, cultural and political role in Poland's history –

a repository of Polish national identity during periods such as the 123-year period when Poland lost its national statehood. Moving more up to date, during the Communist period the Polish Catholic Church acted as a strong focus for opposition to the Soviet-imposed regime and after his election as Pope John Paul II in 1978 the Polish Cardinal Karol Wojtyła became a rallying point for the faithful in opposition to the Soviet regime, and was one of the absolutely unquestioned moral authorities for virtually all Poles, believers and non-believers. As I say, 90 per cent of people say they are Catholics in Poland; two-thirds of people in France say they are Catholic, but most people who go to Church in France are probably migrants, not native French; one of the striking things about Poland is not just that it's an overwhelmingly nominally Catholic country but that it remains one of the most devoutly religious countries in Europe in terms of Church attendance. The Church's own census puts the figure at about 40 per cent of faithful attending mass at least once a week; some surveys put it at nearer 50 per cent: I think this is second only to Malta in Europe.

So, what are the implications of all of this? Well one of the implications, that I'm going to talk about more a bit later on, is that national patriotic sentiments and discourses, notions of Polishness, of Polish national identity, sometimes even overtly nationalist discourses, have often intertwined with Catholicism. The second implication is that the Catholic Church as an institution emerged from the Communist period as a hugely authoritative and respected societal figure enjoying the trust of something like 80 or 90 per cent of the population. Recently there has been more division in society and trust has fallen from those stratospheric levels, but the Catholic Church has been and remains an extremely influential civil society actor in Poland that retains a huge capacity to legitimise or to delegitimise a particular political or civic initiative. And therefore, to return to our topic, the position taken by the Church hierarchy or political elements within it on any particular issue including European integration in the Polish context has enormous implications. So what the Polish Catholic Church says matters, what it *has* said about European integration has mattered and does matter and will matter.

### **Attitude of the Church to the EU before Polish Accession**

So what has driven the Polish Catholic Church's attitude towards the European issue? One of the things to bear in mind is that after the collapse of Communism, during which time the Polish Church was fairly monolithic in terms of its public face at least, there's been much more vigorous debate within the Polish Catholic Church, at all levels – within the hierarchy, within the clergy and within the laity. This debate has not been so much on religious or moral cultural matters: pretty much everybody apart from very isolated

milieux within the Polish Catholic Church are very orthodox on those kinds of issues, even “liberal” Catholics. But on socio-political issues, such as the Church’s attitude towards European integration, there has been much more open debate, and the Church has been much more divided. In fact I can’t stress strongly enough that the Polish Church does not speak, and never since the collapse of Communism has spoken, with one voice on the issue of European integration. There’s a wide spectrum of views that crosscut the hierarchy, the clergy and the laity from strong support to determined opposition.

I suppose the key driver of Polish Catholic attitudes to European integration is the unease that many of the hierarchy and the faithful feel about developments that are increasingly evident in Western Europe such as secularisation, consumerism, individualism, the sexual revolution, changing attitudes towards individual morality, the rights and the place in society of sexual minorities and the implications this has for traditional models and notions of the family; and the threat to what John Paul II described as the culture of life posed by the increasing availability and acceptability of birth control, *in vitro* fertilisation, abortion, euthanasia. And it’s not that there is a liberal Catholic wing that says “lots of these things are fine really”, there is in fact a complete consensus in terms of the unease felt about all these processes and phenomena and the possible threat that they are perceived to hold for the future of European and Western civilisation. Where divisions exist within the Church they are more about how to respond to these phenomena, about the extent to which they are endemic in Western societies, and most importantly for our subject, the extent to which they are linked to the European integration process, and the extent to which the European Union as an organisation has contributed to and strengthened these processes through its institutions and policies. So to the extent to which people within the Polish Catholic Church believe that European integration and these other civilisational processes are on somewhat separate tracks, there will be a tendency to be more open towards European integration; to the extent to which there is perceived to be a linkage between these two processes, there will be more suspicion or hostility.

That’s a kind of overview and assumes a static position. In fact if you look over the 20-year period since the collapse of Communism, and particularly if you look at the 1990s, there has been a quite strong shift in the attitudes of the Polish Catholic Church and particularly of the Church hierarchy on the issue of European integration. Initially, the Church just didn’t say anything about this, up until Poland submitted its EU membership application in 1994, because EU membership was such a distant and abstract prospect, and because they were aware that there were divisions within the Church on these

issues, there was basically a period of silence. But from about 1994, from when Poland submitted its membership application, clergy, members of the Church hierarchy and the Church as an institution started to make statements about the European integration process and Poland's accession, and initially at least, this could be characterised as a kind of reserved hostility. There was a tendency to lump together unease about historical civilisational processes, secularisation, sexual revolution, challenges to traditional morality and cultural way of life with the European integration process. This changed from about the end of 1997, when there was a notable shift in the stance of the Church hierarchy: it became much more sympathetic, much more open to the process and prospects of European integration. There were a number of key elements in this.

A turning point was a visit by a group of Polish bishops to Brussels at the end of 1997 which made them feel that European institutions were not necessarily intrinsically hostile to Christian values and that they could be interested in co-operating with the Church on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity. The supporters of European integration in the Catholic Church talked a lot about subsidiarity as the principle that should govern the relations between the European institutions and civil society organisations like the Churches.

The other key element was a change in the attitude of the leader of the Polish Catholic Church, Cardinal Glemp, whose own views started to evolve on this subject. Let's not get carried away: the Church did not then become an enthusiastic advocate of European integration; one pro-EU bishop described the attitude of the Catholic Church at this time as "yes but, with an emphasis on the but". That's very much what Cardinal Glemp's stand was; but there was a noticeable shift from the kind of reserved hostility that characterised the earlier period to a kind of reserved support. And this was very important in the EU accession referendum in Poland in June 2003. It was important because a kind of axiological critique of European integration was an important element in some of the anti-EU discourses, particularly the sort of Catholic nationalist critique of EU accession which I'll talk a little bit more about in a moment, conducted by Radio Maryja and the milieux around it, really the only mass medium that gave strong backing to the anti-EU camp.

And the key moment really not just as far as the faithful were concerned but more generally in this referendum – after which it became very difficult to sustain a Catholic nationalist critique of EU accession – was an intervention by Pope John Paul II, I think it was actually on the occasion of his birthday, when he was talking to about 20,000 Poles who had come to visit Rome: anyone who watches Polish news will know that on Sunday night, the main channel always broadcasts whatever the Pope's message happens to be, as

one of the main stories of the day. And on that occasion he coined the slogan “from the union of Lublin to the European Union”. The union of Lublin united Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the sixteenth century, creating the largest state in Europe at that time, and the Pope drew a sort of historical continuity between these processes. This was really important, because the key message (apart from all the economic benefits) that the pro-EU camp was trying to get across was that EU accession for Poland represented a civilisational choice. In presenting the debate in this way, Pope John Paul II’s message played into the idea of the choice of Europe being a civilisational choice of historic proportions in line with the tide of history. And although as I say the Polish bishops and hierarchy never explicitly backed a yes vote, on the Sunday before the referendum, they did issue a letter which was read out in all parishes calling upon the faithful to be guided by the teachings of the Pope and to vote as a moral obligation.

### **Attitude of the Church to the EU since Polish Accession in 2004**

So what about the period since Poland joined the EU in 2004? How has the Polish Catholic Church contributed and how is it contributing to contemporary debates? The public statements that the Church has made and the initiatives it has taken on European integration have been obviously related very much to moral cultural issues, clustering around three sets of questions.

First, the importance of recognising Europe’s Christian heritage and culture and concerns about the secularisation of Europe and the marginalisation of the role of Christianity in public life or its expulsion from it altogether. Public debate about Europe is mostly technical or ideological/political: about the Eurozone crisis, the future of the European integration project politically and economically, fiscal union, banking union, the implications of all this for the democratic deficit. But one of the kind of key messages that the Polish Catholic Church tries to contribute to these debates is that Europe cannot just limit itself to being a political and economic community, that it has to be a spiritual community, and in order to be meaningful European integration has to have a spiritual dimension. The progressive secularisation of Europe, it argues, undermines this. I suppose the best example of this was the attempt by the Church to persuade the Polish government to argue that references to Europe’s Christian heritage and traditions should be inserted in the preamble to the constitutional treaty as it was then. The Polish government was the only one that really held out on this issue - interestingly in spite of the fact that this was a left-wing government dominated by a Communist successor party. The Prime Minister Marek Belka, who is probably an agnostic or an atheist, was actually praised by John Paul II for his stance.

The second set of concerns has been around the sanctity of human life, resisting attempts within the European institutions, particularly within the European Parliament, to try and put pressure on countries like Poland to liberalise their abortion laws. Poland still has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe, even though it actually emerged as a compromise agreement and not the legislation the Church wanted.

The third set of concerns that the Church has raised has been around the traditional model of the family, understood as a lasting union between a man and a woman (as it is actually defined in the Polish constitution) with the primary purpose of bearing children. The Church supported the Polish government's decision to opt out of the EU charter of fundamental rights in 2007, the charter that was of course linked to the Lisbon Treaty. Britain has also opted out of the charter, but for different reasons: it is unhappy about the implications for employment and social policy legislation. This wasn't the concern in Poland: here the concern of the government, reflecting the concern of the Church, was that the charter could be used as a lever by groups representing sexual minorities to introduce same-sex marriage and adoption through the back door.

### **Attitudes of the Laity and Rank-and-File Clergy**

#### *The Laity*

So far I've been talking about the attitudes of the Church hierarchy and leading bishops; but what about the laity and the rank-and-file clergy? It's difficult to find data specifically on the attitudes of Polish Catholics towards European integration, but given that most Poles are Catholics, you can actually transpose a lot of the views that Poles have on the European Union onto the Catholic laity broadly understood.

One of the things to bear in mind about Poland as far as public opinion is concerned is that not only is it an overwhelmingly Catholic country, but it is also an overwhelmingly Europhile country. Poland voted by 3:1 in the accession referendum to join the EU, and if anything public support for the EU has increased since then: there hasn't been a Eurosceptic backlash, if anything it's been the opposite: support has risen to about 80 or 90 per cent. And that obviously reflects high levels of support among lay Catholics.

Some interesting research has been done on this, by Simona Guerra for example, a former doctoral student of mine, and by my Sussex colleague Alan Mayhew, who's sitting by the door there. Before EU accession there was a

relationship, albeit a weak one, between religiosity and opposition to EU membership: the more often someone went to church the more likely he or she was to be opposed to EU membership. Research has shown that since accession this relationship has turned the other way round: now Poland shows the same pattern as other Catholic countries in Europe: the more religious you are the more likely you are to support EU membership. Part of the reason for that is, I would say, something that I've found in my own research on public opinion: while many religiously-inspired opponents of the EU have argued and still argue that a militantly secular EU is going to try to undermine Christianity, to force abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriage upon Poland, very few Poles, whether they think these things are good or bad, actually think that that has been the case. When people are asked about the negative consequences of EU membership, moral cultural effects are never or hardly ever mentioned, by 1 or 2 per cent of respondents: people simply do not see the EU as a militantly secularising force; or if they do, they see Poland as being immune to it.

### *Rank-and-File Clergy*

As far as the clergy are concerned, it's much more difficult to talk about their attitudes because there has been very little research. The only piece of academic research that I've found on this was a survey of clergy taken in 1997/98 by a Polish think-tank, the Institute of Public Affairs. So I have to put a huge health warning on what I'm about to say, because these are old data. However, they are very interesting, because they found that the views of ordinary rank-and-file parish priests about Poland's integration into the EU were actually more positive than those of the population as a whole. At that time, 64 per cent of Poles thought Poland should join the EU, but among priests the figure was 84 per cent. That result partly reflects the demographic profile of priests, who are well educated, know foreign languages, travel abroad: the demographic profile of those who tend to be the most pro-EU people in Poland. That doesn't mean that such people didn't have all these misgivings about the civilisational cultural effects of processes happening in the West, but that they separated them out from the process of European integration in general and the institutions and policies of the EU in particular.

### *Radio Maryja*

Finally I'd like to talk a bit about Radio Maryja, a very influential Catholic nationalist broadcaster which can't be ignored in relation to Catholicism and European integration. It is headed up by a very charismatic, very well organised Redemptionist priest, Fr Tadeusz Rydzyk. It started in 1991 as a local radio station, but by the early 2000s it was broadcasting as a national

station; in the meantime it had engendered a number of linked media enterprises: a daily newspaper called *Nasz Dziennik* with a circulation of around 200,000, which is high for Poland, where the biggest circulation for any newspaper is about 400,000; a satellite television station called TV Trwam, which is Polish for 'I persist' (that has been less successful: it has proved difficult to translate the formula into television); and a network of associated civil society outlets: social political organisations like the Radio Maryja Family, a national organisation of listeners; branches attached to local parishes; an intellectual milieu called the National Education Institute for academics and intellectuals in sympathy with the message; a forge for educating young cadres called the Higher College for Social Culture and Media.

It's difficult to gauge its precise influence: I've heard estimates that up to 3 million people listen to Radio Maryja; the latest estimate I heard was 1.5 million; but that's still a lot of people. And the key thing about this network, this conglomerate of associations, is that it has been highly Eurosceptical and very influential among what might be called Poland's religious right. It has played a crucial role in mobilising Poland's Eurosceptics and also this religious right electorate, which probably accounts for about 10 per cent of Polish voters, behind bigger, broader electoral alliances that Father Rydzyk has supported like Solidarity Electoral Action in the 1990s or the Law and Justice Party which is the ruling party at the moment, and it played a key role in sponsoring specific political parties like the League of Polish Families which with the backing of Radio Maryja managed from scratch to get elected to Parliament in 2001 with about 8 per cent of the vote. So there is a not insubstantial electorate here which Radio Maryja can mobilise.

I could say a lot more about Radio Maryja and its relationship with the hierarchy, which is quite complex and changeable, but time doesn't allow. What I really want to focus on here is a very interesting point for me as a political scientist but also as a practising Catholic: the Radio Maryja milieu, and therefore the Polish Catholic Church, and therefore Poland itself, is a deviant case. We tend to assume that political Catholicism, the politically organised expression of Catholicism that we are familiar with in Western Europe, in the form of Christian Democratic Parties, has generally been associated with support for the European integration project: this has been part of their repertoire of belief as a way of overcoming nationalism. The European integration process has been from the outset strongly rooted in ideological principles whose sources can be traced back to Catholic social teaching. The Catholic Church's universalistic claims are rooted in a mutual understanding and reciprocity between individuals and groups, and Christian Democratic parties that have drawn their inspiration from this come



to the conclusion that they need to support supranational identities and transnational institutions. But in Poland, in the Radio Maryja milieu we have a significant, religiously inspired Eurosceptic lobby that draws its inspiration *explicitly* from the social teaching of the Catholic Church. And it does this by tapping in to a particular, arguably a uniquely Polish, strand of Eurosceptic discourse that intertwines the Catholic faith and nationalism. And this distinctively, possibly even uniquely, Polish phenomenon is linked to what I was talking about earlier, the significant role that the Polish Catholic Church has played as a repository and a core component of Catholic national identity. The resulting melange of Eurosceptic nationalism, Catholic religion, national identity and politics has produced a Catholic nationalist discourse which perceives the secular liberal principles that underpin much of the EU as a threat not just to Polish Catholic civilisation but to Polishness, the Polish nation itself.

## **Conclusions**

So let me just try to pull all this together and draw some conclusions. Poland is an overwhelmingly Catholic country; it has very high levels of religious observance. Given the role that the Church plays in Polish history, politics, culture, society, not least its contribution to the collapse of the Communist regime, means that what the Catholic Church in Poland says about European integration matters; the Church is a significant civil society actor. While it has been united on religious and moral cultural matters, it has been divided on European integration as it has been on a number of social political matters, and the key driver has been the extent to which the Western civilisational trends that I've talked about – negative from the Church's point of view – are linked to European integration and to the institutions of the EU. Having taken a position initially of reserved hostility, from the 1990s the Church has moved to a position of reserved support, and took a cautiously pro-EU line in the accession referendum; since the country has become an EU member, the Church has continued to raise concerns over moral cultural issues like the role of the Church in public life, Europe's Christian heritage, the sanctity of life, the traditional family. Whatever certain members of the hierarchy or certain milieux within the Church might say, most Poles and therefore presumably most of the Catholic laity do not however view the European integration process and Poland's EU membership as a threat to the country's traditions. Since accession there has actually been a positive correlation between religiosity and support for EU membership, and there is evidence to suggest (although it's very dated) that the attitude of the rank-and-file clergy may reflect that and in some ways possibly even strengthen it.

Finally, as I say there is, has been and remains a sizeable religiously-inspired Catholic nationalist Eurosceptic lobby in Poland clustered around this Radio Maryja media conglomerate and network of social and political organisations which from my point of view as a political scientist provides a fascinating and unusual case of Euroscepticism being inspired by political Catholicism, in stark contrast to Western Christian Democracy, which has often been associated with support for European integration as a means of overcoming nationalism.

## **Discussion**

Questions and comments from participants are in italics; Aleks Szczerbiak's responses are marked 'AS'.

*Does Poland have a Church Tax? This could be a useful statistical guide as to how many Catholics or members of any other denominations there are.*

AS: No. It's quite interesting actually because this is a very topical subject. At the moment there's a big debate in Poland about contributions paid by the Polish state to the pensions of Catholic clergy and to help renovate churches, for example. At the moment, all the money for this comes from a so-called 'Church Fund', which was actually set up in the 1950s to compensate the Church for assets that the Communist regime recognised it had illegally confiscated. The current government is planning to abolish the Church Fund and replace it with a donation, a Church Tax if you like, which people would make through their tax returns at the rate of 0.3 per cent of their income. The Church is very hostile to this: partly it is very wary about how many people will actually pay the Church Tax; partly it says that it's very very low (it wants 1 per cent and gives examples of other countries where it's nearer to that). There's quite a vigorous debate about this: it's probably the main bone of contention apart from moral cultural issues between the current government and the Church. I actually wouldn't be surprised if the government backed down on this, for several reasons: it is fighting on lots of other fronts and it doesn't really want to get engaged in an extra fight with the Church over this; also there's the argument that doing this unilaterally without the Church's consent would be contrary to the terms of the Concordat which the Polish government agreed with the Vatican and they are worried they could actually lose a court case if they insisted.

*No mention so far of antisemitism, which has been an issue among Polish Catholics, both before the Communist period and possibly since.*

AS: I think there are two issues here. One is antisemitism within Polish society generally, and the other is specifically as it relates to the topics we've been talking about. I have to declare a particular interest here insofar as I have Polish roots and was brought up in a Polish culture, and I'm actually quite defensive about this issue. An analogy that I always use is that if you go into any Western country and look for examples of xenophobic attitudes towards particular minority groups, you will find them; so if you go out and look for antisemitism in Poland you will find it; but that doesn't really tell you about its extent. Opinion surveys for example have found that as a social phenomenon this has declined, particularly outright racist antisemitism. Politicians across the spectrum are very keen to try and avoid Poland's image as antisemitic. For example: a few years ago the Chief Rabbi was attacked in the centre of Warsaw, and the then President Lech Kaczyński invited him to the presidential palace and publicly apologised to him. It would be difficult to imagine that happening in France, for example; there would probably be people in the presidential palace all the time being apologised to, I would imagine! So I think it's a phenomenon that is kind of overplayed; it's declining, and people are certainly aware of it. Radio Maryja in particular is criticised both from within Poland and from abroad for at best tolerating and at worst promoting antisemitism. That is a very serious charge. Now I'm no great fan of Radio Maryja; it's not my style of Catholicism; but my personal view is that I don't think that Fr Rydzyk and the core people involved in Radio Maryja are antisemites. But I think that they have not been particularly sensitive to the need to be very careful about not allowing antisemitic discourses to seep through the outputs of the broadcaster. A lot of the antisemitic contributions come from phone-ins, and in a country like Britain where we are much more sensitive to this kind of thing a broadcaster would be aware of the heavy criticism that would come down on them if they allowed too many interventions of this kind.

*Can you shed some light on the relation between the Church and the main political parties in Poland? The Wyndham Place Charlemagne Trust organised a seminar with the Polish Embassy at which an academic from Kraków said 'it is our job as the Church to control what the Catholic political party says'. Is this really the attitude of the Church?*

AS: The Church has moved in and out of intervention in party politics. In the early 1990s the Catholic hierarchy to some extent and parish priests to a much greater extent were much more open about courting political parties. Since then they've backed away from this quite a lot and are much more cautious about it. What tended to happen was the counter-mobilisation of anticlerical voters – and for all of what I've said there is actually quite a strong anticlerical electorate; it kind of mirrors the religious right at about 10 per cent of voters. I

still personally would be quite critical of the Church in that it tends to try and do 'high politics', by doing deals with politicians rather than campaigning on issues that it's concerned about and mobilising its supporters around those issues. I think that's very problematic: doing deals with politicians assumes that people are going to follow you and vote for you on the issues these politicians represent, but if your flock don't see these particular issues as important you actually lose touch with them and can't mobilise them. I think that's been the weakness of the Church: it's tried to do things at the high politics level; and certainly most parties on the centre right, and even on the centre left, have tried to appease the Church. For example on the constitutional treaty. During the referendum campaign the Communist successor party in government was desperate for the Church not to intervene on the 'no' side and it therefore pulled back on promoting liberalisation of the abortion laws which was one of its election policies. But the Church became too dependent on supporting particular political parties rather on trying to mobilise its own followers about the issues that it felt were important.

*One thing that struck me when I was in Poland as a diplomat was that Christian Democratic education wasn't particularly deep. There was a knowledge of Church teaching, but the application of it was nothing like as advanced as it was in Western Europe (Germany, the Netherlands). And there was a high degree of personalism and inter-personal criticism, which reminded me very much of Russian Christian Democrats in the 1990s.*

AS: I think there is quite weak catechesis in parts of Poland, and not enough attention paid to developing the depths of spirituality. Many critics even within the Church would say that the depth of understanding of many Polish Catholics leaves a lot to be desired and that this is the result of weak catechesis. I have actually done some research on why there is no Christian Democratic Party in Poland despite many attempts to set one up. A colleague who is a specialist on Western Europe and I looked at the conditions that would be necessary and concluded that a lot of them just didn't exist in Poland at the time. One of the key factors, as I suggested earlier, is that the Church has tried to pursue its agenda through various political parties at different times rather than hitching everything onto a single Church-backed political party, and in turn, a lot of political parties, particularly on the centre-right particularly, have at various times tried to enlist the support of the Church. So it wasn't functional in the way it was in Western Europe to have a single Church-endorsed Christian Democratic Party. And obviously it has been much more difficult since the Second Vatican Council to do these things in such an overt way.

*It seems to me that the groups around Radio Maryja have never made any attempt to associate themselves with other confessionalist anti-EU groups in other parts of Europe.*

AS: I wasn't aware of this but it doesn't surprise me. Radio Maryja is a milieu that doesn't really look beyond Poland very much except to Chicago and Polish communities in the USA where it's very well organised. I remember standing in a queue once next to Fr Rydzyk who was getting on a plane to Chicago; he goes there quite a lot. But they don't network internationally very much, and they don't network with different confessional groups. I suppose they don't really feel they need to. If you want to run a campaign on moral cultural issues in Britain, on things like same-sex marriage or abortion, there's no point doing it in just within the Catholic Church, you have to look for allies elsewhere too. In Poland there's no need for allies as the Catholic Church is the only game in town really; other allies are not very important so there are no incentives for them to work with other confessional groups.

*How much could the enthusiasm the Poles have for the European Union be to do with 'My enemy's enemy is my friend'?*

AS: Why are Poles so enthusiastic about the European Union? The answer is quite simple: the key attraction was that it was a civilisation choice, it was reuniting Poland with the West. That is how campaigners for EU accession presented the choice very cleverly in Poland, and John Paul II's intervention played into that. I watched all the campaign advertisements produced by the 'yes' and 'no' sides in the campaign. By far the most effective one was produced by the 'yes' side: a series of images from Polish history up to and including recent history: the Pope's visit to Poland in 1979, the shipyard strikes in 1980, the round-table negotiations that led to the semi-free elections that led to the collapse of Communism in 1989, and the final image of the Polish Prime Minister and President signing the EU accession treaty, so presenting it as part of a logical chain symbolically reuniting Poles with the West. A very difficult argument to argue against if you are a Eurosceptic since that would mean constructing an alternative narrative of history. In Britain it is perfectly possible to construct an alternative narrative of history that doesn't include integration with the European Union, but in Poland that's much more difficult to do. Then I think that something else has happened in the post-accession period. Poles were actually quite realistic; in fact if anything they were quite pessimistic about what they would get from EU membership. Polls show that they didn't expect huge benefits, certainly not early on. But there were a few areas they expected the EU to deliver on. One of them was the ability to travel and work abroad, and the EU has delivered on that one – or more correctly Great Britain, Ireland and Sweden, taking up

labour. So the greatest favour that was done to the pro-EU camp after accession was Britain opening up its labour markets in 2004 because that was the one thing that people really expected and wanted to happen. They weren't expecting there to be a transformation of society, they were very realistic about this. And in some areas where they didn't expect the EU to deliver, it did – agriculture for example. Most people, and most farmers, thought that the agriculture sector in Poland would lose out as a result of EU accession. But Polish farmers have done as well if not better than almost any other socio-demographic group, certainly until recently, out of EU accession. So Poles were pleasantly surprised about some of the things that happened after accession. So, first we have the idea that in reuniting with the West Poland was breaking away from a different sort of civilisational circle which Poles thought they should never have been part of: the country had been kidnapped and dragged off by the barbarous East. And second, the EU has fulfilled and in some cases exceeded the very low expectations that the Poles actually had of it.

*I was a bit surprised to hear you say that the Polish hierarchy had reservations about the EU, in view of the fact that John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła) was clearly in favour of European integration*

AS: I think that what's important here is to understand the kind of language used by religious figures like Pope John Paul II in talking about political and economic processes: very often they will use metaphors and euphemisms in a rather ambiguous way that leaves a lot of room open for interpretation. Despite the tenor of many of John Paul II's major speeches, Eurosceptics would say things like 'yes absolutely we must have European integration but not on the basis of this current European project'. During the referendum campaign Pope John Paul II talked about integrating Poland 'into the structures of Europe'. Now you could interpret this as meaning the institutions of the EU, or you could interpret it in a much more abstract way and say yes, we must have European structures in which Poland needs to be integrated, but they are not the structures of the EU. So I think that's the problem: a lot of the language used by Church figures can be interpreted and used by people in different ways: it can be instrumentalised. I think that Pope John Paul wanted Poland to join the EU, but it was perfectly possible for someone to say that he or she was a devout follower of the Pope but interpret his speeches as not necessarily saying that Poland should join the EU.

*Did the change of frontiers at the end of the Second World War affect the demography of the Catholic Church? The territories that came in on the West would have produced quite a significant new Protestant element, and the territories lost in the East would have had quite a large Catholic population.*

AS: The change of borders had an impact on levels of religiosity and religious observance. I said earlier that 40-50 per cent of Poles attend church services once a week, but this is the average, and local figures vary enormously. In central Warsaw it's something like 20-25 per cent; in rural areas it's much much higher. One of the strongest variants is between the more traditionalist conservative rooted communities that you find in the south-east of Poland, in areas that were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where weekly church attendance is around 70-75 per cent. In the western territories you mention there are much much lower levels of church attendance. The argument is that these are much less rooted communities. Ironically, a lot of people moved there from the eastern borderlands, but the argument is that they were uprooted from their communities and therefore never developed the strong roots of which their identity with the Roman Catholic Church was a part. But there's not a substantial Protestant community in the western lands, except in the German minority areas, in parts of Silesia like Opole for example. There's a Polish Lutheran Church, with communities mainly in areas with German minorities. There are also Hungarians, who tend to be Methodists. But Protestants are still very much a minority in Poland.

*Does the hierarchy ever talk about its having any responsibility for example in the lost territories in the East? Does it express any view on Polish foreign policy within the EU context, for example saying that Poland has a role to play in East-West relations? What is its attitude to NATO, Ukraine, the USA, Russia? And can one see any difference between the position of the hierarchy and that of the political parties? And do the hierarchy or political parties say that Poles who have gone to work in the West should have an obligation to come back to Poland later and contribute there?*

AS: I'm not aware that the Church hierarchy makes any statements about what the EU's foreign policy should be in terms of Poland's eastern neighbours. Its statements tend to confine themselves very much to moral/cultural issues. Where it does intervene however is in supporting the Polish communities in those countries; and very often, as is the case in Britain, the community is organised around the local Catholic parish and the Polish priest is the community organiser. This provides the large Polish minorities in places like Belarus' with a sense of cohesion, as it does in the UK. And indeed further east: a lot of Poles have ended up in the Central Asian republics, and Polish priests go over there to visit the Polish communities: the Polish episcopate sees this as part of its international pastoral role. Fr Rydzyk and Radio Maryja are sometimes accused of being too Russophile by their critics; they say that the upshot of their Euroscepticism is that they are actually very sympathetic to Russia. Some say that this discourse can elide into pan-

Slavism. But certainly the hierarchy doesn't make overt statements about these kinds of high political matters.

*Has the fairly monolithic nature of the Catholic Church in Poland on social and moral issues become more differentiated in the seven years since the death of John Paul II?*

AS: Since John Paul II's death the leadership of the Catholic Church in Poland has become much more fragmented. He was not just a kind of authority figure for Polish society but he was also effectively the leader of the Catholic Church in Poland even though he was based in the Vatican. There is no comparable figure now who could trump any developments within the episcopate. Cardinal Glemp was to some extent such a figure as well, but of course he's gone now. The chair of the episcopate is Archbishop Michalik who is relatively conservative and also relatively Eurosceptic, I would say, but he is very much first among equals, and there there are many different voices. The discontinuity between the Church's teaching and what ordinary Catholics believe and what they do is a very interesting point. And to some extent this ties in with the earlier point about weak catechesis: the Church in some sense has itself to blame: it trades on the fact that Polishness as national identity and Catholicism are linked and therefore it's a default cultural phenomenon, and that makes the Church lazy about working to deepen people's faith. It's true that there is an increase in things like contraception, people living together before they get married, divorce. But Poland is still a much more socially conservative society than most Western European societies. In recent years Poles have actually become more hostile to liberalising the abortion law than they were in the early 1990s. Opinion polls show that Poles' attitudes towards issues like same-sex marriage or same-sex adoption are still relatively conservative.

*Can you tell us something about the dynamics of Radio Maryja? Which direction is it going in? Do we know much about the age and sex structure of the Radio Maryja population? Is it something that is likely to gradually dwindle and die out or is it growing stronger?*

AS: Part of the reason why Euroscepticism plays so well among the Radio Maryja milieu is not just because they have ideational problems with the trajectory of Western civilisation which they link to the EU, but also because the demographics of the people who listen to Radio Maryja map very clearly onto the demographics of people who are suspicious of European integration: older people, particularly people in rural communities, not working (unemployed or on early pensions, the latter including a lot of older women). The Church hierarchy has very mixed views about Radio Maryja. It doesn't like the fact that there is such a powerful organisation that speaks for



Catholics in Poland over which it has pretty much no control, including financial. At the same time it is rather in awe of the ability of Radio Maryja to set up a very successful media operation with these local circles of people who have a really strong emotional tie to it. And that's one of the things that characterises it: the emotional tie between its listeners and the radio station is really strong. The ability of Radio Maryja to mobilise people to vote, to sign petitions, to donate money, to go on political demonstrations, to go on pilgrimages (they just had one last weekend, hundreds of thousands of people) is very strong. And the Church is very impressed: it's had no success in doing these things. But I think that the problem for Radio Maryja is going to be how to reach out to people who are not already in that milieu, brought up in that kind of tradition. It's a long-term problem of renewing itself.

*What does the Church think about the growing strength of relationships between Germany and Poland? The last 20 years have seen an enormous improvement in relations between the two countries. And it's interesting now that we see Britain drifting off into the Atlantic and France drifting off into the Mediterranean, we're gradually getting this hard-core Europe which now includes Poland as well as Germany, the Netherlands and Scandinavia.*

AS: Relations between the Catholic Church in Poland and the Catholic Church in Germany are very good. There was concern, the first time that Pope Benedict visited Poland, that he wouldn't be received as warmly as Pope John Paul II was, partly because he wasn't a national icon and partly because he was German. But this didn't happen, he was received extremely warmly, there was no anti-German sentiment. Even Radio Maryja is surprisingly not that anti-German, partly because Fr Rydzyk spent quite a lot of time in Germany and apparently actually got the idea of setting up Radio Maryja from an analogous radio station that was operating in Munich at the time that he was there. This is surprising because if you look more broadly, at statements made by politicians, one of the key elements of Eurosceptic discourse in Poland among political leaders is anti-Germanism. And this is the key driver for many Poles. They're worried about European integration because they fear the strengthening of an institution in which Germany is dominant; so in the secular sphere Euroscepticism is almost a metaphor for anti-Germanism.

*As a representative from the Polish Embassy, may I thank you for such an interesting talk on diverse topics. I would like to explain why so many Poles are very happy with the European integration. I think that apart from the civilisation choice, and apart from EU plans which are very important especially for some regions in the eastern part of Poland, it is very useful to take into consideration some strategic perspectives: the engagement and position of the USA nowadays. In the 1980s during the Cold*

*Was the USA perceived in Poland as one of the most important allies against Communism. Now under President Obama US policy focuses rather on the Asian and Pacific regions, and the Polish government, and I think also Polish society, in a reaction to this change, see European integration as an alternative to close ties with the USA.*

AS: I agree with you.

*Taking into consideration some global trends concerning moral issues, such as changing attitudes to issues such as same-sex marriages, euthanasia, abortion, how do you see the position and significance of the Catholic Church within Polish society developing in the future?*

AS: In some quarters there is a certain historical determinism which sees the processes of social-economic modernisation, secularity and social liberalism as inevitably intertwined. I don't agree with this view: you only have to look at the USA, which is very modern in terms of its economy and social development, but in many ways remains a very socially conservative country and a very religious country. So there's nothing inevitable about the decline of the Catholic Church in Poland and its being swept away by the forces of secular liberalism which are a feature of Western civilisation. However I do have a concern, which I've mentioned a few times, that if the Catholic Church in Poland is going to remain relevant and persuade people that its views are right, it is going to have to engage much much more with the public in terms of improving its catechesis and deepening people's faith. The Church has a tendency to appear incredibly complacent and to rely simply on a kind of reflexive cultural Catholicism, Catholicism as Polishness. I'm not particularly sympathetic with Radio Maryja, and as I have said there are real problems about its reaching beyond its milieu and getting to new people; but one of the things it has realised is that it has to evangelise and has to build strong links with its followers. So I think that the biggest danger for the Catholic Church in Poland is the complacency that grows from its current strong position within society and the state: when secularity and liberalism do inevitably come to Poland the Church runs the risk of being found wanting.

*You mentioned Poles travelling to other European countries to work: they certainly come to the UK. Which other countries do they go to? Do they go to any of the countries that have suffered under the recent Eurozone crisis? Have they noticed any effect on their own well-being? Do they send any feedback on that back to their relatives at home? And is there any discussion in Poland resulting from this?*

AS: Another country that Poles go to for work is Ireland; and they have also traditionally gone in very large numbers to Germany and Austria, for the

obvious reason of geographical proximity. They were even doing so in Communist times: I had cousins who went to work in Germany as it was an attractive labour market. I haven't seen any research on this, but apparently the opening up of the German and Austrian labour markets hasn't actually led to a huge upsurge in the number of Polish immigrants, which might be to do with current general economic trends, or it might be to do with the fact that a lot of the Poles who wanted to get there found a way of doing so anyway, despite earlier restrictions, either setting up their own businesses or working in the black economy. Indeed it seems that German employers have been trying to attract Poles to come and work in Germany and have actually found it not that easy. About the impact of the current economic crisis: a lot of Poles in Britain for example decided to return to Poland once the crisis began; but a lot still decided to stay, because in spite of the fact that the situation is difficult in Britain, it's still better than it is in Poland: if you can find work you can still earn considerably more. And a lot of the Poles who live in Britain have now decided to settle. This is one of the key differences: if you looked at the surveys that were done of Polish migrants immediately after Poland joined the EU, fairly low numbers said that they intended actually to settle in Britain. In a sense it was actually a bit of a misnomer to call them migrants; they were really a kind of international commuter: they would come and they would go back. Now much more substantial numbers have put down roots; there is some academic evidence for this, but I also notice this anecdotally just from the Polish community I know best in Brighton and Hove. It's evident in Polish community organisations that initially the recent wave of Polish immigrants were a bit wary about getting involved in them, unlike my parents' generation who were political refugees and knew that they were going to be in Britain for a very long time and therefore had to set up Polish clubs and Saturday schools. The new generation of migrants held back from this: what's the point of spending time on this when you could be out earning money and you're going to be going back anyway? But now they are starting to get involved and to put down roots. Another interesting thing is that although the Poles wanted access to Western labour markets and are very happy they've now got them, in Polish national discourse this is often portrayed as a great failure: the Polish Eurosceptics will say that the fact that all these talented, hard-working young people are moving abroad to work is a disaster, and they will use it as a stick with which to beat the government; the political opposition will criticise the government for failing to sort out the Polish economy to the extent that these people want to come back.

*Could you say something about the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary both in official Catholicism and popular piety and also in the milieu of Radio Maryja?*

AS: I'm not an expert on this from a sociological perspective, but it's clear that Mary is of huge importance in Polish Catholic identity: many people see her as the Mother of Poland. At times of national crisis Polish Catholics will say devotions to Mary instinctively. I don't know what importance she has for Radio Maryja, but it wouldn't surprise me if it went further than the name. *A question stemming from this suggestion that there might be some latent dangers in complacency arising from the very success of Polish Catholicism. Here on these islands we are still reeling from the entirely unforeseen implosion of Irish Catholicism: it's the nearest thing here in the West to anything that happened in the East. If something awful were to happen to Polish Catholicism, where would the cracks be? Where is its possible Achilles heel of Polish Catholicism? Would it be financial scandals, or abuse of power? Where do the dangers lie?*

AS: We've touched on the dangers of complacency, and also on the question of whether the Church is perceived as out of touch with modern social issues. But the area where secularists attack the Church with great success is that of its financial and institutional privileges. Earlier I mentioned the Church Tax. The Church's greatest weakness is that it is seen, and can be attacked, as an institutional self-defence mechanism rather than as serving an evangelical and pastoral mission. As I mentioned earlier, there's a religious right in Poland, and also a secularist and anticlerical constituency, each around ten per cent of the Polish electorate; but there is also in parliament an interesting phenomenon called the Palikot Movement [relaunched in October 2013 as Your Movement (ed.)]. Its main feature has been an appeal to secularism and the need to weaken the powers of the Church. And the strongest elements of this party's appeal have not been so much on questions like liberalising the laws on abortion or same-sex marriage, although they do talk about these things, but on the institutional privileges of the Church. One of their election broadcasts had a very fat member of the clergy sitting in a very expensive car with poor children outside playing in rags, tossing a few small coins out at them: pretty obnoxious from my personal point of view but an extremely powerful piece of political communication. I think that's the Church's Achilles heel. There have been sex scandals, paedophile scandals: in 2002 Archbishop Juliusz Paetz resigned as a result of one of those: but the real problem comes if there is a feeling that the Church is trying to use its institutional power to cover such things up. So it's not so much Archbishop Paetz and the allegations against him, it's the fact that he will still be invited on certain occasions and he will be up there with other bishops: it's this that is widely perceived as the Church using institutional power to protect its privileges, and this goes well beyond hard-core anticlerical constituencies.

*In 2008 it was revealed that Bishop Janosz Jagucki of the Polish Lutheran Church had been involved with the Polish security services during the Communist era. Is this a*

*issue that could damage the Catholic Church if similar things were revealed about Catholic hierarchs?*

AS: The question of links with former security services is not the issue that it was four or five years ago, but it still crops up on various occasions, and I'm actually writing a book about it at the moment. The fact is that every single member of the Catholic clergy had a file started on him by the Communist security services, and it's estimated that something like ten per cent of them were at some point recruited as secret informants. Of course there were personal stories in every case: some did it out of fear, some for venal or other reasons. Whether there were mitigating circumstances or not, personally I think it was always wrong. But the point is that part of the price that the Church paid for being a significant independent civil society actor in Poland was the fact that it was invigilated to such a degree. Is this a threat to the Church now? Well, again I think it's a threat insofar as the Church is seen to be covering it up to protect its own. That's the problem. In some localities the Church has collaborated with local historical commissions which have examined the archives of the former security services in cooperation with a body called the Institute of National Remembrance which is now the repository for all the archives, carries out historical research into the Communist period and investigates crimes committed under Communism; in some localities this is being done extremely well. But I'm very critical of the Church because I still think it still hasn't really got to grips with this issue properly; indeed that it's shied away from it; and I think that critics of the Church are correct in saying that this is still potentially a ticking time-bomb. It isn't much of an issue at the moment, but it has the capacity to arise again very quickly. There are some interesting alignments on this issue. People who tend to be the most ardent supporters of vetting clergy for their links with the Communist security services are people involved with the more conservative Catholic lay groupings. For instance there's a journal called *Fronda* edited by Tomasz Terlikowski which argues that this is part of the institutional weakness of the Church, that it's leaving itself open to criticism because it's not getting to grips with it. At the other extreme, the most prominent member of the Polish clergy to be accused of links with the security services is Archbishop Wielgus, who was going to become archbishop of Warsaw in 2007 but eventually didn't because these links were revealed - but was defended to the hilt by the Radio Maryja milieu! He was very close to them in other respects, and they came out vigorously in his defence, booing at the fact that what was supposed to be his investiture wasn't going to take place. So this issue does throw up some quite curious alignments. On the one hand you have quite conservative elements in the Church who say that renewal has to take place through traditionalism, but also through confronting the Communist past. On the other hand, there are probably liberal elements

within the Church, but also Radio Maryja, who agree in their opposition to exposing the Church's links with the past because they suspect that some of the people involved in those links are now allied to them. So it's quite a complicated issue, which throws up quite complex alignments. And all of them are aspects of institutional complacency, protecting your own.

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