

## **European Integration and Catholicism in Germany (1945-1990)**

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For a long time European integration was to be described above all as a political and economic success story. In it, the way of Europe appears predominantly as a dialectical process of crises and convergence which, in total, led to an ever stronger unity. For some time there has been a growing new interest in the cultural context of this process. The focus is especially directed at what importance religion deserves in the “cultural self-reflection” and European formation of identity.<sup>1</sup> There is not only the question about the contribution made by religious communities in Europe in their own arena to this success story. At the same time, they are in the limelight as protagonists seeking to bring into congruence different experiences of European integration with role models and the narrative of Europe. The awareness of such cultural formations of meaning has increased again recently since the current economic and political crises of Europe have appeared to threaten or even shatter the seemingly obvious ideas of Europe – i.e. discrepancies between societal-political experiences and identity formation of the Europe narrative become visible.<sup>2</sup> Such an interest is not at all coincidental or even new. In 1979, Munich Archbishop Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger appropriately stated that the identity of Europe develops further when confronted by alternative models.<sup>3</sup>

There is a good reason why the history of the Christian Democrats after 1945 in Europe is woven into the success story of the European process of integration attributing a special political weight to Catholicism. The German Federal Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, the Foreign Minister of France, Robert Schuman, and of Italy, Alcide de Gasperi – all of them Catholics – are regarded as the “Founding Fathers of Europe”. Not wrongly so, critics point out that short-circuits between a policy led by interests of European integration and Catholic denomination of the protagonists involved cannot be proven as selective; a Christian-Democratic variant is merely added to an identity forming narrative of Europe already in existence.

What does the contribution of Catholicism in Germany to the integration of Europe consist of if the answer does not lie alone in the historical showing up of the path taken by the “Adenauer-CDU”? The following explications try to broaden the perspective: additionally to the experience of German Catholicism as bearer of an understanding of nationhood always integrated in Europe, its hitherto underexposed role of religiously borne reconciliation in the “international” political run-up field is given focus. These experiences are not to be kept apart from the constant endeavour to join Christendom and Europe in cultural role models of a Christian Europe.

After 1945, the German Catholic Congresses with their European positioning exerted an influence within the Catholic domain but also beyond in the realm of political culture and society. The traditionally self-confident German lay- Catholicism seldom

acted completely without the German Episcopate and – in the beginning even more important- the Pope, respectively the Holy See, as a diplomatic representation of its diplomatic interests on the international floor. Taking this Catholic array in view as a whole, it becomes apparent how much effect and importance of its Europe-political activities and identity forming narratives depended decisively on the changes which its cultural memory and its religious heritage as part of the dynamically changing conditions in democracy and society has brought about.

Thereby something almost obvious is stated: German Catholicism has made a *part*-contribution to European integration. If the interdependence to the Protestant ecumenicalism could only be touched upon nothing is said about their independent importance for the historical discourse on Europe. On this premise, the following shows a sketch of the initial situation after 1945 as it existed for Europe marked by the “Iron Curtain” as a denominational place for Christendom (1.). Then the religious-motivated contribution will be traced that Catholics contributed on the crest of enthusiasm for Europe to German-Franco reconciliation in post-war times. The later spreading, above all Catholic, perception of the Christian Democrats Adenauer, Schuman and De Gasperi as “Founding Fathers” of a United Europe came about, not at least, against the background of this change in the relationship with France (2.). Then the question will be posed on how the change of paradigms of the Catholic Church resolved in the Second Vatican Council has had an effect on its contribution to the debates about the identity of Europe of the long 1960s (3.). Finally, the importance of German Catholicism to the reconciliation with Poland as part of Pope John Paul’s II religious-political, influential drive to open Europe to the “East” will be dealt with (4.). All in all, it will become apparent how much the specific contribution of Catholicism to European integration lay in a religious policy of symbols, historically often underestimated, but politically highly effective, to be understood rightly and today to be decoded more than ever.

## **1. Western Europe, Place of a Dominant Catholic Denomination**

“Europe becomes Christian or it will cease to exist”.<sup>4</sup> This statement by the Catholic religious philosopher Romano Guardini in the year 1946 perfectly grasps the meaning which generally was attributed to Christian religion for the present and future of Europe. Despite or – as many believed – just because of two excessively violent world wars, Christendom was the dominant religion throughout Europe at the beginning of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Not without pride did Herbert Aufhofer claim the quantitative lead of Catholics in the “State Lexicon” published in 1959<sup>5</sup>: of 550 million Europeans about 212 million (38.5%) are Catholics, 120 million Protestants (22%) and the rest breaks up into a ratio without reliable estimates of Orthodox, those without denominational affiliation as well as Muslims, the Jewish and other minorities. Catholicism centres on Southern, Western and Eastern Europe (which does not only mean Catholic Poland but also considerable percentages of Catholic populations among Slovaks, Croatians, Hungarians and Lithuanians) whereas Northern and Central Europe (including Germany) were predominantly

Protestant; the Orthodox churches are practically confined to the Balkans and the European part of the Soviet Union. In terms of religion and politics, state and church are separate according to their constitutions; only in Italy and Spain, the Evangelical – Lutheran churches of Scandinavia as well as the Orthodox church of Greece does a state church exist, additionally so the Anglican Church of Great Britain. A serious impact on the perception of Europe was the fact that after 1945 a large part of Central Europe and Eastern Europe almost completely vanished behind the “Iron Curtain”. Since then, Europe was confined to its Western, Southern and Northern states. Catholic Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany turned Catholic becoming “outposts” on the ideological interface of two systems during the “Cold War”. In the 1950s, Praemonstratensian friar and founder of the Catholic work “Church in Need”, Werenfried van Straaten, proclaimed the establishment of so-called God’s fortresses along the German-German border.<sup>6</sup> The competition of the ideological systems was especially charged with religion at its beginning: Christian Europe was divided between religious freedom on the Western side and its oppression on the Eastern part. Nowhere else did this situation become more visible than in Berlin where the building of the Wall and barbed wire along the East-Berlin sector border in August 1961 violently cut across the parish St. Michael.<sup>7</sup> In ecclesiastical statistics, Catholics, above all, appeared as the winners of Europe’s division.. However, Aufhofer’s impressive numbers concealed the religious changes that went hand in hand with the flight and expulsion from the Eastern European states – the Baltic states, Poland, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. In Poland sprang into existence for the first time an ethnically and religious almost homogenous nation state by the victorious powers’ sanctioning a shift of the state border to the West. There was a different development in Germany. The formerly predominantly Protestant German Empire became, as a Federal Republic, almost impartial in terms of denomination which politically manifested itself in the foundation of the inter-denominational CDU as bearer of the future. Even in everyday life of the two Christian Churches, the old denominational confines could be felt: with their “invisible refugee’s belongings”<sup>8</sup> of religious and cultural experiences before the flight, the displaced refugees directly hit upon the folksy religiosity of the indigenous inhabitants. Below the surface of the conservative Adenauer era, the young Federal Republic saw the build-up of pressure on the traditional, denominational boundaries of confined social milieus. At the beginning of the 1960s, a sustainable drawback of the Christian and especially of Catholic cult practice could be observed in all Western European states.<sup>9</sup> The French historian Christian Rene Remond has named this deep-going change of Ecclesiastical religious practice and the extinction of its symbols as an act of “de- sanctifying time”, the German historian Thomas Großbölting talks of a “lost heaven”.<sup>10</sup>

Church contemporaries have ascribed as a cause to this process (still going on today) the impact of industrialisation, modern urbanisation, and the rapidly increasing affluence after the war. The critique by church leaders of “practical materialism” and the on-going secularisation of the Christian faith unwinds as a red thread through

unnumbered statements made in those years. In this context, church representatives unwittingly agreed with the agnostic respectively atheist critics of religion but who, from the same observations, drew opposing conclusions about the inevitable end of Christendom and religion in modern times.<sup>11</sup> The Catholic discussions about the future of a Christian Europe mirror the experience of secularisation in two ways: a crises-ridden threat by the Western practical but also the Eastern theoretical materialism.

## **2. After 1945: Reconciliation with the French Arch Enemy**

After the new beginning of Europe's history after the Second World War stood experiences of the break-down of civilization. Within three generations, Europe had been devastated by two world wars – each with catastrophic impacts: the destruction of states, the existence of unstable nationalistic societies, the reckless execution of ethnic “cleansing”, the oppression and persecution of Christians, especially the annihilation of European Jewish life glossed over by a racist ideology. These experiences explain society's approval seen by the movements for a United Europe, above all in the second half of the 1940s. At first, the “Federalists” set up the Europe-political agenda and its implementation for a European Federal State with a supra-national government. They took up again impulses emanating from pan-European ideas of the 1920s which were especially connected to the names of the Austrian author Richard Nikolaus Graf Coudenhove-Kalergi and the French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand.<sup>12</sup>

In the Catholic Church, after the First World War, Pope Pius XI, true to his motto “Pax Christi in regno Christi”, put forth his idea of a peaceful Europe on the agenda of Catholics by summoning them for a closed “Catholic Action” aimed at restoring the kingdom of Christ. In 1925, the Pope gave it special religious-symbolic emphasis by instituting the Feast of Christ King. In the environment of this programme of spiritual-moral ideas and mobilization, very different initiatives and organisations had evolved. The “Christ King Society”, founded by the Freiburg diocese priest Max Josef Metzger in 1919 and renamed in 1927, ranks with its predecessors among the nuclei of the Catholic peace movement and the ecumenical movement *Una Sancta* in Germany. Gathered around the journal “Evening Paper”, Catholic intellectuals with their homes especially in the Rhineland in the 1920s walked the path of German-Franco understanding. The Bonn Romanist Hermann Platz, together with others, moved into the foreground Christendom as a culture and community spawning force of Europe and draws a clear dividing line between the “occidental people” and nationalists, national socialists, adherents of the League of Nations and Pan-Europeans.<sup>13</sup>

After 1945, discussions and clear voices for example the one of Romano Guardini about common elements in Europe used this as a starting point.<sup>14</sup> The Catholic voice in the concert of ideas of Europe was represented before all by Pope Pius XII. Within the new bi-polar world of the western and eastern superpowers he regarded Europe “as bearer of the Church's message of civilization.”<sup>15</sup> Not at all did the Pope think of

restoring *societas christiana* after the model of the Middle Ages. He was concerned with actualising the core thought it was based on. He was convinced that Europe, in turning away from the secular, in its most recent outgrowths of a totalitarian past and present, in the future would only find peaceful unity if it turned back its mind to the Christian tradition guaranteeing the synthesis of religion, morality and civilization.<sup>16</sup> The Ecclesiastical honouring of Saint Benedict on the occasion of the 1400<sup>th</sup> day of his death in 1947 – founder of Christian monkhood on the threshold of the Roman-Christian Late Antiquity era to Latin Middle Ages – rendered this decisive Catholic argumentative understanding of Europe, cherished by the Pope, a sustainable religious as well as historical symbolic power<sup>17</sup>; later, in 1964, Pope Paul VI was to elevate the saint as guardian patron of Europe.<sup>18</sup>

In this intellectual-cultural environment of wishing for integration, first noteworthy initiatives thrived in German post-war Catholicism for the reconciliation with the French neighbour and imagined German “arch enemy”.<sup>19</sup> Even before Christian Democratic Europe activists from France, Great Britain, Switzerland and Germany took first steps by regular “Geneva Meetings” of the “Nouvelles Equipes Internationales” since March 1947, religious- spiritual paths of reconciliation had already been opened: only weeks after the liberation of France in March 1945, Bishop Pierre-Marie Theas and 39 other French fellow- brothers made an appeal for a “crusade of reconciliation between Germany and France”. The appeal caused a lively echo on both sides of the Rhine by the foundation of “Pax Christi” groups.<sup>20</sup>

Throngs of believers were moved by trans-national pilgrimages accompanied by big crosses of peace. Indeed, it was amazing that “our fellow citizens in front of the cross from Aachen have forgotten what havoc a few years before a distorted cross (swastika) had wrought upon them.” as recorded by a Belgian priest. In the manner of new praying, the participants without saying followed the old ritual code of a religious act of repentance: praying pilgrims as an expression of remorse and stepping in for atonement for the injustice done to the French by the Germans. This formed the condition for the great meetings of reconciliation in 1947 and 1948 at the sites of pilgrimage, Lourdes on the French side, and Kvelaer on the German side; in 1949, a German-Franco bishops’ delegation met at Bühl in Baden where Pax Christi had erected a peace cross in 1952. Finally, French and German Catholics built a Church of Peace in the shade of the mighty medieval Emperor’s Cathedral in Speyer in 1953/54, dedicated to the great Cistercian abbot, Christian mystic and western preacher for the Crusades, Bernhard of Clairvaux, who died in 1153.<sup>21</sup>

Unhampered by an environment of Catholic activities and respective symbolism, to be found especially in the Franco-German border region, the first step to the integration of Europe was not the work of the Catholic “black International” as a British diplomat remarked with concern.<sup>22</sup> By the “European Community for Coal and Steel” (EKGS-Montan-Union) the leading representatives of the three biggest states of Western Europe in 1951 had established a trans-national association of economic

interests. Its success and importance for the European integration was not certain at the beginning. The fact that the German Federal Chancellor Adenauer, the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman and his Italian Colleague in Office, Alcide de Gasperi shared Christian Democratic convictions and common roots in the Catholic faith promoted this political as well as economic epoch-making first step. The International Treaty of the Foundation of a European Economic Community (EWG), concluded in Rome in 1957, integrated three more countries, the Be-Ne-Lux states; it made the first step irreversible and put European integration on a secure foundation.

The Ecclesiastical overtones that Pope Pius XII and the German bishops struck up in numerous statements and Pastoral Epistles with their emphasis on the occidental-Christian community of values and their strict renunciation to totalitarian Communism did not arouse dissent nor contradiction on the political side – quite to the contrary.<sup>23</sup> From here it was only a close step to a view of Europe with a Catholic touch: “Europe must be Christian or it will not exist” claimed Augsburg Bishop Stimpfle in 1973. “Schuman, De Gasperi and Adenauer were aware of this. They understood the unity of the European continent not only as a political and economic necessity but as a demand of a Christian past and future.”<sup>24</sup>

### **3. In the Long Years of the 1960s: Freedom of Religion, Human Rights and Democracy**

At the beginning of the 1960s, a sobering effect spread in German Catholicism. The post-war years were drawing to a close and saw important steps to political and economic unification. But the answer, which in the post-war generation had been found, among other things, on a religiously motivated path of reconciliation with France, apparently had lost its powers of persuasiveness. An internal report on the state of affairs of the Central Committee of German Catholics recorded that “opposite thriving cooperation on the political field, an awareness of belongingness within European Catholicism had hardly evolved, above all, on the level of lay persons.”<sup>25</sup> The question about the ideal-intellectual foundations, the Christian “soul” of Europe arises vehemently anew. And differently from 1945, the search in German Catholicism for modern and future answers became part of a basic change of paradigms in the Catholic Church.

Recognition of religious freedom by the Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council was appropriately called a “Copernican Revolution” by the constitutional lawyer and Catholic Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde.<sup>26</sup> A new orientation of the Catholic view of the world marks the Council’s declaration “Dignitatis humanae” (“Human Dignity”). Recognition of the individual’s religious freedom as part of personal human dignity turned upside down an indisputable tradition of church teaching at the beginning of the 1960s: religious truth and unconditional defence of its liberty were not argued as unerring truths by the church as a teacher with authority but rather from the personal freedom of the individual. This had far-reaching consequences because it brought with it a new calibration of the relationship between Church and

societal freedom, Church and freedom of conscience, eventually of Church and State. In its optimistic positioning, addressed to all people, which the Council undertook in its pastoral Constitution “Gaudium et spes” (“Joy and Hope”) for contemporary “Modern Times”, there is no want of a positive appreciation of the democratic order of state and society (GS 75).<sup>27</sup>

Condemnation of modern liberties, as pronounced by Pope Pius IX in his syllabus errorum a hundred years before, in 1864, had become history, but, in the future, the Church was tasked with taking steps against any kind of violation of human rights in general and religious freedom in particular. In the 1960s of de-colonisation, this led to the consequence that any coercive mission contradicting a free acceptance of the faith to be refuted as un-Christian. Pope Paul VI opened the global perspective in which he ascribed to a united Europe the role of a promoter of international justice and world peace: “The rich cultural, moral and religious heritage of Europe, characterised by Christian values, in this way will start shining in a new brilliance before the eyes of the whole world.”<sup>28</sup>

Ever since, the Apostolic See has carefully sought to retain its independence and neutrality from the political powers. In the same fashion, the Catholic cautiously began to accompany the European institutional process of integration during the lifetime of Pope Pius XII. Initially, the initiative for institutionalisation started with the internationally operating communities of Catholic Orders. Responding to an invitation of the Straßburg Bishop, the Jesuits were the first in 1956 to open a “Catholic Secretariat for European Questions” (“Office catholique pour les Problemes europeens”-OCIPE) to continuously inform about the work of the European Council. In 1963, it obtained official status, when, close to the Brussels Community-Institutions, a second office for information was set up – signal of a more active Vatican engagement in the crises-ridden European process of unification of those years. Almost at the same time and as a direct consequence of the Council, Europe’s bishops began to organise a steady exchange of common current questions concerning pastoral care.

Accrediting an Apostolic nuncio to the European Community in Brussels in 1970 and, a year later, foundation of a Council of the European Bishops’ Conference (Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae – CCEE) – reaching beyond the “Iron Curtain”- the Catholic Church was newly established, politically and pastorally, on a European level a few years after the Second Vatican Council. In 1980, in Brussels, a new office-representation of the bishops from countries of the European Community (Commissio Episcopatum Communitatis Europensis – ComECE) was added in order to be able to react to the dynamics of the European process of unification in an appropriate manner.<sup>29</sup> In view of this, Catholic laity obviously lacks comparable institutional platforms and functioning networks. The call from the Rhineland-Palatinate Minister of Culture and engaged Catholic, Hanna-Renate Laurien, for a “Central Committee of European Catholics”, was lost unheard of.<sup>30</sup>

The European “Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe” (KSZE), which was concluded in 1975 by signing a final resolution in Finnish Helsinki after two years of negotiations, marked the foreign-policy change of paradigms of the “Cold War” of the post-war era for a *détente* between East and West in the 1970s. However, the political effect did not stem from the clauses of non-involvement agreed upon, which were “only nice packing for international agreements already in existence”, but rather from the “utopian paragraphs following (these clauses).”<sup>31</sup> It was not at least the merit of the joint Evangelical Conference of German Churches (KEK) and an influential diplomacy of the Vatican acting on the European stage that obligated the signing states to heed “human rights and basic freedoms including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or conviction for all, irrespective of differences of race, gender, language or religion”.<sup>32</sup>

In the 1970s and 80s, one could not see that, in the long run, the Christian Churches would contribute to the undermining of the ideological foundations of the Socialist states of the Eastern Bloc. A different challenge governed the agenda: since 1957, the extension of the European Community to the North by Great Britain, Ireland and Denmark (1973) and to the South by Greece (1981), Spain and Portugal (1986) more and more matched the “classical” ideas of Europe; however, the search for a new, adequate European role model for a long-faded “Christian West” was felt as more and more difficult. Euro-sclerosis, lamented by many at the beginning of the 1980s, did not only have economic causes. A few weeks before the first elections of the European Parliament in 1979, 52-year-old Munich Archbishop Joseph Ratzinger (and later Pope Benedict XVI) attempted to take up the political, societal and church developments in Europe that had sprung up after the death of Pius XII in 1958 to further develop them into a Christian role model of the future for a democratic Europe.

There was a clear drawing of lines: the archaic- non-history fusion of tribal law and religion to be found in Islam as well as in Marxism as a secular non-religious world view orientated toward the perverted revolutionary value of overthrowing the government would contradict any self-image of Europe. Only the crises-ridden appearance of a secularized society dominated by an “unlimited rational autonomy” and pluralism of values and privatised belief in God has made possible such “counter- models to Europe”. Opposed to this, Europe’s identity is grounded in the antique link to democracy and validity of good law (*Eunomie*), in the Jewish faith with Christendom conveying Greek spirit, in the idea of Europe as an overreaching *res publica Christiana* of faith and law, with the freedom of faith and conscience and the validity of the general human rights emanating from them. Therefore, for the Munich Archbishop, the future of Europe consisted of democracy obligated to legal, religious and virtues values guaranteeing the freedom of conscience and human rights instead of a “Nation” and “World Revolution” with an understanding of the responsibility for the common welfare as a global task and service for an order of peace and shared participation of the goods of the world.<sup>33</sup>

In appreciating a democracy bound by values as a foundation of future European integration, the Munich Archbishop agreed with the Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans. Effects from the Council were fairly recognisable when the staunch Catholic European politician of the second generation, at a Catholic Congress rally in Freiburg in 1978, formulated the pillars of a Christian Europe: Europe will be democratic or non-existent. No people's democracy, but one in which (...), by name, everything is offered to religions to freely unfold. (...) Europe is not to become a continent of hatred, neither between nations nor classes, but one of understanding and cooperation. (...) Countries, where, for whatever reason, freedom or certain freedoms are oppressed, will not hinder their populations from looking to Europe as a desirable goal."<sup>34</sup>

#### **4. In the Short 1980s: Avant-garde of German – Polish Reconciliation and Pioneers of a New Europe**

From the beginning, rejection of National Socialism was part of the Catholic "Europe" canon. But the rapprochement with the "French Arch Enemy" after 1945 already showed that Catholicism and the Church could not escape the long and dark shadow of history's two world wars: in a Europe, where in 1919/20 and 1945 ethnic-national thinking reigned the ideas of state order, national and church matters could not be kept apart in any country. Thus had proclaimed in 1962 the Freiburg Catholics' Congress under the auspices of Herbert Czaja – a politically very active representative of German displaced persons and determined attorney of the right to homeland within the framework of European unification, coming from Silesia – "the existence and unfolding of all peoples and ethnic groups as anchored in natural law".<sup>35</sup> Already a few years later, this declaration met harsh criticism at the Catholics' Congress in 1968 in Essen: in the sense of a new European order of peace, the traditional positions of the church supported German East foreign policy also had to be put to the test.<sup>36</sup> In divided Germany, the ideological and politically controversial question about the recognition of the German-Polish Oder-Neiße-border had a great influence on the ranks of German Catholicism related to the "Adenauer-CDU".

In his political memoirs of the European policy of détente led by "Change through Rapprochement", Willy Brandt pointed out the dialogue with the Churches which was "well ahead" of politicians.<sup>37</sup> This judgment by the Social Democrat Federal Chancellor did not only apply to his party friend Egon Bahr with whom the latter, in 1963 at the Evangelical Academy in Tutzingen, kicked off a heated public controversy about the German East Policy. In spring 1964, a small group of the German Pax-Christi-section with a pilgrimage of repentance to Auschwitz, led by Alfons Erb, set up a prominent sign of the German wish for reconciliation.<sup>38</sup> In the young Cracow Archbishop Karol Wojtyła (and later Pope John Paul II) the German group of pilgrims met an open-minded contact who very convincingly could interpret this incident in its religious, as well as political dimensions. The words of guidance which the Polish bishops, in their message aimed at the German bishops at the end

of the Council in 1965 – “We grant you forgiveness and we beg for forgiveness” – were conceived as notions of atoning repentance and reconciliation.

Such a symbolic action, which cannot be underestimated in its communicative implications, did not move, as already in the beginnings of German – French rapprochement, in an apolitical space. But differently from the first post-war years, the small number of Pax-Christi- activists themselves acted more politically. They placed the moral finger in the wound of a German practice of recompense that only superficially healed guilty memories and initiated a “solidarity donation” fund for former victims of concentration camps in Poland. In 1973, this laymen’s initiative, supported by the German bishops, evolved into the Catholic “Maximilian-Kolbe-Works”. Their work in the fields of reconciliation and encounters – especially with members of the ZNAK group prominently represented by the publisher Stanislaw Stomma – remained exposed to the burden of the past and the waves of national ups and downs caused by the open question of the border. In the course of time, an ever tighter personal network with the Polish victims was spun. Its enormous importance showed in 1981/82: the wave of preparedness of German Catholics, among others, to help a Poland teetering on the brink of economic disaster – due to martial law and crisis of supply – “from grassroots”, brought with it the break through for the tedious process of reconciliation.

In the logic of such actions lay the appeal, directed by the President of the Central Committee of German Catholics, Hans Maier, directed to the responsible people in government and parties not to leave Poland alone in the struggle for freedom and self-determination – with extremely modern echo from the ranks of the social-liberal government coalition. From the dramatic events in Poland a remarkable highlight showed to the end of that prevailing trend in Europe that harboured great sympathies for State Socialism.<sup>39</sup> As was the case with Pope John XXIII two decades before on the rim of a change of tides: in October 1978, for the first time in Church history, a young 58-year-old Pope John Paul II , a Pole, took the helm of the Catholic Church.

As Archbishop of Cracow, Karol Wojtyla, on the occasion of a meeting between the Polish and German Episcopate four weeks before in Cologne, had proclaimed further rapprochement between the cultures and churches of the two peoples as an essential building block of “shaping a new face of Europe and the world”<sup>40</sup> When, at the end of 1980, he put Saint Benedict to the side of the Slavic Apostles Cyrill and Method as guardian saints of Europe, he clearly expressed his spiritual vision of Europe<sup>41</sup>: against the acceptance of modern times, secularism and compromise he set missionary (new) evangelisation as the Church’s task. He juxtaposed to the compromise with Marxism from the times of his predecessors his Church as an alternative moral and societal authority. John Paul II fought the struggle against atheism of the East and materialism of the West in a belligerent way typical of Polish Catholicism and, characteristic of him, public fashion: “Europe needs Christ! (...) The crisis of civilization (Huizinga) and the decline of the occident (Spengler) are only hints of the urgent topicality and need of Christ and the Gospel. The Christian

formation of meaning for the human being as the image of God is, according to Greek theology so loved by Cyrill and Method and deepened by St. Augustine, the root of the peoples of Europe (...).<sup>42</sup> For the Pope, mental-moral unity of Europe is fed by two traditional roots of Christendom, the Western and Eastern.

Since the change of the pontificate, in ecclesiastical announcements, the central notions of the papal Europe-message moved into focus: peace, justice, human dignity and freedom of religion. The clarity of their expression mirrored the political and mental change of climate within the Church. With refined irony, the British historian Tony Judt summed up the political impact which, contrary to his presence, the Pope 's mightily eloquent message brought to bear on conditions in Poland and beyond in Europe: "As Stalin once said, the Pope has no divisions. But God is not always by the side of strong battalions."<sup>43</sup> Apart from his charismatic appearance, John Paul II, the representative of the Holy See at the KSZE's succeeding conferences, constantly ranked as an exhorting voice to heed human rights and freedom of religion in the Helsinki spirit. In divided Germany, the "Dresden Catholics' Congress" in 1987 reflected on the changes in the small number of Catholics pushed to the fringes of society in the GDR. "The Church, the Christians in our country want do give their talents and competences to our society without following a different star than the one of Bethlehem", preached Berlin Cardinal Meisner to thousands of participating believers."<sup>44</sup> For the Diaspora Catholicism persevering on the fringes of society, the Catholics' meeting, at the same time, meant to be a secure point of reference of a growing awareness of civil society. Eventually, it was to find entry into the participation of Catholics in the "Ecumenical Assembly for Justice, Peace and Conservation of Creation" authorised by the Church.<sup>45</sup>

In the West German Federal Republic, the Central Committee of Catholics chose a different focus as regards subject- matter, but argued in the same direction. With strong emphasis, it called for establishing the political process of Europe's unification on a constitutional, democratic foundation: jurisdiction of the European Court, the European currency system, the European Political Cooperation as an instrument coordinating foreign policy, and the Act of European Uniformity, resolved in 1986, proved the progress Europe had reached in the meantime. "Time is ripe for the decision!" was the slogan in 1987 in the vehement plea passed for a federalist Union of Europe following the Federal Republic's model, three decades after the Roman Treaties having come into effect.<sup>46</sup> In conjunction with the Constitution, the basic rights and human rights laid down in the European Convention of Human Rights in 1950 are to be enacted. They are "goods and expression of the common European heritage which is the ultimate bearing foundation of the community of nations; achievements of struggles lasting for hundreds of years which now strengthen, as a common history of Europeans, their consciousness to be citizens of a Union."<sup>47</sup>

On the European stage, however, the demand of the lay Catholics was eclipsed by newly initiated dynamics oriented toward a union of the economies and currencies. Not passing a European Constitution but the step- by- step reduction of border

controls within Europe resolved in Schengen (Luxembourg) in 1985 and the reform of the EU- financial system, introduced by the President of the Commission, Jacques Delors in 1987, became new milestones of European history; it should reach a new climax in the European Union resolved in Netherland's Maastricht in 1992. In German lay- Catholicism, one at least knew to be in agreement with Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl who regarded himself as heir to Konrad Adenauer in European politics.

“Poland – 10 Years, Hungary – 10 Months, GDR – 10 Weeks, CSSR – 10Days”: The banner which jubilant demonstrators fastened to the Prague TV-tower on November 28, 1989, the day the Communist Government of Czechoslovakia (CSSR), reduced the enormously accelerated experience of time of contemporaries to a popular as well as handy formula. The breath-taking speed at which the peaceful revolution brought down the hardly stable architecture of the Eastern block of the “short 20<sup>th</sup> century” came as a surprise to even dynamic protagonists of the European process of integration.

The German Federal Chancellor, who had internalised the history of the European continent like only a few of other political leading figures, considered Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia as undoubted parts of Europe. There is no doubt about Helmut Kohl's historic merit to have won the old Allied Powers of political order as well as Germany's neighbours for German reunification in a politically strengthened European Union. It could not be planned but was striking: On November 9, 1989, the message of the fall of the Wall reached the Federal Chancellor at the very moment of his visit to the new Warsaw Government, led by the dissident Tadeusz Mazowiecki; on the spur of the moment, Kohl departed for Berlin, but then returned to continue his state visit in Poland. While selected representatives of lay- Catholicism, who, like Bernhard Vogel and Elisabeth Erb, deserved special merits for the reconciliation with Poland, were accompanying the Federal Chancellor, German bishops paid visits to the Polish Pope John Paul II at the same time in Rome. The fact that the Church in Germany bore its share in the international recognition of the Oder-Neiße-border marked the end of the East-West conflict in the Catholic realm; the establishment of an independent Bishopric Görlitz in 1994 formed an important Ecclesiastical building block of the new Europe.

And, conclusively, German lay Catholicism could not have found a better place for a programmatic positioning of Germany's future than the 90<sup>th</sup> Catholics' Congress which took place in May 1990 in a now undivided Berlin. In a jointly worked out and resolved “Berlin Declaration”, the Central Committee of German Catholics, the members of the Common Committee of Actions of Catholic Christians in the GDR and representatives of the lay Apostolate from the jurisdictional districts of the Berlin Bishops' Conference publicly expressed their political and civil societal commitment for Christian responsibility “for a common future in Germany, Europe and the world” in an impressive way and justified emotionalism: “We have become witnesses of great upheavals: after decades of division, Germany has regained her unity, Europe

is on its way to a common future of freedom and peace, and new powers for tasks in the world have been set free. We German Catholics want to work on the newly won energies to be used for realizing democracy, justice, peace and the preservation of creation. Thus our world becomes more and more One World.”<sup>48</sup>

Translated from the German by York R. Buttler, 7/16

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