

The Polish Catholic Church and the Elections of 1989

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The countries of Central and Eastern Europe, though not geographically remote from Britain, are in many respects more distant than New Zealand. All these formerly socialist countries confront many similar problems and thus there is a possibility that some general analytical conclusions concerning their current progress may be developed. Poland does not, for example, differ from its other post-socialist allies as regards its backward industry and inefficient economy. Yet there are circumstances which have made this country a place of sociological paradoxes and surprises, notably the religious element in the free trade union movement that emerged during 1980.

Given the influence of the Catholic Church upon the Solidarity movement, it is worth exploring how this manifested itself in the election campaign of 1989. In April and May of that year the opposition succeeded in making the most of the round-table settlement concerning quasi-democratic elections to Parliament and the legal recognition of Solidarity. The subsequent election campaign resulted in a great victory for the Solidarity opposition and brought a change in the composition of Parliament.

This article is in two parts: the one descriptive, and the other analytic. The descriptive section briefly reviews some of the organisational solutions developed by Solidarity activists, particularly those solutions which proved to be successful in winning elections. Poland's neighbours in the socialist bloc now face elections and it might be useful for them to have some of the secrets of the Polish opposition's successful campaign recounted with the prospect of applying this information in their own countries. Other experiences, however, cannot be repeated elsewhere because they relate to the role of the Catholic Church in Polish social life. This role may be characterised in terms of an enduring effort to preserve national identity and continuity of social tradition in a period during which oppressive authorities sought to construct a modern, progressive society untrammelled by the legacy of the past. An indication of the

extent and the forms of help provided by the Catholic clergy for the Solidarity opposition illustrates this identity-preserving activity.

The socialist project of rapid societal modernisation ended in pathetic failure. Even before that occurred, the Catholic Church had not given up its attempts to gradually transform the political system. But, and this is most significant, the greatest contribution to this cause was made by the high ranking clergy, because lay Catholics were circumscribed by legal regulations which seriously hindered any independent activity. For many years it was the shepherds, not their flocks, who alone could affect some, albeit small, transformations of the political system. In this respect, the recent elections were particularly distinctive and important. For the first time in fifty years, lay Catholic activists were as significant as clergymen. In this two-month period of transition several well established monopolies were broken.

What is specially interesting from the point of view of the sociology of religion are changes in the social circumstances of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church in Poland has acquired the characteristics of an exclusively populist, activist ecclesiastical body. Economically it is dependent upon the donations of believers; its social base lies in the villages and the towns (in 1982, 96 per cent of the population of the city of Torun described themselves as Roman Catholics and, paradoxically, a slightly smaller per cent as religious believers¹). After the opposition's great success at the last elections a change of the church's status became possible as a result of the assistance and support that had been given to Solidarity. It thus acquired some of the characteristics of a state church. Such a shift has strengthened its political position and facilitated exertion of its authority. Now, the open question is whether the church, formerly populist and activist, can transform itself into a state church. A change in the reverse direction might be much more easily described. Transformation into an institution closely linked to the state, deprived of the possibilities of social criticism in which it had engaged for such a long time would be a new and extraordinary transformation.

The possible transformation of the Catholic Church into the state church of Poland had been seen as a threat by the intelligentsia for many decades. This menacing prospect was clearly perceived by the left-wing intelligentsia who were inclined to promote far-reaching societal reforms. Religion through its integrating functions, and above all because it points, when reality is too hard to bear, to a future

¹These figures come from an inquiry carried out by the Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw, in September 1982. The particularly high ratio of religious identifications may be accounted for by the political situation at that time. The project was entitled: 'Contemporaries of the Polish People's Republic '82'.

blissful world, seemed to be an obstacle to social progress. Consequently, the motives of priests were questioned, and suspicions were formed concerning their real intentions in providing assistance to Solidarity. It is in this context that the analytical section of this paper includes an examination of the view that the church's activity during the campaign was self-serving and aimed at increasing its influence and popularity.

The Election as a Challenge to Solidarity

The decision to organise an election for a reconstructed Parliament was conceived as a means to increase the popularity of the communist authorities in the context of their clear inability to reform an increasingly disintegrating economy. The new government was to receive sufficient legitimation to impose a severe limitation of consumption. The change was to be cosmetic and profound at the same time. A degree of democratisation was envisaged so that the opposition would also appear to be responsible for unpopular economic decisions. No one could imagine that the result of the elections would lead the communists to give up power. Some preparations were made to ensure that the result of the elections would be as advantageous as possible from the point of view of the old ruling group. Presumably because a rapid break down of production was foreseen for the third quarter of the year, the election date was set for the beginning of June. The fact that the opposition was organisationally unready was an additional argument for insisting on this date. Another resolution reached during the long negotiations between the authorities and the opposition was the settlement concerning the electoral law. The opposition was to be enabled to win at a maximum only 35 per cent of the seats in the *Sejm* (counterpart of the House of Commons) but up to 100 per cent in the *Senat* (Higher Chamber). This latter concession was probably conceded because it was assumed that the opposition lacked the organisational readiness which would enable it to win a reasonable number of seats in the *Senat*. Even Solidarity assumed this. In one interview Walesa stated that Solidarity could win *Senat* seats in only eighteen out of forty nine counties. Quite simply, the opposition was not ready to take part in the elections as a significant party. The regulations concerning the electoral law were the most difficult part of the Round Table negotiations and stronger pressure from the opposition to win a more advantageous settlement there might have resulted in all negotiations being broken off. But this was what the opposition wanted to avoid, perhaps just as much as did the communists. Solidarity was recognised

as a legal, all-state organisation before the election campaign started, but it was powerless, deprived of any technical infrastructure and of the ability to act in many districts. In response to these circumstances, a parallel structure was created, one specially designed to run a pre-election campaign. This organisation of the civil committees of Solidarity was to bring together all activists who were to work for the success of Solidarity regardless of their political affiliations.

The Pre-Election Campaign

The Round Table settlement included provisions that obliged local authorities to provide the civil committees with furnished locales and equipment, especially telephones and telexes. Not every local state representative adhered to the conditions of this agreement. One can point to many regions, especially those where Solidarity was weak, such as smaller towns in rural counties, where the local civil committees had to remain in church premises because, although promised, no other accommodation was made available to them until the election was over. The Warsaw headquarters of the civil committees started its fullscale activity one third of the way into April. The first item of equipment was a map of Poland showing *województwa* (counties), and the dioceses of the Catholic Church because the help of the church was expected. The Warsaw headquarters supervised the activity of local branches, as far as possible maintaining permanent telex and telephone contacts and regularly sending messengers to even the remotest towns to provide them with propaganda materials and to collect information concerning their successes, failures and demands. The inflow of information started on 8 April and finished after the announcement of the first round results. The stock of documents collected in Warsaw as a consequence of this process of supervision and co-ordinating activity provides the basis for my descriptive and analytical work. The civil committees of Solidarity were special groups of volunteers whose task was to nominate local candidates of Solidarity for Parliament, although sometimes they were asked to accept a candidate proposed by the Warsaw headquarters. That was the first stage of the pre-election campaign. The second comprised the presentation of candidates to the electorate and the collection of at least 3,000 electors' signatures to place such a candidate on the official voting list. This stage finished on 10 May and a new stage started, namely the stage of canvassing and pre-election meetings. All these activities, as well as fundraising activity, and the appointment of Solidarity representatives to election bodies with the task of controlling their

work, had to be done by people who one month earlier could not even trust each other, since the civil committees were bodies that were created ad hoc.

The activists of the civil committees were strongly convinced that only their party deserved the support of the church. Every manifestation of sympathy for a candidate of the 'party-coalition' or for any other candidate who did not belong to Walesa's team was taken as a sign of disloyalty. But the same activists had to admit that cases of such disloyalty occurred only in a few regions. On the other hand, candidates of the communist party and of different non-Solidarity groups were doing their best to win the sympathy and the help of the Catholic clergy. There was evidence that some of them were referring to the social teachings of the Pope at their meetings and that one even cited the Bible which, in a Catholic country, used to be a very unusual practice. Nonetheless, the relationship between the Catholic Church and Solidarity evolved over nine years prevented any confusion over which way the Church would turn. Consequently, the Catholic clergy took part in many diverse and essential campaign activities. The following list of these activities reflects the temporal order in which they occurred rather than to their significance for the election's ultimate results.

1. The Catholic Church had prepared and schooled many of the election activists since, beside those actively engaged in Solidarity, the vast majority of those composing the civil committees were also members of the Catholic intelligentsia clubs or people involved in industrial and peasant missions. The religious as well as the educational and social activity of these clubs and missions meant that others besides communist local leaders were present when the need of mobilising local communities became apparent. The Catholic intelligentsia clubs can be regarded as the post-war continuation of the pre-war organisation known as Catholic Action. The efforts of many of the clergy were required to establish them and sustain their activity.
2. Priests helped to initiate and to organise the activity of some of the local civil committees.
3. Most of the civil committees began their activities in church halls. They would have been homeless without the sympathy of the clergy. At least half of all committees were in that situation and were using church premises from the beginning of the campaign.
4. Pulpits were sometimes used to inform local people about the establishment of Solidarity's civil committees.

5. On five occasions the church opposed the candidates being proposed by local committee activists. In particular, a physician practising abortions was strongly opposed as a candidate of Solidarity. There were, however, 272 seats that could be won by the opposition; which meant, that there were 272 possible occasions on which the church might interfere.

6. The process of collecting signatures, to put a Solidarity candidate on the official list of competing candidates, was regularly arranged after mass in front of or inside churches. Usually, priests informed their congregations about this arrangement in advance asking churchgoers to bring their ID cards to make signatures valid.

7. The church made its xerox machines and its printing shops available to the Solidarity campaign. This form of help was not common or widespread because the church itself lacked these facilities but it was important as the opposition had limited opportunities to print its propaganda materials.

8. On at least one occasion a priest would perform the role of messenger between committees.

9. Catholic priests and nuns also sought to hinder and prevent the destruction of Solidarity posters and banners by opponents.

10. Priests encouraged their flocks to attend pre-election meetings with Solidarity candidates.

11. Sometimes priests presided at such meetings and thus usually helped to prevent quarrels between neighbours.

12. Clergymen accepted religious celebrations organised to endorse political occasions, for example the blessing of Solidarity banners and candidates. Moreover, the clergy did not protest when religious meetings were transformed into pre-election meetings with candidates of Solidarity. As a rule people who gathered for religious celebrations were invited from the pulpit to stay on after mass to meet and talk with Solidarity candidates.

13. Catholic priests in some parts of Poland provided candidates with transport and accommodation in the exhausting days of meetings with voters.

14. Solidarity candidates were received in audience by bishops and cardinals. These formal meetings with blessing and wishes for political success were recorded and used as a political argument in opposition publications.

15. Priests were among correspondents informing the Solidarity press about forms of propaganda and the steps being undertaken by political opponents. One case in particular provides an appealing example of this form of assistance. A prison chaplain informed the local civil committee about preparations to riot

being made by people calling themselves Prison Solidarity whose intention was to discredit Solidarity.

16. One priest was the victim of attempted blackmail via letters which were intended to discourage his activities in the civil committee.

17. Priests also gave instruction on voting techniques. The act of voting was purposefully made difficult since voters had to keep in mind three rules regarding three lists of candidates if their votes were to be valid. Thus, there were regions where specially prepared instructions were read from the pulpit.

18. Finally, special prayers were organised for the election success of Solidarity. Thus, the clergy prayed for an opposition victory.

These forms of support are sufficiently well documented to be simply mentioned here. What is important is that the clergy were not specially mobilised during the election campaign. Normal, routine activities were not suspended because Solidarity was in need. The extent of help depended on Church resources, but political involvement was only marginal to the clergy's normal work. Whatever could be given was given but not at the expense of religious activity. The commitment, however, was sufficiently visible and comprehensible for us to enquire about its motivation and causes.

The recent elections were peculiar also from the point of view of the Catholic clergy. For the first time in the history of the Polish state the Catholic Church had a considerable opportunity to determine the composition of the parliament. The selection of people to fill the opposition seats could not be undertaken on the basis of the programmes they put forward, since these programmes were vague, hazy and imprecise. The church, however, had the possibility of blocking those of Solidarity's candidates who appeared unable to guarantee the spread of its influence on public affairs. And this explains why a bishop protested successfully against Solidarity's proposal to appoint a physician who was performing abortions. Two other protests concerned candidates whose private life was far from exemplary. The church's motive might be interpreted as self-interested and self-seeking, but it was undoubtedly concerned to maintain what it thought of as public virtues. Two unsuccessful and less comprehensible cases concerned the vetoing of two of Solidarity's candidates because of their political past. What is interesting is that it was not membership of the communist party which was the reason for the protest in either of these two cases, but rather the political commitment of the candidates. The general rule was that neither unbelievers nor Protestants were refused the support of clergy but there are reasons to suspect that the anticlericalism of candidates

would provide more serious reason for the withdrawal of clergy support. But ill-will towards the clergy was only occasionally expressed.

A second principle was that candidates were not specifically labelled as religious people, or as Catholics, to mark them off from other candidates. Religious commitment was sometimes mentioned while a candidate was presented to his or her constituency but it was not used as an argument in the political game. It was rather the non-Solidarity candidates who tended to display posters which reproduced photographs taken when they were being received in collective audience by the Pope.

A third characteristic was that divisions, quarrels and disagreements in the opposition ranks prevented the church from helping any of the contending parties. As a rule the bishops tried to reconcile and unify opposition. In no more than three counties mutual antagonisms within Solidarity were so strong and its leaders so irreconcilable that none of the contending parties received significant church support. The passive attitude of a local bishop in failing to give a lead tended to encourage the political sympathies of particular clerics who did not always favour every Solidarity candidate and such a situation immediately resulted in accusations of betrayal by the Solidarity press. A divided and quarrelling opposition could exist only where traditions of independent political activity had been rooted since 1980. The clergy's help was not essential to win the election in such districts and the civil committees' activists coped successfully even when the church stood aside. The final result was always the same. The rivals of the civil committee candidates had minimal chances of success in competition with members of Walesa's team.

Indispensable Help?

An examination of the mechanisms of the pre-election campaign provides an opportunity to answer an important question concerning the political maturity of Polish society after 45 years of communist rule. The facts presented make a convincing case that the clergy's help was useful in the period of political mobilisation. But was it necessary? Assessing the consequences of 45 years of continual criticism by the church of the socialist way of exercising power is problematic. The direct effects of the political involvement of the clergy can be discussed, however, since the intensity of this involvement varied in different social contexts and was co-variant with the electoral victory of Solidarity. An investigation of the situation in four different groups of counties sheds some light upon the relationship

between the strength of the clergy's political involvement on behalf of Solidarity, the characteristics of local society, and the magnitude of voting success. Because of different conditions present in each of these groups of counties one can discuss the hypothetical situation of what might have happened had all the clergy left their churches and gone into retreat during April and May 1989.

The first group comprised territories of the former Austrian division of Poland, that is the south-east counties. Because the most important characteristics of these districts include lively local communities and a relatively low inflow of uprooted newcomers, the strength of the social network is strong and the population is quite well organised. Presumably, the best scheme to illustrate the context of the clergy's political involvement consists of the following links: intensive priesthood programmes; the maintenance of strong community links; the high position of the clergy in society; intense interest on the part of the clergy in community problems, with the clergy encouraged to act as local leaders (e.g. as organisers of the election campaign); increased cohesiveness of local communities. As a result every candidate of Solidarity collected more than three quarters of the ballot. If the clergy had gone on long vacations at the time of the pre-election campaign the size of Solidarity's victory might have been less substantial but there can be no doubt that inhabitants of this part of Poland would have been interested in the political game and would have known who deserved to be elected.

The second group of counties comprised districts of rural character but of weaker, destroyed local communities. Most rural counties of eastern and central Poland belong to this group. Industrialisation and emigration from villages to cities have disturbed the tissue of local community, so that many symptoms of social *anomie* such as widespread alcoholism are to be observed there. The network of social organisations was smashed in the 1940s and 1950s and it is now only slowly being reconstructed. The organisational structure of the Catholic Church is also weaker there in comparison with the counties described before. Relatively smaller numbers of churchgoers mean diminished possibilities for exerting influence on local societies. The positive feedback of religious programmes initiated by the clergy and the strength of local communities has limited effects. The clergy's support for Solidarity's candidates was visible and comprehensible to everybody. The local opposition was not yet divided because it was still weak and vulnerable; consequently most of the accounts of involvement by priests originated in exactly those situations. There are, however, reasons to suspect that this help was of limited effectiveness. More perceptive observers reported that people who exposed themselves to meetings held in chapels and churches did not

need such gatherings because they were already convinced that Solidarity deserved support. The messengers noticed that meetings organised elsewhere were much more effective and useful since they had been attended by unbelievers and people who visited churches only sporadically. But just such groups comprised a significant section of the local population. The election campaign resulted in complete success where local activists of the civil committees were aware of this situation and did not rely solely on the clergy's help. Two of the three defeats of Solidarity candidates occurred because inexperienced activists relied inordinately on the assistance of the clergy. Their involvement often made the pre-election campaign easier for activists and gave them a false sense of security. Since there were counties where initially inexperienced activists successfully conducted the pre-election campaign with very little, sometimes insignificant, help from the church, one may conclude that the final result of the elections depended not so much on clergy involvement as on the ingeniousness and energy of local activists.

The third group of counties included those with uprooted rural populations of post-war immigrants. Since the counties now discussed are those of the Regained Territories, we may appreciate that the organisational resources and the strength of the Catholic Church were weaker there than elsewhere in Poland. Naturally, the extent of their assistance to Solidarity was relatively limited. Nonetheless, the candidates of Solidarity won in every one of these electoral districts. This occurred because of multiform aid received from the Warsaw headquarters. The popular singer or actor turned out to be as good an argument in the pre-election campaign as the local bishop or clergyman. Of course, special activity and strict co-operation had to be ensured in cases where popular television stars were substitutes for the local clergy in the effort to convince local people of Solidarity's claims. The supposition that the clergy's political involvement was not indispensable to final election victory is also confirmed by the aftermath of activities in districts where Solidarity was divided.

The last homogeneous group of counties comprises those districts with the most anomic, uprooted population where Solidarity had successfully survived the period of persecutions. Here its activists had been recruited from higher educational establishment and from heavy industry, and amongst them were to be found considerable divisions. The church tended not to interfere in such rivalry and, with few exceptions, priests tended to avoid strong commitment. Consequently, activists of the civil committees of Solidarity had only their own resources to rely on, together with limited help from the Warsaw headquarters. Their activity always resulted in success since they met surprisingly weak and unconvincing counter-attacks from their

communist opponents. Moreover, the divisions within the opposition pushed the activists in the civil committees to greater endeavours.

There are two or three counties where the situation differed from those already mentioned. For example, the case of a district with a rural population of immigrants, with quite strong ecclesiastical organisation and a still living tradition of independent activity does not fit any of the listed categories. But even there, the view that Solidarity candidates would have been defeated had the local religious leaders gone off for two-month vacations seems insupportable. All collected testimonies seem to confirm the supposition that there were two conducive and significant conditions for the electoral success of the Polish opposition. The first was the existence of independent activists able to mobilise the people's support for Solidarity's political aims. The inability to justify the economic situation or to mobilise even their own party electorate was the second factor bringing about the defeat of the communists and the change in Parliamentary composition. The political involvement of the Catholic Church made the pre-election campaign more spicy, colourful and easier for Solidarity activists. Because of this help many local communities gained in cohesion and many local leaders consolidated their position. Quite a few seats in Parliament were probably won only because instructions dealing with voting techniques were read straight from the pulpits. But the main contribution to this result has to be attributed to the communists and to Solidarity's activists who won despite their divisions and lack of experience.

Whether the church's 45 years of religious and social activity was essential in allowing the opposition to win the last election must evoke speculative answers. As a matter of fact, only the experimental replication of the Polish social context, hypothesising as the sole variation the involvement of the church, could offer support for the supposition that the social activity of the Catholic clergy resulted in change in the composition of parliament. The ratio of priests to every 10,000 inhabitants in a given area must suffice as a measure of the church's resources and of its possibilities for influencing local societies. The relative measures of social *anomie* seem to be valid indices of disorganisation within local communities. We may hypothesise that the more suicides and the more abortions, the more limited the control exerted by the community on its members. Although in many analyses, particularly those of a historical character, social disorganisation might be regarded as a dependent variable, as a legacy of war and post-war social changes, here it will be used as a second determinant of the extent of the electoral victory won by Solidarity. The average vote polled by a candidate of Solidarity in a given county is subject to ambiguous interpretations. It is a measure

of the support given to Solidarity by the local community. Therefore, a local community is identified with respect to the intensity of its oppositionist, anti-communist feelings. These feelings may be only a negative reaction of repulsion but in many situations they may indicate a new social quality, that is the striving for self-management and independence. Whatever might be the interpretation of this phenomenon, the relation of this variable to the measure of the church's strength, and its relation to the measure of social disorganisation deserve special attention. The correlations of the measure of Solidarity's victory and the indices of social disorganisation will show the relative importance of anomic and non-anomic social settings in determining anti-communist, opposition feelings. The result was that the co-variance of the number of clergy and of the proportion of votes won by a Solidarity candidate proved to be sufficiently strong to discuss the role of the ecclesiastical body in ensuring Solidarity's success.* Moreover, there are no reasons to doubt that uprooted, anomic populations have supported Solidarity. The mobilisation campaign of Solidarity's leaders as well as their former political activity had integrating social consequences. Initially it was negative integration, i.e. against communist rule. Religious involvement sought a more positive approach, organising communities for rather than against something. But it is quite obvious, that the roots of electoral success lie in two factors: existing communities that could be easily mobilised to support anti-communist opposition, and the activity of political activists who attempted to mobilise people lacking stable community life.

Conclusion

The church's involvement on behalf of Solidarity was visible to every observer of the political scene. The mobilisation during the campaign was so extensive that the role of the clergy could be neither concealed nor denied. Consequently, during my public presentation of the descriptive part of this work none of the observers or even the participants in the campaign tried to undermine the main theses, namely, that the Catholic Church's involvement was of a very extensive and multiform character. Surprisingly, however, the motivation of the clergy was questioned. According to some the pursuit of power and the possibility of exerting control over society were the only significant motives behind the past and present commitments of

*Professor Kosela included a chart at this point indicating the relationship between indices of social disorganisations, degree of electoral support for Solidarity, and ecclesiastical strength. — *Ed.*

the Catholic clergy.² This way of interpreting the facts has a long tradition and is quite often voiced, and thus it was to be expected that it would be offered as a key to understanding recent events. The suspicions and the perceived threat which were resented mostly by the left-wing intelligentsia may be elucidated in relation to the social functions of religion. Its integrative potential was demonstrated many times, for it is beyond doubt that religion fosters loyalty and solidarity among members of society. Religion strengthens and consolidates inter-group ties. But increase of integration may become transformed into destructive power when it turns against people belonging to other groups, nations or denominations. There is another reason why the intelligentsia, perceiving itself as the leading stratum of the nation, is suspicious of and reluctant to accept programmes implemented by the ecclesiastical body. Religion may be said to demobilise people, providing them with supernatural hope in time of stress, oppression, and deprivation. It impedes their efforts to improve their earthly predicament. Thus, it may be considered as a real obstacle by people who have not abandoned socialist ideals. Moreover, it is not surprising that there should be anti-clericalism in a country with such strong Catholic Church structures as is the case in Poland. Of course once must assume that the attempt to make political profit is inseparable from political struggle and political manipulation. But this assumption demands close scrutiny.

Verification of a hypothesis that assumes a particular, profit-seeking motivation by the clergy and the bishops who helped the Solidarity campaign must rely on associations related to the picture of the diabolic political manipulator in a cassock. Some might assume that manipulation was managed by ecclesiastical headquarters in Warsaw or even in Rome. But there were too many cases of insubordination by local priests for such an argument to be plausible, and there were too many who were passive or reluctant to engage in electoral struggles. The implementation of one centrally appointed programme would look quite different from the actually observed political involvement of the clergy. Moreover, one should expect as a consequence of this hypothesis specially strong activity on the part of the clergy in places where an unformed and divided society left room for political manipulation. But the church, strong or weak, was as a rule passive and stood aside from political rivalry. Accordingly to the manipulationist hypothesis priests should have refused to support the Solidarity campaign in districts where the expected profits were

²Opinion like this was presented at a conference of the Polish Sociological Association which was held at the beginning of November 1989 in Warsaw, and which dealt with recent elections to Parliament. The larger Polish version of this article is now in print, together with other papers presented at the conference.

minimal, or where the only profit would be the impression created for observers. There was one district where the local Solidarity activists did not try to mask their hostility to clergymen. Consequently, local clergy should have either refused to support Solidarity's candidates or should have remained passive. But in fact they were active organising the campaign for Solidarity almost against the wishes of the local Solidarity leaders who were engaged in strike-preparations. However, the most convincing argument against the hypothesis which alleges that clergy motives were self-interested is to show that agreement and peaceful co-existence with communists, who were ready to pay for support by conceding many legal privileges to the clergy, might have been the best tactic for the church. The drive in the direction of a state church could have begun long before 1989. Ironically the church is suspected by some of being untrustworthy because it negotiated with the communists as well as supporting Solidarity. The fact, that such a discussion has been carried on seems to be a significant characteristic of Polish political debates.

The political engagement of the Catholic Church during the last election campaign was not a turning-point or the beginning of a new kind of activity with a new ally. The significant choice had been made no later than the second half of the 1940s. The striving to become a state church was abandoned then and there is no reason to suspect that the rapid changes of political situation has reawakened that desire. The same incentives, however, that pushed the clergy to provide help for Solidarity may bring it to think over its commitments when social and economic conditions make pastoral programmes ineffective or difficult. The instability of the social situation and widely experienced link between Catholicism, family and national tradition will probably result in an enduring demand for these pastoral programmes. So it is likely that future Polish governments will have to accept such intangible factors as the sense of spiritual well-being constraining their choices. Moreover, it is doubtful whether the Catholic Church will be involved as overtly in future political rivalry in support of any party as happened in 1989.