

DONALD KERR (Dublin)

## RELIGION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY: 'CATHOLIC POLAND' AND 'CATHOLIC IRELAND': SIMILARITIES AND CONTRASTS

*It is not possible to understand the history of the Polish nation... without Christ... If we refuse that key which enables us to understand our nation, we become victims of an enormous deceit. We no longer understand ourselves. Without Christ, it is impossible to comprehend this great age-old community.*

Pope John Paul, 2 June 1979 at Victory Square, Warsaw. „La Documentation Catholique” 76:1979 no. 1767.

*Take an Irishman wherever he is found all over the earth, and any casual observer will at once come to the conclusion, 'Oh, he is an Irishman, he is a Catholic'. The two go together.*

Father Tom Burke, Lectures on Faith and Fatherland, p. 117, 268. Cited in: John A. Murphy, *Religion and Irish Identity*, in The Princess Grace Library, ed. *Irishness in a Changing Society*, London 1988.

The factors that go to make up the identity of a people — race, language, land, geography, and religion — shift in their significance as a group's self-perception changes under pressure from new challenges. Almost always, however, religion's role was of prime importance and, in some cases, decisive. From the time of Theodosius, the Roman Empire became officially Christian and all members of the Empire were judged to be members of the Christian Church. This situation remained on in Byzantium where every member of orthodox faith was by definition a subject of the Empire for he/she was a son or daughter of the true religion. In the west from the time of Charlemagne a concept of a Europe, no longer as a geographical term, but as a Christian state, 'Christendom', emerged. The Crusades, by pitting Christians against Muslims, deepened this identity. By the 12th century almost every region of Europe would have identified itself as Christian. After the Turks overran much of eastern Christendom, the Reformation divided western Christendom and forced ethnic groups and nations to chose between Catholicism and Protestantism. In early modern Europe, the constitutive period for many nations, religion became an important element in the legi-

timation of nationality. This article looks at two countries of western Christendom. One is a central European nation, the other is in the far west of Europe. Both are nationstates, both are often singled out for their allegiance to the Roman Church to the point that they were often referred to simply as Catholic Poland and Catholic Ireland<sup>1</sup>

#### THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD: POLAND

Irish monks, Italian and German missionaries were among the first to bring Christianity to Poland. Just a thousand years ago, in 966, King Mieszko married the Christian Czech princess, Dobrawa, and was baptised. From then on Poland defined itself as a Christian nation. The Reformation had some immediate success among an important section of the nobility and the bourgeoisie, particularly in towns where German influence was greatest. The masses remained Catholic, however, and the advent of the Counter-Reformation, led by reforming bishops and Jesuits, native and foreign, brought most dissident nobles back to Catholicism. The close identification of Polish and Catholic can be traced to the wars of 1655—1660, or Swedish 'Deluge', which threatened to submerge the country. Poles attributed their protection to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin of Jasna Góra. The king, John II Casimir, led a national revival of the Catholic masses and nobles against the invaders. In 1656, he chose her as queen of the Res Publica of Poland and, at his request, the intercession, „Queen of the kingdom of Poland” was added to the Marian Litany of Loreto. The sense of difference, an integral note of nationality, increased during the 17th and 18th century. The Polish ruling class perceived Poland as the land of liberty and contrasted it favourably with its autocratic neighbours, Swedes, Prussians, Austrians, Cossacks, Russian, Tartars and Turks. All of those, during a period of incessant wars, had on occasion threatened Polish liberties. Significantly, all, except the Austrians, were of a different religion. Catholicity and Polishness began to be perceived as one.

#### THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD: IRELAND

During the Reformation period in Ireland, after a confused period, it became evident before the end of the 16th century that the Old or Gaelic Irish, the great majority of the people, had opted for Catholicism. Of great significance was the fact that the Old English or descendants of the early settlers in Ireland from the Norman invasion in the 12th century on, who were strong in the towns, had, unlike their German counterparts in Poland, also opted for Catholicism. The vast majority of the Irish rejected their ruler's

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<sup>1</sup> On the similarities between modern Poland and modern Ireland, see P. Clancy, M. Kelly, J. Wiatr, R. Żoltaniecki, eds *Ireland and Poland: comparative perspectives* (Dublin, 1992). A good, up-to-date account of Polish Christianity is L. Vaccaro, ed. *Storia religiosa della Polonia* (Milan, 1985).

religion. This was quite unique in Europe, where the maxim, *cujus regio, ejus religio*, was already being followed. By the beginning of the 17th century Counter-reformation Catholicism had come to Ireland in the shape, particularly, of seminary priests, Friars and Jesuits, educated on the continent of Europe. Some of these priests sought to forge a union, based on religion, between the Old Irish, who had suffered dispossession, and the Old English, whose long-standing influence was now under threat. Geoffrey Keating, an Irish scholar and divine, himself of Old English stock, in his classic account of Irish history, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, written about 1635, consciously sought to give intellectual cohesion to a fusion of the two groups into one nation on the basis of the Catholic faith. While he appropriated the tradition of Gaelic Ireland, he portrayed the Norman conquest of the 12th century as, on the whole, a Christian one, but the recent Tudor conquest of the 16th century as a destruction of the true religion. What he aimed at was a fusion of as 'Éireannaigh' or inhabitants of Éire, Irish, united not by ethnicity nor even by language but by religion. The Franciscan friars at Louvain, who addressed themselves to the Old Irish, attempted to provide a similar ideology. In 1642 the Old Irish and English formed the Confederation of Kilkenny for king, religion and country and an armed struggle continued until 1652. The alliance between Old English and Old Irish was an unstable one and ended in defeat at the hands of Cromwell. Both Old English and Old Irish suffered persecution and expropriation. In 1690, when William of Orange expelled the Catholic King James II from England, both groups fought for James and suffered from further expropriation and penal laws. By this time, political reality had brought about that fusion for which Keating and others had provided the ideological basis. By now, also, the three groups existing at the beginning of the century — 'Old Irish', 'Old English' and 'New English', had been replaced by three new groupings 'Protestant', 'Dissenter', and 'Catholic', the latter consisting of descendants of both Old English and Old Irish. This three-fold categorisation was to remain. The Catholics constituted the great bulk of the nation and, in their own eyes and in the eyes of most of their opponents, Irish and Catholic had become synonymous. During the course of the 18th century, Gaelic Irish literature looked for succour to the Catholic Jacobite king and to the Catholic powers of western Europe. The poem *My Dark Rosaleen*, where Rosaleen, or 'Little Rose' is the figure or Ireland, brings that out:

Oh my Dark Rosaleen, do not sigh, do not weep  
The monks come o'er the ocean green, they march along the deep.  
There's pardon from the Pope in Rome, upon the ocean green  
And Spanish wine shall give you hope, My Dark Rosaleen!<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> This is adaptation of James Clarence Mangan's translation of the original in Irish:

A Róisín ná bíodh brón ort fár eirigh dhuit  
Ta na Braithre ag teacht thar sáile is ag trial thar muir  
Tíocfaidh do phárdún on bPápa is ón Roimh anoir  
Is ní sparáilfear fín Spáinneach ar mo Róisín Dubh.

The return of the priests, pardon from the Pope in Rome and Spanish wine all show where their hopes lay. Although many of the peasant population clung to the idea of a Catholic restoration until into the 19th century, yet as the possibility of a Jacobite restoration receded in the course of the 18th century, many middle-class Catholics abandoned the Stuart cause and tailored their ideology to obtain toleration.

#### 19TH CENTURY POLAND

Important though the 17th century was in laying the basis for an identification of Catholicism and national identity, the 19th century proved even more significant for both Poland and Ireland. This had largely to do with the political situation and developments in both countries but also with the cultural dimension. National culture has always been of great importance in national identity for the enshrinement of a country's literature in the written word gave its national distinctiveness an authority and a standing in the group's own eyes. For many national groups the Christian religion played an important and direct role in the commitment of their literature to writing. The most ancient Polish literary document is the Bogurodzica which is both chant and catechesis. Although Polish literature owed much to the 16th century reformers, it was the 19th century which left an indelible mark in Polish culture literature, music, painting, providing the paradigm for modern literature. The same is not quite true for 19th century Irish culture. Irish literature from the 7th century on owes its preservation and development largely to Irish monks but unlike Poland, however, the 19th century Ireland saw the further catastrophic decline of the native Irish culture. It had been discriminated against since the 15th century but by the 19th century even Irish speakers had lost confidence in their language and culture and saw English as the gateway to advancement in Ireland, England and the United States where so many of them were emigrating. A literary movement and parital language revival at the very end of that century certainly tended to deepen the Catholic/national identity.

For both Poland and Ireland the 19th century brought much suffering. After the partition of Poland the Church assumed a new significance. In the face of attempts to Russify, Germanise, and Austrianise the Poles, it remained for them the only surviving national institution. In Prussian and Russian Poland, efforts were made to suppress Polish culture and to buy up Polish land. The Catholic clergy opposed these efforts. Both these governments rightly identified the Church as a source of Polish nationality and attempted to bring it to heel. Professor Kumor has detailed their attempts to weaken and control it<sup>3</sup> All seven bishops appointed to the diocese of Ermland from

<sup>3</sup> B. K u m o r, *Ustrój i organizacja Kościoła polskiego w okresie niewoli narodowej 1772—1918*, Cracow, 1980; *Nominations to the Catholic Episcopal Sees of the Roman Rite in Poland in the Period of National Oppression, 1795—1918*, in D. K e r r, ed. *Religion, State and Ethnic Groups*, London, 1992, p. 27—49.

1785—1918 were German, and the same was true, with one exception, for the diocese of Chełmno although the vast majority of the people were Polish. Bismarck's Kulturkampf was in full swing and the German clergy were expected to encourage the germanisation of Prussian-occupied Poland. Prussian (German after 1871) nationality was promoted in every possible way, and Polish nationality was disparaged. Archbishop Ledóchowski of Gniezno was jailed for opposing this Prussian war of cultural superiority. The most striking example concerned Gniezno, the cradle of the Polish Church and Poland's primatial see. Before the partition, its archbishop represented the whole Polish Church. The government, after attempts to abolish it, finally attached it to the new metropolitan centre of Poznań. Then, at the height of the Kulturkampf, a German, Julius Dinder, was made metropolitan of the united dioceses of Gniezno-Poznań.

The situation was worse under Russian rule where, since the Congress of Vienna, the Tsar was effectively king of Poland up to 1831. The Russian government perceived Catholicism as Polish, Orthodoxy as Russian, and subordinated bishops, particularly in the eastern parts of old Poland, to the metropolitan of Mohylów, who was seen as the 'Russian pop'. Pressure was brought on the papacy to appoint amenable bishops by the simple expediency of leaving sees vacant for lengthy periods. The extreme example of that was the diocese of Wilno where between the years 1815 and 1918, the see was vacant for a total of 72 years! More recalcitrant bishops were deported. The Polish clergy, including an archbishop of Warsaw, took an active part in protests and rebellions against Russia. In the uprising of 1863, many priests and, particularly, very many religious supported the rebels. This brought savage reprisals against the Church. Four-fifths of the religious houses and convents were suppressed, so that by 1874 the total number of religious houses was 264 compared with 1638 a decade earlier. No fewer than nine bishops and 400 clerics were deported to the interior of Russia. The diocese of Kamieniec Podolski was abolished in 1866 and that of Mińsk in 1869. Popular devotional rites such as processions and pilgrimages were severely limited, and the police scrutinised sermons in the churches. Protests by Pope Pius IX acerbated feeling between Rome and Russia to the point that when the Vatican Council was held in 1869 the bishops were not allowed to attend. Extreme pressure, indeed violence, was exercised against Oriental-rite Catholics (often called Uniats) to incorporate, willy nilly, into the Orthodox Church.

Since Austria was a Catholic monarchy, the Polish Church suffered no discrimination as such in Austria. The policy of Josephinism was in the ascendent at the time of the first partition, and the state remained imbued with it. This meant that the state exercised considerable control over the Church at least up to the Concordat of 1855. Despite some reaction after Pius IX published the Syllabus of Errors in 1864, the Catholic Church enjoyed a privileged position during the long reign of Franz Josef. The government, however, pursued a policy of austrianising its Polish subjects. Again

the Church was targetted. The government appointed many non-Poles (13 out of 21), mainly Germans or Czechs, to the episcopal sees in Galicia. Many of the priests and bishops spoke no Polish. Despite the common Catholicism and their far greater degree of independence, Catholic Poles did not identify with Austria. All in all, these three great powers in their different ways sought to impose their culture on Poland, and, recognising the importance of the Church in Polish identity, sought to promote only clergy favourable to themselves.

#### 19TH CENTURY IRELAND

In Ireland as in Poland, the nineteenth century, particularly the latter half, proved the most significant period in further deepening the notion of a Catholic national identity. The act of Union of 1800 had made Ireland part of the United Kingdom. The government sought to control the Irish clergy because of their influence on the masses and, as in Poland, to control the appointment of bishops. A notable and interesting difference took place. The outcome was different. When it was proposed to give the government a Veto on the appointment of bishops, that is, the power to say that the candidate was unacceptable to the government, the Catholic bishops, who had initially accepted it after the great rebellion of 1798, met in Dublin in 1808 and totally rejected it. In 1814, Mgr Quarantotti, acting head of Propaganda, in the absence of Pius VII, still held prisoner by Napoleon, gave Rome's approval to the Veto and was supported by the English Catholics. In Ireland, however, Daniel O'Connell, the Catholic leader, warned that the priests and laity would revolt against any Veto. Although the Veto received the approval first of Cardinal Litta and then, in February 1816 of Pius VII, on his return from exile, Irish Catholics in general, including the bishops, maintained their objections. When, fourteen years later, in 1829, O'Connell won Catholic Emancipation, the government wisely decided to drop the idea of a Veto. It did, however, attempt secretly to influence the appointment of Irish bishops, and with some success up to 1832. After this episode Rome felt it did not understand remote Ireland and, although Pius was annoyed with the Irish, the curia became very cautious in dealing with Irish affairs. In 1826, Thomas Wyse, a lieutenant of O'Connell, reported: „I have heard Pope Pius VII state in a conference which I had with him that he found more difficulty in governing the Church of Ireland [the Catholic Church] from its refractory disposition than all the rest of the Churches put together”<sup>4</sup>

In the first half of the century Daniel O'Connell was the preeminent figure in Irish politics, and in the 1820s he mobilised all Catholics, by then over 80% of a population of 8 million, in one of the first mass campaigns anywhere in the world, to obtain Catholic Emancipation. Although O'Connell wished to have Protestants in his national movement for Emancipation and,

<sup>4</sup> Cited in: J.A. Reynolds, *The Catholic Emancipation Crisis in Ireland* (1954), p. 50.

later, for Repeal of the Union with Britain, the very strength of resurgent Catholicism frightened Protestants of the Established Church (Anglicans) and Dissenting Protestants (mainly Presbyterians), who had benefitted economically from the Union, into an alliance to block any effort to weaken the link with Britain. Thereafter the identity between Irish nationalism and Catholicism increased. Visitors, Catholic and Protestant, from France, Germany and other countries, testified to this increasing identification of the two. An effort in the 1840s by cultural nationalists, the Young Irelanders, to loosen the bond between Catholic and Irish, achieved little success. When the eldest daughter of John Mitchel, a northern Presbyterian and one of the most dynamic of the Young Irelanders, became Catholic, her father explained away her conversion on the grounds of „her very deep Irish feelings... a kind of sentiment that one cannot be thoroughly Irish without being Catholic”

The Great Famine of 1845—1849, brought intense suffering. As a result of it and the subsequent emigration, the population of about nine millions, commenced a steep decline<sup>5</sup> The population haemorrhage was accompanied by an increasingly rapid decline of the Irish language and culture. As a consequence, some historians see the Irish as placing more emphasis on the one remaining characteristic that distinguished them from the English — their religion. The identification of Irishness and Catholicity deepened during the second half of the century. By 1862, John Blake Dillon, the leading Young Irelander in Ireland at the time and one of the three co—founders of the Nation, declared: „I, an Irish nationalist, know, and the enemies of Irish nationality also know it, that the cause of the Irish Catholic Church and the cause of the Irish Catholic people are one and indivisible” This was certainly the perception of Cardinal Paul Cullen, archbishop of Dublin, possibly the dominant figure in Irish political life during the third quarter of the 19th century, though neither he nor his fellow-bishops believed a dissolution of the Union with Britain was possible and for many it was not desirable<sup>6</sup> A further highly significant development came in the 1880s when Charles Stewart Parnell, a Protestant landlord, united constitutional and extreme (republican) nationalists in a struggle for the land and for 'Home Rule' In 1886, the Catholic hierarchy, many of whom had supported the Land War, proclaimed that 'Home Rule alone can satisfy the wants, the wishes, as well as the legitimate aspirations of the Irish people'.

Since the two most powerful bodies in the country — the Irish National Party, who had 85 of the 103 Irish seats in the British Parliament, and the Catholic Church — were now working hand in hand for major political objectives concerning land, education and ultimately political independence, it

<sup>5</sup> During the Great Irish Famine, Athanasius Sedlag, bishop of Culm raised money from his diocese for the Irish Famine victims.

<sup>6</sup> Although Cardinal Cullen opposed rebellion in Ireland, he publicly expressed strong sympathy with the Poles in their struggles with Tsarist Russia. Cullen was a nationalist but believed that in Ireland it was possible to achieve national ends through non-violent action.

was probably only a matter of time before a nation-state, either linked to Britain through Home Rule or independent, would emerge. The mutually advantageous consensus between the National Party and the Church, guaranteed that Catholicism would be an essential element in the final settlement. The language and literary revivals of Douglas Hyde and Yeats at the end of the century, and their contribution to the 1916 rebellion added a Gaelic cultural dimension but tended to strengthen further the Catholic identity. For Protestants, descendants of English and Scottish settlers, Irish 'Home Rule' was perceived as 'Rome Rule'. Remarkably, to this day, this is the perception of Northern Irish Protestants, for they see Catholic and Irish as one and identify themselves as British! Even after the recent cease-fire, Protestants felt it necessary to declare that they would rather die on their feet than live on their knees to Rome!

#### ROME AND NATIONALITY-POLAND AND IRELAND CONTRASTED

The relationship national identity and religion is greatly affected by the model of religion involved. Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Churches tended to relate differently to government and to the nation. In Orthodox countries the Church was traditionally subordinated to a central state in a type of cesaro-papism. For Protestants, generally, the idea of an elect nation, based on the Jewish concept of a covenant people, was strong. Partly for this reason and partly because of the historical origins of Protestantism, often the result of a decision by the ruling prince, as with Henry VIII in England, the resulting structure of the Church was a national one. What chiefly differentiated Catholics was that they had their spiritual centre outside the state, in Rome. The consequences were important. Were Catholics were in a non-Catholic state, the governments regarded them as disloyal. This was very much the case in Ireland where Catholics had constantly to dispel the charge of a double loyalty, to the pope and to the monarch, if they were to hope for a relaxation of the penal laws against them. On the other hand, by the 19th century, Britain and Russia were willing to use for their own ends Catholic teaching which enjoined obedience to lawfully constituted authority. Both governments brought pressure on Rome to tell the subject nationalities to be loyal subjects of the state. Again, the success of these efforts were different in Poland and Ireland.

For Poland, the first great test came during the reign of Gregory XVI (1831—1846). The situation in Rome was not favourable. The papacy never supported revolution, but in the aftermath of the Church's sufferings during the French Revolution, it was more firmly convinced than ever of the evils that such upheavals bring. Like most of western European states it supported the principle of 'legitimacy' The Congress of Vienna in 1815 had enunciated this principle, whereby the legitimate ruling dynasties were to be upheld, as the sole method of preserving stability in Europe. Gregory XVI, who had been obliged to flee from Rome because of his outspoken opposition



to the French Revolutionaries, was strongly of this tendency. Then, in 1830, the Poles, unwilling to cooperate in crushing Belgian rebels against the Dutch king, and hoping to regain their independence, rose in revolt. Many Polish priests preached insurrection, and the Poles appealed to the Pope to call an urgent meeting of plenipotentiaries to resolve their difficulties with the Tsar. Rome hesitated, unwilling to condemn the Catholic Poles and loath to offend the Tsar. The nuncio in Vienna approached the Austrian Chancellor, Prince Metternich, but he refused to get involved. When Gregory became pope, he came under pressure from the Tsar who insinuated that if the pope did not act he would be responsible for the repression that would follow. He told the Polish bishops, on 19 February 1831, to preach obedience to constituted authority. On 9 June 1832 he went further and, with the help of Cardinal Luigi Lambruschini, the secretary of state, wrote the encyclical, *Cum Primum*, addressed to the Polish bishops where he denounced revolutionary movements and condemned certain deceitful persons and sowers of discord for using religion to revolt against the legitimate ruler. Whether he decided on the measure under Russian pressure or of his own accord, Gregory consulted the Russian ambassador before issuing it. At the same time, he wrote to the Tsar listing Catholic grievances and calling on him for better treatment. In an interview with Count St Aulaire, French ambassador to the Holy See, he explained his conduct:

The Pope said... that he was no politician, but had always performed what he felt to be his duty, and took the Bible as the Rule of his actions. 'Thus', he continued, 'during the later revolution I remembered that Scripture enjoins men to be obedient to constituted authorities, and accordingly I endeavoured by means of letters which I addressed to the Catholic Clergy to recall the Emperor's Polish subjects to their allegiance. Now that the revolution has been put down, I call to mind that Princes are bound to be merciful to their subjects, and that my duty as Head of the Church obliges me to make the strongest representations in favour of those of our creed who are treated with over-severity'<sup>7</sup>

Although he repeated this call later in 1832, and again in 1842, nothing came of it, for the Tsar made great use of the encyclical enjoining loyalty, but suppressed all mention of the other letters rebuking his own conduct. It was a bitter time for Polish patriots who, in addition to Russian ill-treatment, felt abandoned and publicly rebuked by the head of their religion. Exiled Poles expressed their disappointment and anger with the Holy See. The poet, Juliusz Slowacki, attacked the papacy, as being allied to the Beast of the Apocalypse, that is the Tsar, attached to temporal possessions and cynically indifferent to the spiritual welfare of a suffering and crucified people. Adam Mickiewicz also attacked Rome as too interested in the temporal interests of the papacy and the clergy. Yet he, too, believed that the Church could be purified. In his famous work, *The Book of the Polish Pilgrims*, he declared

<sup>7</sup> George Seymour to Lord Palmerston, 28 Aug. 1832, Foreign Office 79/65, cited in: J.F. Broderick, *The Holy See and the Irish Movement for the Repeal of the Union with England 1829—1847*, Rome, 1951 p. 7—8. Seymour was Britain's special agent in Rome. Palmerston was British foreign secretary 1830—1841.

that the only civilization worthy of man was a Christian one. By 1842, Gregory had learned a lesson from the Tsar's conduct, and in that year he accused the Russians of persecution, detailing cases supplied by the Austro-Slavs.

Ireland was not indifferent to what happened in Poland in 1830—1831 or later in the 1860s. In the House of Commons, the Irish Catholic leader, Daniel O'Connell one of the leading parliamentary orators, influential also as one of the great Radical leaders, protested at Parliament's inaction, commenting 'that while great sympathy was shown by the House [of Commons] for the king of Holland, none was manifested for the Poles... struggling for their independence, their country and even for their existence. His hope was that the Poles would succeed'<sup>8</sup> He repeated these attacks on Russian oppression outside parliament. In the 1840s, the Irish Catholic Directory, published accounts of Russian oppression. In a different way, Irish and Polish affairs crossed briefly in Roman diplomacy a few years later. On 1 February 1845, Tsar Nicholas's special envoy, Count Struwe arrived in Rome for consultations concerning the marriage of an Austrian prince and a Russian princess. Apparently, the Tsar also intended a Concordat which might be agreed on at this private audience. Annoyed at the way the Tsar had used his letters against the Poles at the time of the revolt, Gregory let Struwe and Butenev, the Russian ambassador, know in no uncertain terms that he would have nothing to do with secret negotiations behind the backs of the people concerned, in this case, the Poles.

Gli [Struwe] fu fatto riflettere alla cattiva impressione che eccita nei Cattolici sparsi per tutto l'Orbe il timore di essere dalla Santa Sede non protetti, e il solo sospetto di segrete trattative e convenzioni tra la Santa Sede i rispetti Governi: al qual proposito si accennò il fatto del grande allarme dei Cattolici Irlandesi ed Inglesi per la sola falsa voce di un Concordato che conchiuso si fosse tra la Santa Sede ed il Gabinetto Britannico<sup>9</sup>

As Metternich was interested in the matter and Gregory sent him an autographed minute, in March 1845 repeating his total opposition to any suggestion of secret negotiations for a concordat with Russia and again cited for the Austrian chancellor the example of the uproar in Ireland when Irish Catholics thought that he was going to sign a concordat with Britain.

Conviene perciò avere in vista qual sinistra impressione sarebbe nei cattolici sparsi per tutto l'Orbe una segreta trattativa di Concordato in cui temerebbero forse abbandonata la loro causa per particolari politici riguardi. E recentissimo il fatto del grande allarme dei Cattolici Inglesi ed Irlandesi per la sola falsa voce di Concordato che conchiuso si fosse o andasse a concludersi tra la Santa Sede et il Gabinetto Britannico<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd series, v. 931—2, Aug. 1831; *ibid.* vi. 1218, 7 Sept. 1831.

<sup>9</sup> Udienza accordata ad istanza del Sig. Conte di Bouteneff e alla di lui presenza al Sig. Struwe 1 Feb. 1845, AA.EE.SS., Carte di Russia e Polonia, vol. VIII, parte I, ffl 13—14, cited in: R. L e f e v r e, *Santa Sede e Russia e i colloqui dello Czar Nicola I nei documenti vaticani (1843—1846)*, „Miscellanea Historiae Pontificiae” 14:1948 p. 159—293.

<sup>10</sup> Minuta autografia di Gregorio XVI sulla possibilità o meno di un concordato con la Russia..., *ibid.* ff. 36, cited in: L e f e v r e, *Santa Sede*, p. 255—257.

What had happened in Ireland to cause this reaction in Rome? The controversy originated in the reform policies of the British prime minister, Sir Robert Peel, for Ireland. Fearing the strength of O'Connell's mass organisation of Catholics, Peel sought to kill the movement by granting concessions to the Catholics, hoping at the same time to detach them from O'Connell. The rumour spread that he was negotiating a concordat with Rome, and influential papers, such as „The Times” discussed the advantages of such an arrangement for Britain with the pope to regulate Irish Catholic affairs, and the French paper *Le Siècle* reported that the pope had abandoned the Irish Catholics for political advantage:

D'après des lettres de Rome, l'Angleterre a enfin obtenu du Pape l'encyclique qu'elle desiroit [...]. Le Ministère anglais [...] a, dit-on, menacé, la cour de Rome d'exercer à la révolte les populations de ses Etats [...] Ainsi, le Pape auroit préféré, l'intérêt temporel à l'intérêt spirituel<sup>11</sup>

Irish nationalists, priests and laity, were furious. 'Religion from Rome, politics from Home', became the cry. The primate's own vicar-general presided over a meeting in Dundalk at which those present solemnly declared their resolve „as loyal subjects and Irishmen, to repudiate and resist any and every attempt of the Pope to interfere with matters which are merely temporal” ‘What’ asked the „Pilot”, a leading Irish Catholic paper, „shall Popes and Bishops reckoning on our awe of their holiness of place, carry on secret negotiations with our enemies affecting our civil liberties and we shall not know nor hear anything about it except by accident?” Whether or not Gregory planned a concordat with Britain but the furore that even the suggestion of it created among Irish Catholics was sufficient to kill any such measure and to make Rome even more careful in dealing with Irish affairs. Monsignor Ludovico Altieri, the nuncio in Vienna, had been approached unofficially by British politicians concerning the desirability of an agreement between Rome and Britain on Irish Catholic matters. Lambruschini, however, warned him against such a move, and he promised to observe a „gelosa riservatezza [...] circa un sì delicato argomento”<sup>12</sup> Lambruschini was now visited by two influential Catholics, Charles Bodenham and Charles Weld, who hoped they might „never live to see the day when the independence of the Irish Catholic Hierarchy would be sacrificed to the manoeuvring intrigues of a Protestant State Policy” Although Lambruschini reassured them, they also went to see the very influential English cardinal, Januarius Acton who was related to them. Acton was the cardinal whom, a year later Gregory placed in charge of negotiations with Count Struve and it is certain that he had the Irish furore very much in mind and took a very tough line with the Russians. Yet, despite these difficulties, Lambruschini and Butenev

<sup>11</sup> „The Times”, 26 Dec. 1844; „Ami de la Religion” 9 Jan. 1845.

<sup>12</sup> Altieri to Lambruschini, 10 Jan. 1844, Archivio della Nunziatura di Vienna, vol. 280 G., ff 182—183, no. 2045, Monsignore Althieri; dispacci scritti alla Segretaria di Stato, 1844 — Luglio 1845, Archivio Segreto Vaticano. The letter is marked 'riservatissimo'

did eventually draw up a Concordat which was signed on 3 August 1847. On the other hand, the proposal of a Concordat with England was never pursued.

The different line Rome took towards Ireland is all the more surprising in that Lambruschini and his friend Metternich looked on events in Ireland with alarm, seeing in O'Connell a radical in the same mould as rebel Polish Catholics, and the clergy as making pure revolutionary calls for liberalism under the guise of religious freedom<sup>13</sup> The British government made numerous requests and demands, going so far as to allege that the clergy promoted sedition and incited to assassination. Yet despite these diplomatic manoeuvres to obtain papal condemnation of O'Connell's movement for limited Irish independence, neither Gregory XVI nor Pius IX made any significant move against Irish nationalists. The most they did was to send a brief from time to time to the bishops requesting that the priests stay out of politics. Even then, the attitude of the Irish Church to these papal requests was striking. While the bishops professed total obedience and gratitude for each brief and recorded it in their minutes, they promptly proceeded to ignore it, alleging that it was based on false information and, furthermore, in no way applicable to the Irish situation. The explanation they gave Rome was to point out that if the Holy See was perceived to oppose Irish national feeling, it would alienate the people from the Church, and that they, the bishops, would refuse to be a party to that. The bishops, while professing utmost loyalty to the Pope, were prepared to defy Holy See in the name of the Irish Catholic nation!<sup>14</sup> Even more amazing is that they succeeded in getting their way.

Some explanation of the softer Roman attitude to Irish national movements may lie in the following reasons. Rome felt it did not understand Ireland well enough. Furthermore, like the Poles, the Irish had a strong Irish lobby in Rome. The Irish Church was dependant on the Congregation of Propaganda Fide which was able to take a less 'political' line than the Secretary for State or the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs. Indeed, the Irish College in Rome, was accused by British agents of having won Propaganda over to its way of thinking. Furthermore, the political situation was different in Ireland and in Poland. Although Irish Catholics suffered discrimination, there were more legitimate methods of protest open to the Irish nationalists in the more liberal United Kingdom than in Tsarist Russia. They could use the press, demonstrate at meetings and, after O'Connell had achieved Catholic Emancipation in 1829, bring their grievances before parliament. The very astute O'Connell pushed these methods to the limit and yet carefully kept his agitation within constitutional bounds. The clergy supported him totally, pleased that the grievances of the people

<sup>13</sup> D'Ohms to Metternich, 1 July 1843, Foreign Office, 7/313. D'Ohms was Austrian chargé d'affaires in Rome.

<sup>14</sup> J. A. Murphy, *Religion and Identity...*, p. 134; O. M. A. C. D. O. N. A. G. H., *States of Mind: a study of Anglo-Irish Conflict 1780—1980*, London 1983, p. 90—103.

were being channeled by O'Connell away from revolutionary violence into successful agitation. The government was dismayed but afraid or unwilling to violate the constitutional rights of the agitators. Instead it decided to seek Rome's help to keep the unruly Irish Church in order. Unlike Russia, however, England had no diplomatic relations with Rome, for any relations of Protestant England with Rome were liable to the charge of treason. Although successive administrations contemplated re-establishing official relations, the government was forced to use unofficial representatives which severely limited the effectiveness of its policy. Protestant prejudice was so strong that it was not until the 20th century that diplomatic relations were restored between the two.

Paradoxically, the English hostility to the Irish Church in the 18th century and refusal to have any dealings with Rome favoured the independence of the Irish Church, so that by the 19th century it enjoyed remarkable freedom. The United Kingdom, during the 18th and 19th century was strongly confessional and anti-Catholic and no-Popery agitations occurred; indeed prime ministers, into the 20th century were strongly anti-Catholic<sup>15</sup> But, although hostile, the state muffed the one opportunity it had in the wake of the 1798 rebellion to claim control. The result was that it was not able to nominate Catholic bishops, pay its clergy or regulate its seminaries. On the other hand, Rome felt distant from Ireland and was cautious pressing measures that could be interpreted as 'political', or even progovernment, on a country which remained so faithful to the pope in spiritual matters. So the Irish Church had the best of two worlds. This remarkable independence meant that the Irish Church approximated, in the eyes of European Liberal Catholics, to the ideal of „a free Church in a free state” On the other hand, its critics saw it as insufficiently accountable. In 1825, the British minister to Florence, Lord Burghersh, reported to Canning, the British Foreign Secretary:

[...] it [the Curia] would be anxious to bring it [the Irish Church] to a more orderly conduct both as regards the British Government and its own authority [...]. They [the Curia] conceive that to have the whole body of the clergy of 5 or 6 millions of people totally separated in interest, and without connection with, or control from the Ruling Power must be calculated to render the people under the spiritual charge of this powerful Body bad subjects<sup>16</sup>

Right through the 19th century the Irish Church combined intense loyalty in matters of doctrine with a remarkable independence in matters political. Although the Church during the 19th century had become more ultra-

<sup>15</sup> Winston Churchill wrote of Balfour, Conservative prime minister 1902—1905, that „his aversion from the Roman Catholic faith was dour and inveterate” His rival, Herbert Asquith, Liberal Prime Minister from 1908—1916 had two life long dislikes — eating rabbit and Catholicism; A. H a s t i n g s, *A History of English Christianity, 1920—1985*, London 1986, p. 131.

<sup>16</sup> John Fane, Lord Burghersh to George Canning, 2 Apr. 1825, PRO, F.O. 79/44, cited in: J. B r o d e r i c k, *The Holy See and the Repeal Movement 1829—1847...*, p. 68.

montane, the supra-national character of the Catholic Church, which this tendency underlined, proved no real difficulty in Ireland.

From the middle of the 19th century, the wretched plight of the working classes emerged as a crucial problem and Catholics in Belgium, France, Germany, Austria and finally Rome, in the person of Leo XIII, made an attempt to address the problem. His encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* marks an important stage in social Catholicism. It is not certain that the Church in Ireland or in Poland managed to come to grips with the problem. In Ireland, most priests, taking their line from the condemnation of socialism in *Rerum Novarum*, condemned what they saw as atheistic socialism, or a revolutionary plot. Others such as Peter Coffey preached a Christian socialism. A crisis occurred during the great strike of 1913. Many clergy opposed the sending of the under-fed children of the Irish strikers to England lest they be contaminated by socialist ideas. The socialist leaders, James Larkin and James Connolly, rejected Christian socialism, fearing that the emerging socialist party would be dominated by the clergy whose influence at that time was at its height. They, however, remained loyal Catholics and the Labour Party which emerged was almost totally Catholic in its leadership and members. In Poland the question developed differently. Sections of the intelligensia and of the working class, attempted to build Polish identity on language, territory and history, and in that way to facilitate the inclusion of other believers and non-believers into the national identity. It threatened the historic bond between being Catholic and being Polish.

#### BETWEEN THE WARS — CATHOLIC CONSTITUTIONS AND MINORITIES?

After the restoration of the republic after World War 1, the tendency towards weakening the link between Faith and Fatherland increased in Poland but encountered tenacious resistance from those who believed such efforts constituted an undesirable break with tradition. Poland, now one of the biggest countries in Europe, contained substantial Ukrainian, German, and Jewish minorities and fully one third were neither Polish nor Catholic. The Second Republic recognised this diversity, though it accorded a special place for the Catholic Church in its constitution of 1921 which stated: „The Roman Catholic faith, being the religion of the vast majority of the nation, has a leading position in the State among denominations with equal rights” A difficulty during this period, especially after Marshal Pilsudski took control in 1926, was how the Republic would treat its religious and ethnic minorities. Pilsudski was respectful of both German and Jewish minorities, although the problem with Lithuanians, Ukrainians and Bielorussians was complicated by his vision of the national unity. After his death in 1935, his successors, the strongly nationalist and patriotic ‘colonels’, were less accommodating of minorities. The problem, as for all newly established or re-established states was how to solve the dilemma of homogeneity and heterogeneity: one homogeneous political unit — the State — included many diffe-

rent cultural or religious groups. Minorities appeared to detract from the new state's sovereignty and its prior claims of universal allegiance.

The situation in Ireland after World War I, shows parallels with and differences from the Polish one. In 1922, came the foundation of the Irish Free State (later Eire or the Republic of Ireland). Although the two political parties who have formed all Irish governments from then on studiously avoided discrimination, and the state could not be described as sectarian, nevertheless the ethos of the new Irish state was distinctly coloured by the religious outlook of Catholics. A major reason for this was that the most Protestant part of Ireland refused to enter the new state, setting up instead a state composed of six north-eastern counties, called Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland, although the Catholics formed more than 36 per cent of its population, was claimed by its leaders to be 'a Protestant state for a Protestant people' The rest of the country formed the Irish Free State and Catholics constituted 93 per cent of the population. In this the problem differed from Poland where the minorities, ethnic and religious, were many and substantial. With such a demographical preponderance of Catholics in the new Ireland and with fervently practising population, the identity Catholic/Irish was almost inevitable. The new state's constitution enacted in 1937, begins with an explicit invocation of the Holy Trinity and thanked God who had sustained its people (which meant no other than the Catholic people) through centuries of struggle. One of its articles stated: 'The State recognizes the special position of the Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church as the guardian of the Faith professed by the great majority of the citizens' and then goes on to recognize the Protestant Churches, the Jews and other denominations existing in Ireland. If Irish Catholic nationalism produced the constitution, it was not a confessional constitution, for despite pressure from some Catholic bishop it avoided explicit identification with Catholicism<sup>17</sup> Eamonn De Valera, the leading statesman of the period, in introducing the Constitution claimed on the one hand that it would give a lead to the world 'as a Catholic nation' and, at the same time, provide a basis for unification with the Northern Irish state, though this latter belief was wishful thinking. If the ethos was Catholic, the treatment of minorities, Protestant and Jews, was scrupulously correct. Yet an identification between Irish and Catholic remained remarkably strong in the new Irish state up to the beginning of the Troubles in Northern Ireland in 1969. As late as the 1950s prime minister John Costello and the leader of the Labour party, Brendan Corish, proclaimed the crucial importance of their Catholic faith in their life and work.

A new and crucial period opened for both countries after World War 2, and for Catholics after Vatican 2. The war had brought appalling to Poland and the loss of 6 million of its people, including most of its Jewish popula-

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. D. Keogh, *Catholicism and the Formation of the modern Irish Society*, in Princess Grace Library, ed. *Irishness...*, p. 152—177; Murphy, *ibid.* p. 132—151.

tion. The Nazi regime targetted the intelligensia and over 3,000 priests and religious died during the persecution. After the war, the problem of ethnic and religious minorities did not arise in the same manner as before because the new state, considerably smaller, comprised only a tiny minority of non-ethnic Poles (98 per cent Polish, 1 per cent Ukrainian). The communist regime, with its subservience to Moscow, sought to diminish the Church's influence, and Cardinal Wyszyński was imprisoned from 1952 to 1955. Part of the new intelligensia were Moscow-trained communists and others had become anti-clerical or atheistic. From 1956 on, they strongly promoted the laicisation of Poland, and the exclusion of the Church from public life. Cardinal Wyszyński was severely criticised for allegedly mixing religion with politics, particularly when he tried to promote reconciliation with Germany. Yet, the standing of the Church, which had endured so much during the war, was high, and the people remained solidly attached to it. Most striking of all was the great popular devotion of the people.

#### CATHOLIC CHURCH AND HUMAN RIGHTS

New developments came in 1968. The demand for civil rights spread around the world. In Ireland the first civil rights march took place, with demonstrators in Northern Ireland demanding equal rights for Catholics in voting, housing and employment. That same year in Poland the communist state began to repress the intellectuals. Many of the intellectuals not well-disposed towards the Church found to their surprise it was the Church that intervened strongly to defend them against the might of the all-powerful state. In 1976, the Church again, this time aided by the intelligentsia, defended the rights of students from state repression. These significant developments, surprising to many, forced critics to reflect on the changed role of the Church. In the past, it had hesitated between doctrinal orthodoxy or support for the constituted authority on the one hand, and human rights on the other. This was a highly significant development which held much hope for the future. Prior to World War 2, the Catholic Church in general, as in Poland, tended, with some splendid exceptions, to defend its own faithful and their rights. By the 1970s, however, it was in the forefront of the fight for human rights in many parts of the world. Much of this progress is traceable to the international development of the Church and to the Vatican Council.

By the Vatican Council it had given an unequivocal commitment to the rights of all minorities. In 1790, Pius VI condemned the French Revolution's 'Declaration of the Rights of Man'. In 1948, Angelo Roncalli, then nuncio in Paris, played a most significant part in the formulation of this new Declaration — the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The evolution had been long. The Christian Churches' own experience as a persecuted group in totalitarian states contributed much to this evolution. It was also the due to



the efforts of dedicated Churchmen attempting to return to evangelical roots. It had been partly signalled by the Catholic Liberals of the 19th century — Lamennais, the great friend of Mickiewicz, O'Connell and Charles Montalembert. John XXIII thrust it to the very front of Catholic thinking with his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* and by the Vatican Council, which he inspired. The result was an unequivocal statement on religious freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, which furthermore established the philosophical and religious underpinning for human rights. The Church added its powerful support to the Helsinki accord of European nations in 1975. Paul VI and John Paul II have put forward a code of conduct towards minorities. It is not surprising, then, that in the crises of 1968 and 1976 the Polish Church defended human rights and demanded that dialogue replace repression. During the years which centred on the Gdansk strike and Solidarity, the only free trade-union in the Soviet bloc right up to the dissolution of the USSR, the Catholic Church again proved itself the key rallying point. Symbolically, the photograph that flashed around the world of the striker locking the gate of the Lenin shipyards in Gdansk showed attached to the gate a picture of the Black Madonna of Jasna Góra. As in 1655, when the Swedish flood almost submerged the country, now again, in the face of equal catastrophe, Poles were appealing to the Virgin Mary as the protector of their land.

The murder of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko by the authorities shocked the nation and many in the free world, and his funeral, on 3 November 1984, was a demonstration of the people's commitment to Solidarity. It rekindled the heroic memory of martyrdom that in the past had linked Catholicism and Polishness. The old identity of Polish and Catholic recovered much of its appeal. When the archbishop of Cracow, Karol Wojtyła, became the first non-Italian Pope since 1522, his visits to Poland took on a new significance. Many saw his visit and the enthusiastic reaction of the Polish people as a type plebiscite on who rules in Poland. John Paul maintained his powerful support on behalf of Solidarity during this period and many believe that he played a major role in overturning the Communist regime not merely in Poland, but in the whole East bloc.

In his international statements, John Paul developed the concept of freedom for nationalities. In 1989, he emphasised that respect for the rights of minorities was one of the most delicate questions of our time, and laid down two firm principles — twin pillars on which Europe can build. The first is the inalienable dignity of every person. The second is the unity of the whole human race, a unity that has its origin in God the creator. Furthermore, it is not only the dignity of the individual that must be respected. As John Paul II insisted, people find their true identity in relationship with other persons or groups, and this collective identity must be equally respected. This respect for collective identity bestows religious legitimacy on nationalities. That respect must extend to all nationalities, and not least to minorities. On the basis of these religious principles a new Europe can provide the comprehensive fra-

mework where all individual identities are respected and into which they are integrated for the common good. Not narrow nationalism, but a healthy patriotism respectful of others, as John Paul appealed for during his visit to Zagreb in September 1994, is the key.

The same fateful year of 1968 was a new point of departure for Ireland, too, and for Irish Catholic identity. In June that year began the troubles in Northern Ireland, when Austin Currie, a Catholic nationalist member of the British parliament, squatted in house in Northern Ireland which, in keeping with the normal discrimination against Catholics, the bigoted local council refused to a needy Catholic family, but gave instead to an unmarried Protestant girl. When, however, the violence there took on the features of a religious war between Catholics and Protestants, Catholics in the Republic began to look for ways of healing the softening religious differences.

Already, the openness of spirit of Vatican 2 meant that, increasingly, Irish people began to question the desirability of such a close link between the state and the Catholic Church in an ecumenical age. One gesture proposed was to drop the article in the constitution on the special place of the Catholic Church in the state. The Cardinal Primate, William Conway, publicly saying he would not 'shed a tear' if it were repealed, indicated his approval. It was repealed by a referendum in 1972.

There was another and most important influence that was imperceptibly workings its way through Catholic consciousness, and had effected the Church's attitude in both Poland and Ireland. This was Vatican 2's powerful statement on human freedom arrived at after intense and open discussion. American Catholics like the Jesuit, John Courtney Murray, had propagated the American experience of a free Church in a free State felt, and at the Council Cardinal Franz König, Bishop Émile de Smedt, Cardinal Joseph Beran, the exiled archbishop of Prague, pressed successfully for it. This finally moved the Catholic Church away from a pre-Conciliar insistence that error has no rights, to a total commitment to the dignity and rights of the individual.

With the status of nation-state firmly achieved, the need for legitimation was no longer necessary. A new Polish and a new Irish society are emerging and role of the Church is changing. New challenges had to be faced and the Church had to seek a new role. The communist interlude in Poland postponed the necessity of finding this new role in Poland. Vatican II, the Northern Ireland troubles and western-style modernisation forced the quest earlier on Ireland. What that role is not yet clear. New groups of intelligensia and politicians, jealous of their independence, have taken over much of the old role that once fell to the Catholic Church. Fresh agenda — economic, social, cultural, European, — are being tested, discarded and reshaped. The Irish bishops specifically rejected the concept of a confessional state stating at the very important New Ireland Forum, attended by the leaders of all the political parties of the Republic and many of the parties in Northern Ireland, that

„we do not seek a Catholic State for a Catholic people”<sup>18</sup> Understandable tensions concerning the relationship between Church and State, still remain. Many of these are healthy in a democracy, many are an impatient reaction to the earlier dominant role the Church. Perplexing uncertainties as to the future national identity exist too. In the new situation in Poland, the future is less clear. The Christian past in both countries has had such an integral part of the culture and played such a formative part in national identity, that to ignore or marginalise it would risk unravelling the national consciousness. In Poland and Ireland Catholicism still retains an influence, no longer as a dominant institution, but with a more modest yet more Christian role of moral guidance as the both countries seek to clarify their identity and redefine their values in the new world of the 21st century<sup>19</sup>

#### RELIGIA I TOŻSAMOŚĆ NARODOWA 'KATOLICKA POLSKA' I 'KATOLICKA IRLANDIA' — PODOBIENSTWA I KONTRASTY

##### Streszczenie

Elementy tożsamości narodowej, rasy, języka, kraju, geografii i ich znaczenie zmieniają się pod wpływem nowych wyzwań jak zmienia się samopostrzeganie grupy. W prawie wszystkich krajach religia odgrywała ważną rolę, a w niektórych — decydującą. W Europie okres nowożytny był czysto okresem konstytutywnym dla narodu, a rola religii w usankcjonowaniu państwa była szczególnie istotna. Ponieważ samoświadomość grupy rodzi się przez postrzeganie różnic pomiędzy nią a inną grupą, tożsamość tejże grupy określana jest wobec innej tożsamości. Grupy narodowe nie ufały członkom wyznającym inną religię, których praktyk religijnych nie rozumiały. Chrześcijanie żyjący w średniowieczu uświadomili sobie swoją specyficzną tożsamość religijną przez kontakty ze światem muzułmańskim. Pamięć zbiorowa czy mitologia chwały lub prześladowania religijnego rozwijały narodową świadomość. Powstała martylogia, szerzona przez traktaty religijne, pieśni, folklor, procesje, obrzędy ludowe i ceremonie pogrzebowe.

Niniejsze studium rozważa podobieństwa i różnice między tożsamością polską i irlandzką w odniesieniu do religii katolickiej. Dla obydwu krajów wiek XVII i później wiek XIX miały ogromne znaczenie. Rola Rzymu, centrum katolicyzmu, wyznaczała podobieństwa w podejściu Rosjan i Brytyjczyków do polskich i irlandzkich katolików. Rola katolicyzmu zmienia się w tych krajach, lecz nadal zachowuje wielkie znaczenie.

<sup>18</sup> Irish Episcopal Conference Delegation, 1984, *Report of Proceedings: New Ireland Forum*, Dublin 1984.

<sup>19</sup> I am grateful to Dr. J. Tomak for his advice and help.