

Andrzej Sarnacki SJ

**Institutional Changes for
the Polish Church
in Facing New Challenges
(1989–2005)**

**An Enquiry from
a Social Science and Social
Philosophy Perspective**

**Akademia Ignatianum
Wydawnictwo WAM
Kraków 2013**

© **Akademia Ignatianum w Krakowie, 2013**

ul. Kopernika 26 • 31-501 Kraków
tel. 12 39 99 620 • faks 12 39 99 501
wydawnictwo@ignatianum.edu.pl,
www.wydawnictwo.ignatianum.edu.pl

Recenzenci/Reviewers

Prof. Johannes Müller, Hochschule für Philosophie, Monachium
Prof. Norbert Brieskorn, Hochschule für Philosophie, Monachium

Projekt okładki/Cover design

Lesław Sławiński – PHOTO DESIGN

Opracowanie techniczne/DTP

Paweł Majewski

ISBN 978-83-7614-148-0 (Ignatianum)

ISBN 978-83-277-0004-9 (WAM)

WYDAWNICTWO WAM

ul. Kopernika 26 • 31-501 Kraków
tel. 12 62 93 200 • faks 12 42 95 003
e-mail: wam@wydawnictwowam.pl
www.wydawnictwowam.pl

DZIAŁ HANDLOWY

tel. 12 62 93 254-256 • faks 12 43 03 210
e-mail: handel@wydawnictwowam.pl

KSIEGARNIA INTERNETOWA

tel. 12 62 93 260, 12 62 93 446-447
faks 12 62 93 261
e.wydawnictwowam.pl

Table of contents

Abbreviations	9
Introduction	11
I. The Church in transforming Polish society	21
1. Introduction – historical background	23
2. The Catholic Church in the context of transforming society	29
2.1. Political background: from totalitarianism to democracy	29
2.1.1. Brief historical note	29
2.1.2. Church's interplay	33
2.1.3. The outcome	37
2.2. Economic background: from a controlled to a free market	40
2.2.1. Socialist economy	40
2.2.2. Economic liberalisation in Poland	41
2.2.3. Phases of economic transformation: successes and failures	42
2.2.4. Church's interplay	45
2.3. Socio-cultural background: from dualism to pluralism	49
2.3.1. General demands of the socio-cultural analysis	49
2.3.2. General framework of Polish culture and society	52
2.3.3. Socio-cultural transformation in Poland: between <i>homo sovieticus</i> and <i>homo oeconomicus</i>	53
2.3.3.1. Transforming society	54
2.3.3.2. General schema of the ongoing cultural change	55
2.3.3.3. The present condition of Polish society and culture	58
2.3.4. Religious dimension	65
2.3.4.1. Specific historical features	66
2.3.4.2. What accessible sociological surveys show today	67
2.3.4.3. Some general features of contemporary Polish Catholicism	72
2.3.4.4. Catholic milieu	73
2.3.5. Efforts of Church authorities	75
3. The internal reality of the Catholic Church	79
3.1. The Second Vatican Council and its perception in Poland	79
3.2. The figure of John Paul II	80

3.3. The Second Plenary Synod	82
3.4. Level of education of the clergy	82
3.5. The laity, Catholic movements, lack of elites	83
3.6. “Radio Maryja” and fundamentalist trends	84
3.7. Jubilee 2000	86
3.8. Scandals and reactions	87
II. New challenges and the Church’s reactions	91
1. Introduction – need of a global perspective	93
2. Oncoming forces and phenomena that challenge the social order	97
2.1. Secularisation – a challenge to the relevance of the Church	97
2.2. The challenge of finding its place and defining its role in a democratic society	107
2.2.1. Church-state relation in a democracy	107
2.2.2. Civil society, social capital, and the social role of the Church	113
2.3. Responsible participation in the project of modernisation	118
2.3.1. Liberalism, individualism, pluralism and (post)modernism	118
2.3.2. The growing role of knowledge in society	125
2.3.3. The Church in a new cultural environment	126
2.3.4. The Church in Poland	129
2.4. Staying relevant – facing the norm of economic success	135
2.4.1. Between collectivism and economic liberalism	135
2.4.2. The challenge of globalisation	140
2.4.3. Religious economics	147
3. Internal challenges for the Church	155
3.1. Fundamentalism as a negative reaction	155
3.2. The crisis of leadership after the death of John Paul II	158
3.3. Squaring with communism	159
3.4. The challenge of a new generation	162
3.5. Pastoral work and its mass scale vs. lack of elites	163
3.6. Bound by the chains of its own tradition	164
4. Reactions of the Church’s authorities up to this time	165
4.1. Risk of political engagement	165
4.2. Church and society: the possibility to miss each other	171
4.3. The Church’s comprehension of economic reality	172
4.4. Willingness to change	178
4.4.1. To define its stand anew	179
4.4.2. “Ad hanc perennem reformationem”?	184

III. Organisational theories and models dealing with change	187
1. Introduction – a new perspective	189
2. Management: basic terms and models	191
2.1. The 7S McKinsey Model	191
2.2. The Bell Curve model and management by objectives	198
3. The role of learning	205
3.1. Personal mastery	207
3.2. Mental models	208
3.3. Shared vision	210
3.4. Team learning	211
3.5. Systems Thinking (ST) and the role of hidden mechanisms	213
4. The role of knowledge	219
4.1. Relevance of Knowledge Management (KM)	219
4.2. Four elements that structure KM	222
4.2.1. What kind of knowledge?	223
4.2.2. The core capacities of the organisation	227
4.2.3. The role of innovation	229
4.2.4. Traps and dangers: core rigidities	234
4.3. Ways of introducing KM	239
5. The role of corporate culture	243
5.1. The importance and elements of corporate culture	243
5.2. Leadership and typology of basic assumptions	248
5.3. How to change culture	252
IV. Framework of learning: practical application of the managerial theories to the Catholic Church and their stand according to Catholic Teaching	261
1. Introduction – proposing management	263
2. Grounds for the use of principles of management in the Church's state of affairs	265
2.1. 'Ecclesia semper reformanda'	265
2.2. Church's restraints	266
2.3. Why management	269
2.4. Reconciling some contradictions	272
3. Key factors of strategic changes in the Polish Church	277
3.1. Positioning diagnostic results	277
3.2. To define anew its place in society in a meaningful, modern way	280
3.3. Conditions for changes	287
3.4. Using available resources	298

4. Church's universal criteria for its own conduct	301
4.1. Church-state relationship and politics	302
4.2. Church's attitude to economic systems	304
4.3. The Church in socio-cultural environment	306
5. Final conclusions	309
Last word – perspectives	311
Bibliography	313

Introduction

The role and the future of the Catholic Church has been a very lively and hotly disputed topic in Poland. Polish society, which has been in a period of rapid transformation since the year 1989, still struggles to create an identity that is new in many ways within the framework of vast political, economic and cultural changes. At the same time, it must deal with its own traditions and beliefs.

The Catholic Church has played a nationally important role over centuries of difficult history. It cannot stay immune to these all-embracing processes of social transformation. Its exceptional authority is a worldwide phenomenon. 95,4% of the population (of 38.650.000 Poles) declare themselves to be Catholic¹ and 75% affirm their trust in the Church.² At the same time, in this by and large Catholic society, one observes rapidly growing anti-clerical tendencies and continually declining acceptance for the Church's teaching on sexual morality as well as for its pro-ex-communist choices in the presidential and parliamentary elections. The Church suffers from the critique of being too conservative, too paternalistic and too slow in its adjustment to the rapidly changing state of affairs. Many predict that its influence and significance will gradually go down and that, similar to the fate of the Church in Western societies, Catholics are going to lose their dominant position in society. Poland's entry into the European Union most likely will only speed up the process of growing social laicisation.

¹ By comparison Catholics in other post-Communism countries: 86,3% of the population in Lithuania, 83,5% in Croatia, 81,8% in Slovenia, 66,4% in Slovakia, 64,6% in Hungary, 39,8% in the Czech Republic, 7,6% in East-Germany (Tomka/Zulehner 2000: 34).

² According to an opinion poll of TNS OBOP on 25-27 Oct. 2003 (Rzeczpospolita 11 December 2003).

These opinions are expressed as well within the Church, as it worries about its future and the future of Polish society. There are different expectations and ideas, both inside and outside church circles. How should the Church respond to the constantly changing needs of its members and of society? How are we to evaluate the Church's response up till now? This response may have a decisive role for the further existence of the Church. The stakes are high and the responsibility is immense. The response has in a sense already been given: not so much through some set of theoretical discourses as by the way of changing, or refusing to change, its own way of proceeding. Changes cause difficulties and resistance because they run the risk of causing mistakes that pay back, and because they challenge the already known and accepted beliefs and rules. But avoidance has also its price. Not to react is easier, but it causes in the long run the danger of the Church's becoming foreign and obsolete to the new generations.

We are entitled therefore to talk about an unsettled position of the Church and, through analysis, to indicate its possible future course. What the future will be like depends on the development of this complex situation and on the decisions made today by those who are responsible for the Church. This future development cannot yet be determined.

“Will subsequent processes of secularisation be the inevitable ‘side effect’ of the developed market industry, an open, pluralistic society and a democratic state?” (Dylus 1997: 63)³

The implications of decisions could be to some extent explained and in this way certain valid predictions regarding the possible future form of the Church could be made.

Our task therefore is to tackle this very pertinent topic of the meaning, present conduct and possible future perspectives of the Church in Poland. Our interest is to research both the institutional and organisational character of the Church. By ‘institution’ we understand here a social, durable enterprise that limits lawlessness or arbitrariness of human activities, defining the degree

³ Polish quotations are my own translation.

of formalisation of human behaviour and responsibilities. Institutions anchor these activities and behaviour in norms and values as well as through incentive structures. They serve both an individual by forming one's personal needs and the society by preserving its structures and stability.

“Institutions are simply patterns of behaviour which persist and crystallize in the course of time and to which people become attached as a result of their role in the formation of identity, or through investments of energy or social interests” (Wallis, SSE 400).

Although having defined characteristics, institutions remain flexible and undergo changes, especially during a transformation time. They also shift borders of responsibility, e.g. between the state, churches, trade unions or the military (Lipp 2000: 149).

“When we discuss the perspectives of faith in Poland, it would be important to focus on the Church as an institution” (Szawiel 2002: 34, in: *Więź* 3).

‘Organisations’ are social products created for a specific purpose, with their typical managerial-like features: division and allocation of labour, planning, decisions regarding strategy, designing of structure and systems, co-ordination of work, motivating workers, etc. (Kieser, SSE 566) Organisations are understood as resource pools (manpower, money, political support or religious identification), where the particular positions are ascribed according to one's competence, functioning under requirements of effectiveness and competition. The formal structure of an organisation's design serves the organisational purpose. Organisations are designed and the design mirrors particular understandings, perspectives and theories that create the context of the organisation's specific character. Designs should be justified because they tend to become stagnant and can carry on assumptions that prevent any needed improvement and growth.

An institutional character of the Church will be reflected in socio-economic and cultural analysis (chapters one, two and four), when the organisational character will be depicted in a more practical approach to managerial concepts, especially in the third but also in the fourth chapter. The specific perspective, institutional or organisational, will be made clear respectively.

We begin therefore with an analysis of the situation of the Church and Polish society that will help to sort out the key elements in the general picture. The first chapter outlines the situation of Polish society and of the Church according to political, economic and socio-cultural stands. In this descriptive part of our work, the meaning of transitional changes in these three domains will be delineated, along with their relation to and impact on the situation of the Church. Accuracy in this analysis is crucial for the appropriateness of further proposals. Some authors already draw attention to such a need.

“Pointing out the directions of the development of the future Church and foreseeing its particular tasks should be based on an attempt to diagnose the situation in which the Church has found itself, the exterior and interior threats, and challenges which it has to face” (Bagrowicz 1997: 6).

The economic, political, and socio-cultural situation of society and of the Church in Poland will be researched in available and relevant publications, mainly from the Polish but also from the German language zone. The choice of resources is not arbitrary but is based on the scientific quality of the research and its relevance to our analysis. The problem is complex, so should be the expected analysis, where

“sociology, economics, and political science are the three lenses needed to see organisations fully; no one discipline can capture their whole meaning” (Harrison White in: Davenport/Prusak 1998: 27).

In our presentation we will trace the alterations that took place in the Church and Polish society between 1989 and 2005. Due to their significance, these two dates create something of a natural framework. 1989 was a year of political, and at the same time economic and social revolutionary change in Poland (and in the whole Soviet block). 2005 was marked by the death of Pope John Paul II (2. April), who was undoubtedly the most significant person in recent Polish history, and by the new parliamentary and presidential elections, which have brought to power radical right-wing parties.

The second chapter is the normative part, and the next step in making an accurate assessment. An adequate diagnosis must be set in a wider perspective, since today the Church's and the social situation are both the result of numerous global factors. There is a need to reflect on the roots and scenarios of secularisation, on the requirements of democracy and on economic changes in an era of globalisation. Thus there is

“a need to foresee the development of the world, the human being and the concrete community in which the Church lives and operates” (Bagrowicz 1997: 6).

We will also bring to light selected key factors of the interior situation of the Church. Based on the facts, we will clearly point out the pattern of decisions being made by the episcopacy. Then we will reflect on the presuppositions that lead to particular decisions and their consequences.

In the background of our work there is a question about change. In the case of the Church, we are dealing with an institution and organisation with which there is no straightforward comparison due to its long tradition, its religious and national role, historical impact and functional integrity. Institutional changes are resultant of many parallel yet often conflictual, social processes (Eisenstadt, 1972: 409–419). Inevitably, in every society a more or less intensive process of exchange transpires between different persons, groups, organisations, and spheres. On one hand, there appear collective goals and acceptable norms carried by some ‘agents’; on the other hand, there are people who are willing to support these goals and norms by paying for them through financial or political support. These ‘agents’ are political entrepreneurs who evince a special capacity to articulate the new political goals, organize their network of communication, and mobilise the resources necessary for their functioning. They try to take control over basic institutional positions and resources, such as power, wealth, or symbols.

Because no society is homogeneous, that process of continuous institutionalisation of norms and settings of exchange takes place in every society and on several different levels.

“The possibility of innovation and change is not something external or accidental to any institutional system. It is given in the

very nature of the process of institutionalisation and the workings of institutional systems” (Eisenstadt, 1972: 418).

An institution continuously attempts to mobilise resources, preserve the boundaries of its system, and maintain the legitimacy of its values, norms and symbols. Doing that, it may affect the position of other groups in society and cause a shift of power and influence. In other words, it may give a rationale for a conflict. Clashing contradictions, conflicts, and shifts in the balance of power may lead to the depletion of resources needed to maintain any given system. Each system is sensitive to its environment; therefore, such turbulences may cause the crystallisation of new foci of resources and orientations, which may, in turn, create a new institutional system.

Changes do not happen automatically. Every society develops certain types of symbolic expression, in order to deal with important attributes of human existence and its goals. Symbols define the basic, fundamental norms of society and they become non-interchangeable. As the most important non-interchangeable commodities, one can name symbols and situations of basic cultural and personal identity, such as personal honour or belonging to a particular collectivity. They create a primordial core of personal relations and orientations.

Nevertheless, conflicts do not preclude that the institutional system will maintain its boundaries through its norms and values. Neither does conflict determine that the institution achieves accommodation, or at least partial insulation of some of its subsystems, so that, in the end, its order persists. The direction and scope of change depend on the nature of the system: on its values, norms, the quality of its organisations, and the various internal forces operating within it. Other major factors are also the external forces upon the institution, which become especially sensitive due to an institution’s systemic properties.

An organisational change, which by its nature can be planned and control to a relatively high degree, always requires a careful distinction between core, unchangeable elements, which constitute its corporate identity, and peripheral changeable elements, which need flexible adjustments in the course of time. In a process

of designing a change in an organisation, it could be especially challenging to identify and negotiate which elements do not have, as some might instinctively claim, universal and timeless value.

“A common mistake of would-be scientific history is to assume that today’s virtues must also be tomorrow’s and that a given factor, if positive once, must always pay. History doesn’t work that way. (...) Different strategies in different circumstances” (Landes 2002: 315).

Our understanding of an organisational change derives from a phenomenon described in the management literature as an empirically observable event that consists in a difference in form, quality or state that happens at a given time in an organisation (Van de Ven/Poole 1995). A strategic change is a transformation of an organisation, a process between two points in time, which concerns ways of using its resources. Changes in using its resources cause changes in the possibilities of achieving an organisation’s purposes (Gray/Ariss 1985: 708). Strategic changes redefine the relationship between an organisation and its environment (Larsson/Bengtsson 1993, Barnett/Carroll 1995, Hofer/Schendel 1978: 25).

The concept of organisational change will be presented in the third chapter, where some relevant managerial theories will be brought in. These instruments from management will serve as a help in systematising our data from the first two chapters, and sorting it out according to their level of importance. It will also suggest some possible solutions and strategies. The use of these instruments is seen as an innovative move that will allow us to be both critical and constructive in formulating our final conclusions.

This organisational approach will allow us to apply criteria that are common to all organisations and help us to understand their inner dynamic of development or stagnation. It is a way of objectivising processes that have been taking place in the Polish Church. Managerial criteria have a flexible, adaptable character that comes from an awareness of the complexity of organisational entities, based on vast research in multiple organisational realities and on comparative studies to other systems.

“Organisations are not easy to define in time and space. They are themselves open systems in constant interaction with their many environments, and they consist of many subgroups, occupational units, hierarchical layers, and geographically dispersed segments” (Schein 1986: 7).

Our purpose in using managerial theories is to clarify the systemic elements and dynamics in the Church. In this way we will look at the Church in Poland from an institutional and finally organisational perspective and not a theological one. The legitimacy of such a study will prove its validity in the course of a careful analysis of the Church’s situation within its environmental context, in the connection of the relevant factors with common organisational theories and at last by our reflection on Catholic Social Teaching that has its own criteria for the Church’s conduct. Some concrete proposals will emerge as possible developmental models for the Church.

This intent carries us to the fourth chapter in which we will draw some conclusions that become evident from the merging of the analyses in the first two chapters with the organisational theories in chapter three. We will make an appeal to important Church documents (e.g. from Vatican II and Catholic Social Teaching) in order to analyse whether or not our results, drawn from social and managerial theories, are able to be reconciled with the Church’s official criteria. We can already expect that many of these scientific ideas will not only not contradict the Church’s teaching but will even supplement it. Some of these theories will have to be limited and perhaps transformed according to the Church’s specificity. But in the end, we should be able to form and discuss some strategies for the Church.

This work has therefore a general character and offers a complex approach due to the intricacy of the topic. It is also the first work that covers such a broad area.⁴ The scope of such a work

⁴ There are already two major works that treat the Catholic Church in Poland in a more complex way: Jarosław Gowin’s *Kościół w czasach wolności: 1989-1999* [The Church in the Time of Freedom: 1989-1999] from 1999 and Dominik Hierlemann’s *Lobbying der katholischen Kirche:*

could be endlessly broadened. In modern times the problem is not so much the lack of information but its excess. The complexity of the issue therefore creates a problem of selection that has a polemic nature, since

“... the researcher must realize that gathering valid data from a complex human system is intrinsically difficult, involves a variety of choices and options ...” (Schein 2004: 203).

As pointed out in the title of this dissertation, there are two major perspectives that constitute our approach to the outlined problem: social science and social philosophy. The first will be presented more clearly throughout the thesis; while the latter, due to the limitations and parameters of our task, will stay in the background providing the context of understanding.

Our approach is ultimately pragmatic, i.e. it intends to put in a certain logical order numerous problems that challenge the Catholic Church in Poland, and to suggest some directions that seem to be crucial for the Church’s future and for the Catholic heritage.

„Therefore serious talk and writing about the future must consciously refer to an evaluation of the present time and of the Church’s mission” (Kostro 1997: 94-96).

Complex research does not make detailed predictions, but rather attempts to identify main problems and to propose some key strategies as possible solutions. Such a work must be done with care and consistency, being aware that the “diagnosis of causes in complex, multicausal situation is error prone” (Axelrod 1999: 140).

Special thanks to Fr. Johannes Müller S.J., professor at the Hochschule für Philosophie in Munich and Br. Michael Hainz S.J., executive manager at the Jesuit Social Institute in Munich.

das Einflussnetz des Klerus in Polen from 2005. But the first one does not take into account the global perspective, and the second one focuses only on the political issues. Neither of them provides sufficient institutional and organisational perspective.

I. The Church in transforming Polish society

*We came here neither to weep, nor to laugh,
but to understand.*

Spinoza

2. The Catholic Church in the context of transforming society

2.1. Political background: from totalitarianism to democracy

2.1.1. Brief historical note

A young democracy emerged around the year 1989, preceded by dramatic workers' riots and a deal at 'the round table' between the communists and those who came from the "Solidarność" movement (which was much more than a trade union). The appearance of "Solidarność" was the result of a long process of the bankruptcy of socialist ideology, the breakdown of economic policy and a growing gap between the socialist party and Polish society. The visit of Pope John Paul II to Poland in 1979 was a spiritual event that could not be forgotten, while it made clear that the party with its ideology had no meaning for the national interest (Davies 2004: 1087).

A political transition brought about the formation of the first democratically elected pro-solidarity government with a liberal mind-set. The prime minister of the new government, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, decided to separate the past with 'a thick line'. It meant forgiveness for the communists with much less vetting and squaring up with the old regime than for example in Czechoslovakia or East Germany. In 1991 Lech Wałęsa, the leader of "Solidarność", was elected the president of the country. Already in December 1989 the parliament ("Sejm") adopted an amendment to the constitution, returning the country to its previous name as the Republic of Poland ("Rzeczpospolita Polska") instead of the Polish People's Republic. The regulation

about alliances with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries was eliminated, and democratic political procedures were introduced. Due to the absence of a well-thought out plan for dismantlement of socialist structures and the complexity of such a task, the whole process was chaotic and lacked an inner comprehensive logic (Dudek 2002: 98).

After the initial period of euphoria there came serious economic problems and an abrupt political crisis in the post-Solidarity block. As the result of a worsening economic situation and a clash in the governing coalition with Hanna Suchocka as prime minister, the parliament declared a vote of no confidence on 29 May 1993 (ironically the members of the Solidarity coalition voted against their own government and found themselves on the side of the ex-communists). The next day President Lech Wałęsa dissolved the parliament and ordered new elections (Dudek 2002: 320ff). The scales of social support – mainly due to the self-embarrassment of the Solidarity coalition – tipped now in favour of the left-wing parties, and the election on 19 September 1993 was a triumph of ex-communists and peasant activists. The former communists came back now with a new image as socialists, enlightened reformers, experts, and specialists, free from responsibility for the past, and rebuilding their old influences. Strategically a moral relativism was propagated in order to water down the responsibility for the past. Many of the new socialists, due to old connections, exclusive ownership of capital, and weaknesses in the law took over crucial industrial branches. In the absence of decommunisation they exercised enormous influence on the economy and in politics. As time has shown, the unhealthy connections between politics and the economy became a source of corruption on a massive scale. The major scandal was an accusation of espionage on the part of the prime minister, Józef Oleksy, who was forced to resign in 1996.

On 19 November 1995 Lech Wałęsa lost his presidential run against an ex-communist Aleksander Kwaśniewski, who was again elected five years later. On 2 April 1997 a new constitution was passed. It determined that the new elections statute would be based on the rule of proportion. It enforced the advantage of the

Sejm over the Senat, made the president the head of the executive authority (but in comparison with the first provisional constitution gave him less power), made more difficult an overthrow of the government by the Sejm, and introduced new state institutions such as the Council of Financial Policy (Dudek 2002: 439-440).

The post-Solidarity movement (AWS) in turn pulled itself together and won the parliamentary election in September 1997. The new coalition government (right-wing AWS with liberal UW) with the Protestant prime minister Jerzy Buzek introduced four major reforms and strived to incorporate Poland into NATO and the EU. The treaty with NATO finally took place in March 1999, but the negotiations with Brussels encountered many problems and prolonged the integrating process (Dudek 2002: 457). The four reforms: administrative, health services, education and retirement pensions were the impetus for a kind of shock therapy which brought about another wave of strong social resentment (the Reform of Health Services was especially negatively assessed). In June 2000 the breakdown of the AWS-UW coalition decreased public support for the government even more.

Weak ratings, a worsening of the economic situation, growing unemployment (16% in 2001) and some corruption scandals resulted in the re-election of the left-wing coalition in September 2001. This scenario of a changing political atmosphere found repetition with Leszek Miller's government that was forced to resign in May 2004, just after the access of Poland to the European Union. This was the result of a series of corruption scandals and the highest rate of mistrust of the parliament in history.⁶ The new transitional government with Marek Belka lasted until 19 October 2005 (the parliamentary election took place on 25 September).

December 2005 brought the end of Aleksander Kwaśniewski's presidency. Its overall performance was heavily criticised. This was due primarily to numerous scandals, such as his secret contacts with some 'fuel mafia' bosses, his signing reprieves for

⁶ In 2004 86% of the population expressed their mistrust to the parliament (Rzeczpospolita 1 June 2004).

some serious gangsters, his many connections to people in conflict with the law, etc. Many questions still wait to be answered regarding the foundation, “Porozumienie bez granic” (Agreement without borders), which was set up by his wife Jolanta, but later was accused of connections with some persons found guilty of financial fraud who have also sponsored the foundation. The most harmful move by President Kwaśniewski, in the opinion of some experts, was the blockade of the fiscal reform of 1999 (Buzek’s government) that might have given a real impulse for modernisation to the Polish economy (Dzierżanowski et al. 2005). The atmosphere of scandals among ex-communists (SLD party members as well as presidents), caused a clear need for society to elect somebody who could give some kind of guarantee to fight corruption.

The main contenders for election in 2005 were two young parties: “Platforma Obywatelska” (PO, civil platform), a liberal party, and “Prawo i Sprawiedliwość” (PiS, law and justice), a right-wing one. The victorious party turned out to be PiS led by Jarosław Kaczyński, which formed a minority government with Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz as prime minister on 31 October 2005. The twin brother of Jarosław, Lech Kaczyński, was elected president on 23 October and sworn into office on 23 December. They both represent a traditional, right wing party orientation, although by western political standards their program will be regarded more as a socialist one, and their electorate as supporting the idea of a welfare state. While their program is based strongly on moral principles with anti-corruption promises, their economic ideas are not clear and leave much room for the opposition PO (Schmid 2005: 6).

At the end of 2005, which marks also the scope of this presentation, there was a feeling in Poland that the passing year was also a decisive one. The promises of PiS and Lech Kaczyński to build a *strong state* and an *honest Poland* were convincing enough to win over liberal promises of economic progress. Once again the previously disappointed segments of society were mobilised and played a crucial role in the elections. The political mentality has shifted clearly to the right along with a lukewarm hope for a ‘fourth Republic’ (“IV Rzeczpospolita”) (Janicki/Władzyka 2005: 26).

In summary, therefore, within the first 16 years of independence a process of creating a new plural political system has taken place. Turbulent sequences of alternately right wing and left wing governments and presidents occurred as a result of discrepancies between expectations and realisations of election promises. This young democracy has been characterised by the existence of weak parties and a historical heritage of cleavages. Nevertheless, major reforms were introduced which have changed the political and social scene. Becoming a member of NATO was also a step away from the old military treaty with Russia (Warsaw Pact). A process under the motto of building a new democracy and successful movement towards membership in the EU brought about relative political stability.

The attitude of the Polish people can be characterised by three features. First, the pattern of switching in elections between the right and left wing parties seems to confirm that the current system of liberal democracy suits the majority (Dudek 2002: 507). Second, the expectations of political guidance from politicians and parties are very high and the role of political society, the empowering of local structures, is not strongly in focus. At the same time the quality of political life is still poor and the favourite policy of political parties seems to be a catchall strategy. Third, society does not see any particular role to be played by the Church in politics, a factor that will be further elucidated.

2.1.2. Church's interplay

History shows us that from the end of the 18th century the Catholic Church was for most people a substitute for the state, taking on this role in the face of a common political crisis (Kłoczowski 1989: 109). During this time patriotism became religion, and religion, patriotism. A similar role continued after the Second World War, during the time of the subordination of the state to the Soviet Union. It could be said that history gave the Catholic Church good training for the struggle against communism.

The Primate Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński played an important role as he presented both firm obstinacy and flexibility (Micewski 1982: 62). In 1950, he signed an agreement with the regime that preserved some autonomy for the Catholic Church, a move that caused some discontent in the Vatican. At the same time he managed to avoid any kind of real submission. In 1953 he was interned and spent three years in isolation, but after that he returned to his office with now even greater authority and prestige. As some conclude, the Primate's flexibility was one of the decisive factors that enabled the Catholic Church in Poland to avoid such strong persecution as occurred in other countries from the East block (Borowik 2000: 60-61). And one can only speculate what would have happened if the persecution had been as drastic as in Russia, where between 1917 and 1939 forty two thousand Orthodox clergy were killed (Borowik 2000: 31).

The Catholic Church in Poland during these years played a significant role as the only strong opposition to the communists, as it was, paradoxically, needed from time to time by the regime for negotiations with dissatisfied elements of society. The Church provided protection and refuge for many dissidents, who for the sake of unity in the face of the common danger kept away from much possible diversity. The collapse of the communist regime in Poland in 1989 is hardly thinkable without the involvement of the Catholic Church, although it did not have sometimes enough strength and courage to defend truth and justice outside its walls (Davies 2004: 1093). This historical background is very important to keep in mind in order to understand the Church's later pattern of conduct.

The strong political engagement of the Catholic Church around 1989 came quite naturally and was commonly accepted. But already within the next two years this social acceptance rapidly decreased, accompanied by the first dissensions in the post-Solidarity group and first signs of disagreement with the Catholic Church. The clergy used their voices in the political struggle. Between 1991 and 1993 many bishops and clergy were again engaged in the parliamentary election campaign but this time without a positive response from the faithful. The by and large

Catholic society gave strong signs of rejecting the Church's political counsel. That attempt at political guidance created a rapidly growing mistrust against the Catholic Church, which is not solely a Polish experience.

“... the trends indicate that where the Church is involved in the public sphere, there is a resistance to any of its activities that are not clearly altruistic and apolitical” (OTWTL 12).

The episcopacy, facing that phenomenon as well as the clear teaching of Pope John Paul II, finally reduced its direct political involvement. Between 1992 and 1995 the letters from the bishops speak only in terms of general values, avoiding particular political directives (with an exception being the presidential election in 1995). But in 1996 they again stepped into the political quarrel about the concordat and the shape of the new constitution. They also supported the right-wing parties for the parliamentary election (partly provoked by the ex-communists), which created much 'bad blood' and strong social tension. During a visit to Poland in 1997, Pope John Paul II managed to calm down the atmosphere, making a strong impression through a message of reconciliation (Gowin 1999: 422). One year later the delayed ratification of the concordat was signed. The new post-solidarity government showed more willingness to cooperate with the Catholic Church, but also evident were some intentions on the part of politicians to make the Church more of an instrument in the political game. The irresistible desire of politicians to treat the Catholic Church as a means of their own purposes was in some sense willingly taken up by some in the hierarchy.

When they could, the bishops remained active in political matters that were subjects of their concern and have influenced some of the laws that were passed in the parliament. The engagement and pressure from the episcopacy as well as the support of the clergy and many Catholic circles and their influence have achieved some legislative results. By 1990 religion or, respectively, ethics was introduced in all schools. In 1992 radio and TV shows were obliged to respect religious sentiments, and specifically the Christian value system. At the same time the ban on abortion

was declared. The restoration of Church property was confirmed before the proper general law was passed (Dudek 2002: 192-196).

The bishops showed great concern with regard to the new constitution. Although most of the Church's postulates were eventually accepted (by the post-communistic government), the bishops decided in 1997 to vote against the new constitution and announced that decision. This is what would later be described as 'ethical maximalism' (Gowin 1999: 249). At the same time they gave ambiguous signals by encouraging everyone to vote according to one's own conscience, yet also accusing the left-wing party of being immoral along with, by implication, all those who would like to vote for them. In the meantime there was an observable change in the strategy of the left-wing parties. The ex-communists saw a new opportunity to discredit the Catholic Church and, at the same time, to build up a new credibility for themselves. They presented the Catholic Church as the enemy of democracy, and rhetoric about Catholic fundamentalism and a vision of a confessional state were used to scare people.

The Church exercised an important voice in the question of the EU enlargement. At the beginning of the political debate over Poland's joining the European Union, the Catholic Church spoke enthusiastically. The bishops had an image of a Europe to which Poland would contribute its Christian tradition and in this way transform the already unchurched mentality. Later on, when the bishops realised the utopian character of such thinking, they became more sceptical towards the process of the enlargement. But the strong and clear pro-European statements of John Paul II cut short the discussion. Although certain Catholic circles (as well as some bishops) stayed at least sceptical and even clearly against the enlargement (like "Radio Maryja"), most of the priests followed the pope's lead.

Undoubtedly the bishops saw the engagement of Catholics in politics as a civic duty and a sign of Christian responsibility for the world. The episcopacy took the opportunity a few times to comment on the political situation in the country. One of the most important documents they issued was "The bishops' address about the need for dialogue and tolerance at the circumstances of

building democracy”⁷, published in 1995. The document speaks about the need of engagement in the process of transformation. It encourages all to see the positive in democratic changes, not to hide from the reality in one’s own shell, and not to accuse others of emerging problems or evils. It shows a need to make distinctions and not to accuse the idea of democracy itself or the very idea of tolerance and freedom for inevitable difficulties.

The tactic of the bishops in relation to political matters consists of maintaining a network of personal relations with influential politicians. Many important issues for the Church are discussed exclusively at the personal level, which is not an unusual pattern in Poland (Hierlemann 2005: 257). This tactic seems to be quite effective, due to a common respect that politicians, independently from their political orientation (for the left-wing politics it is a requirement of their pragmatism), usually have for the hierarchs (Hierlemann 2005: 168).

⁷ Orędzie biskupów polskich o potrzebie dialogu i tolerancji w warunkach budowy demokracji (1995).