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# MODIFICATIONS IN THE RELIGIOUS FIELD OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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**ABSTRACT:** The aim of this paper is to analyse the current situation of religion in Central and Eastern Europe. The main question is whether the transformation processes in the former Communist countries are following lines of development comparable to those in the West, or whether completely new patterns of development will emerge in these countries. In order to show how church and religion developed in Central and Eastern Europe different religious dimensions are separated and the interconnections between them examined. The four religious dimensions distinguished are *personal religiousness*, *personal church adherence*, *impersonal church adherence* and *occultism*. The author concludes that the situation of church and religion in Central and Eastern Europe has undergone a dramatic change since the end of the Soviet Empire. At this point of time it cannot be said whether or not processes of a growing differentiation between the distinguished religious dimensions are taking place as they are doing in Western Europe.

**Key words:** sociology of religion; secularisation; individualisation; Central and Eastern Europe; church and religion

Although church and religion do not represent central topics in current social research, there is a multitude of political, sociological and historical studies on religious change in the Central and East European countries after the collapse of the Soviet Empire. These studies focus on two issues: first, on the question of how the relationship between church and state has developed, the legal position of the churches within the state, the relationship between church and democracy, the role of the churches in the political conflicts, and so on (cf. Michel 1992, 1994; Mojzes 1992; Martin 1993; Anderson 1994; Swatos 1994; Bourdeaux 1995; Bingen 1996; Luxmoore 1996, 1997; White and McAllister 1997; Ramet 1998); second, they focus on the relationship between religion and nationalism (cf. Ramet 1991,

1997; Lilienfeld 1993; Crego 1994; Guroian 1994; Sergeev 1994; Byrnes 1997). The existing works in the social sciences therefore demonstrate a strong concentration on problems concerning the political significance of church and religion. In comparison, less attention is given to the social acceptance of church and religion, the spreading of religious convictions and church practices, and rituals.

Furthermore, a perusal of the existing studies on the role of church and religion in Central and Eastern Europe highlights the fact that there are more country studies than comparative analyses (cf. individual contributions in Borowik and Babinski 1997, and in Pollack et al. 1998, and Andorka 1993; Jasinska-Kania 1993, among others). Although two representative comparative surveys were already carried through as early as 1991 – the European Value Survey (cf. Zulehner and Denz 1993) and the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP 1991) – they were barely used for systematic analysis, and were mostly only drawn upon in an *ad hoc* fashion to substantiate individual statements (cf., however, Schühly and Müller 1997). Studies in the social sciences on the religious change in Central and Eastern Europe have another characteristic that is related to the lack of comparative studies: their almost completely descriptive orientation (cf., however, Tomka 1995; 1996c; Gaultier 1997; Pickel 1998; Jagodzinski 1998; Bruce 1999). Of course, in view of the lack of reliable data, especially relating to the time before 1990, it is exceedingly difficult to make general statements. Nevertheless, this virtually complete relinquishment of raising theoretical questions and of aligning the interpretation of the empirical material to these questions is astonishing. It seems as if Western European sociology of religion had not yet seriously applied itself to the topic of religion in Central and Eastern Europe. Perhaps this is now starting to change since the new ISSP study of 1998, and the research project *Aufbruch* (departure), whose first results have recently been published (Tomka and Zulehner 1999), have meant that two studies have been tackled that will, in future, make it possible to draw comparisons over a certain period of time, and to interpret the recognisable development trends according to a generalising perspective. This article has set itself the task of reacting to the lack of theoretically oriented comparative studies, and, with the support of currently accessible empirical data, to uncovering a few trends in the religious change in Central and Eastern Europe.

Thus the obvious question presents itself whether, after the collapse of state socialism, the transformation processes of church and religion in the previously Communist countries are following lines of development comparable to those in Western Europe, or whether entirely new patterns of development will emerge in these countries (cf. Pickel 1998). In the Western European countries, this pattern is characterised by a strong

tendency towards alienation from the church, while, at the same time, there is a pluralisation of offers on the market of church and religion as well as a corresponding individualisation of religious attitudes and behaviour (Luckmann 1991). Do the Central and Eastern European countries follow this path of development according to the extent of their modernisation, or do they pursue quite different courses in their religious development? This question is to be the central focus of this article. In order to find an answer, it is, naturally, first of all necessary to create a general picture of the critical effects of state socialism on the internal and external position of religious communities and churches in the Eastern and Central European countries. Only then can the effects of the political, social and economic turning point of 1989/90 on the religious field be discerned. It would, however, be going beyond the given scope of this paper to deal with all the Eastern and Central European countries equally. Therefore attention will be given especially to those states on which data material is available.<sup>1</sup> In addition, this article will make use of the method of exemplary illustration. Thus, in the case of having to demonstrate general tendencies of development, it will mostly content itself with selective evidence.

### **Church and religion towards the end of Communist rule**

In all the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, Communist rule caused a weakening of church ties in the population and a decline in the social significance of church and religion. However, it affected the stability and vitality of religion and church in divergent ways. Table 1 demonstrates to what different degrees the individual countries and denominations were affected by the process of alienation from the church.

For an interpretation of this table it is necessary first to point out the fact that the percentages of membership differ substantially in their meaningfulness. In Orthodox countries, such as Bulgaria or Romania, but also Hungary, which is largely Catholic, denominational membership merely reflects a subjective feeling of belonging, not a formalised church membership. Consequently, church membership in these countries has

1. In order to describe transformation processes in the religious field of Central and Eastern Europe, especially religious changes between the period prior to 1989 and after 1989, we have to use different surveys carried out in individual countries. Country comparing surveys were not conducted during the Communist era (except in Poland and Hungary). This has the consequence that the data used in this article are not fully compatible with each other. Some surveys were conducted only once, others cover three or four years, still others ten or more years. The indicators and the wording of questions used in the surveys are different, as are the categories. Other data however are not available.

EUROPEAN SOCIETIES

**TABLE 1. Modifications in the percentage of people belonging to a denomination during the time of Communist rule (%)**

<i>Country (time of data compilation)</i>	<i>Denomination</i>	<i>Denominational proportion</i>		<i>Decline of denominational proportion during the time of Communism</i>
		<i>Before Communist rule</i>	<i>and after</i>	
East Germany (1946–1990)	Catholic	12.2	4.6	63.3
	Protestant	81.5	26.0	68.1
	No religion	5.9	68.0	
Czech Republic (1951–1991)	Catholic	76.7	39.2	48.9
	Protestant	16.4	3.6	78.0
	No religion	8.8	39.7	
Slovakia (1951–1991)	Catholic	82.7	63.7	23.0
	Protestant	16.4	7.8	52.5
	No religion	0.9	9.7	
Hungary (1949–1992)	Catholic	70.5	67.8	3.8
	Protestant	27.1	25.1	7.4
	Others/no religion	2.4	7.1	
Slovenia (1953–1991)	Catholic	82.9	71.4	13.9
	Protestant	1.5	1.0	33.3
	No religion	15.3	23.5	
Estonia (1935–1995)	Catholic	0.2	0.2	0
	Protestant	79.1	12.7	83.9
	Orthodox	18.9	2.0	89.4
	No religion	0.6	83.3	
Latvia (1935–1992)	Catholic	24.4	22.7	7.0
	Protestant	56.0	30.7	45.2
	Orthodox	8.9	7.6	14.6
	No religion	0.2	38.0	
Romania (1930–1992)	Catholic	6.8	5.1	25.0
	Protestant	6.4	5.5	14.1
	Orthodox	72.6	86.8	19.6 (+)
	Greek-Catholic	7.9	1.0	87.3
	No religion		0.2	
Bulgaria (1934–1992)	Catholic	0.8	0.6	25.0
	Protestant	0.1	0.3	200.0 (+)
	Orthodox	83.9	85.7	2.1 (+)
	Muslim	13.5	13.1	3.0
	No religion		0.1	

*Sources:* Pollack 1994: 374; Kaplan 1993: 225; Prokūpek 1995: 94ff.; Tomka 1996a: 235; *Enciklopedija Slovenije* 1996: 165; Ederberg 1935: 114; Lehtsaar 1998; Rozītis 1993: 93; Roth 1998; *Glaube in der 2. Welt* 1991, Vol. 19, No. 5, 27; Bogomilova 1998

quite a different meaning to, say, that in Germany, where it is formalised and tied up with rights and obligations.

Table 1 reveals significant differences in the degree of alienation from the church between the individual countries, and between the denominations, within these countries. In order to explain these differences specific to region and denomination, four influential factors have to be mentioned:

- 1 The most important reason for the decline of religiousness and church ties as well as for the development of regional differences in this process of decline was, without doubt, *political repression*, which members of a religion and religious communities were exposed to during the Communist era. In countries with a high degree of repression (East Germany, Czechoslovakia,<sup>2</sup> the former Soviet Union) the decline of church membership numbers was especially drastic (cf. Czech Republic, East Germany, Estonia: Table 1). In countries with a lesser degree of political repression, such as Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia, where deviant behaviour was met more with a policy of co-operation than with a policy of exclusion, the religious communities and churches were much better able to retain their members (cf. Hungary and Slovenia: Table 1). The influence of the degree of repression over the degree of religiousness and church adherence becomes especially clear when we, for example, look at the religious situation in the Ukraine. In the West Ukraine, which was under Polish rule before the Second World War, the proportion of those describing themselves as religious today is 3–3.5 times higher than in the East Ukraine, which was always a part of the Soviet Union, and had to endure a much harder regime (Jelensky and Perebensjuk 1998).
- 2 Another important reason for the process of alienation from the church in the Central East European countries, but also for the limitation of this process, is based on *modernisation*, which took place in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to different degrees after the Second World War. During the decades of communist rule, many of the mainly agrarian countries went through *processes of industrialisation, mobilisation, urbanisation and rationalisation*, brought about forcibly by the state. The level of prosperity rose as much as the level of education and the quota of women gainfully employed. These processes of modernisation unmistakably influenced the field of church and religion.<sup>3</sup> Due to the

2. In all, the numbers for Czechoslovakia are: Catholics 1950: 76.4 per cent, 1991: 46.4 per cent, Protestants 1950: 16.5 per cent, 1991: 5.4 per cent, people belonging to no denomination/religion 1950: 6.5 per cent, 1991: 29.5 per cent (Prokůpek 1995: 94).

3. A classical reference which describes the influence of the processes of industrialisation, mobilisation, and urbanisation upon religion is given in Martin (1978: 83–99), who points out that due to the second industrial revolution and the processes involved, the social importance of religion decreased.

increase in female employment, the influence of the family in passing on the Christian faith to children significantly regressed. In *Hungary*, for instance, this change in the distribution of work has weakened the capacity of families to hand down religion by about one-third (cf. Tomka 1998). The increase in the level of education contributed to people dissociating themselves from religious beliefs. On average, fewer more highly educated people do not believe in God than do those less well educated. This has been proven for *Hungary*, *Bulgaria*, the *GDR* and other countries (cf. Bogomilova 1998, ISSP 1991: Variable 99). Regional mobility had especially far-reaching effects. In countries such as *Bulgaria* or *Hungary*, where migration from the countryside was especially drastic, the destruction of the traditional village milieu meant that the churches had lost an important means of social demographic support. In contrast, *Poland*, where the collectivising of agriculture did not succeed, preserved the traditional village environment, and the church was able to support itself on that. The stability of the churches was also, not insignificantly, connected to the degree to which traditions were abolished in society. In addition, the rise in the level of culture and prosperity strongly affected the attraction of churches and religious communities. Due to this rise, offers from the realms of art, literature, theatre, films and television increasingly competed as forms of leisure with religious and church events, and growing prosperity meant that the population could also increasingly afford to make use of this non-ecclesiastical cultural selection.

The combination of political repression and processes of modernisation – the rise in prosperity, mobilisation, the abolishment of traditions, and rationalisation – helps very much to explain why church and religion forfeited so much social significance throughout the time of state socialism. Even though the majority of the population rejected the political compulsion that was necessarily connected with the social processes of transformation, the modernisation, industrialisation and increase in the level of wealth that were a result of the socialist restructuring of society were largely approved of. The politically and ideologically pursued process of alienating people from the church managed, among other things, to be so successful because it was connected with a rise in the standard of living, with a highly scientific view of the world, industrialisation and urbanisation, i.e. with processes of modernisation.

- 3 A further factor that has strongly influenced the degree of alienation from the church is *denomination*. By and large one can state that the Roman Catholic Church, of all the denominations, has succeeded the most in preserving its numbers, whereas the Lutheran churches have been the least successful (cf. the denominational differences in the

decline of membership in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia and Latvia: Table 1).<sup>4</sup> The Orthodox church had to endure large losses, too, especially in Russia, Belorussia and the Ukraine.

If one wants to explain the denominational differences, it is necessary first of all to point out the religious institutions' different degrees of strength. The more hierarchically and dogmatically the religious community was structured, and the sharper the difference between the interior and exterior, the more it was able to assert itself against attacks coming from the political system. The resilience of the Roman Catholic Church stemmed, apart from anything else, from its institutional character, its hierarchical order and centralisation. However, it also profited from the fact that it was true to life, vivid and concrete, due to the devoutness it inspired. Furthermore, the Catholic Church was fortified by being embedded in a denominationally shaped culture with its own associations, publishing firms, magazines, care system for the old and the sick and an intensive system of inner communication in quite a few countries. It enjoyed special protection through its dependence on the Vatican in Rome, and thus its link with a supranational power that was independent of the national politics of any given state. By referring to Rome, the representatives of the Roman Catholic Church were much better able to justify their policies than the regional Protestant church, which was at the disposal of the Communist rulers. Finally, the Catholic Church, as opposed to the Lutheran churches, pursued the strategy of having as little contact with socialist society as possible (Pilvousek 1993). Even though this strategy, for instance, in the GDR and in some other countries, meant a certain exclusion from society in general, it did have the advantage of enabling the church to more successfully evade the attempts of state and party to influence it.

- 4 The churches were also conspicuously strengthened wherever they were in *close proximity to national ideas*. Particularly in those areas where the church represented the identity of nations that were not central, but were situated beyond the political centres of power, the national idea could contribute to the fortification of the churches (cf. Spohn 1998). Thus the losses of the Orthodox Church in Russia were much more

4. Regarding the Roman Catholic Church, it has been reported, in Latvia, that only 15 per cent of the children from Catholic families were not baptised in the years between 1946 and 1989 (cf. Krumina-Konkova and Gills 1998). The decrease quota of Protestants amounted to about 45 per cent, whereas, with the Catholics, it only came to 7 per cent. The fact that the decrease quotas for the Catholics and the Protestants are virtually the same in East Germany (cf. Table 1) is due to the unusually high proportion of Catholics that formed a part of the East German population ever since expellees and refugees had come in from East Prussia and Silesia after the war. To a large extent, however, these refugees gradually migrated further westwards so that the decrease quota was disproportionately high between 1946 and 1990.

drastic than those of the Orthodox Church in the Ukraine or Belorussia, or even in Romania or Serbia. In countries such as Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bulgaria or Poland, the church has served, in some cases for centuries, as a representative and preserver of national identity against the dominance of foreign powers. The example of the Ukraine, of course, demonstrates the error in assuming that the connection between nationalism and church in a peripheral area automatically brings about a strengthening of the church, since in this case we have observed that the church has been weakened despite these conditions, and that it was better able to preserve its numbers where there was less political pressure. The Czech Republic, on the other hand, confirms this assumed pattern. In the course of the forty-year rule of Communism, the Catholic Church in this country had to put up with comparatively high losses, even though the majority of the population was Catholic at the beginning of the 1950s. In the Czech Republic, Catholicism was looked upon by large parts of the population as a religion prescribed from above rather than as the religion of the people. Prague was much more closely linked to the centre of power in Vienna than, for instance, the Slovakian regions, where the church was thus better able to become the advocate of national interests. As opposed to that, the close link between nationalism and Catholicism in Poland meant a strengthening of the church.

In countries such as Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia, there was a development of national consciousness, a process which was not, however, able to bring about the emergence of an independent national state. Consequently, in lieu of a politically constituted state, cultural factors emerged strongly in these countries, such as language, literature, art, music or even religion. The development of a national identity took place via these cultural factors. Church and religion were directly involved in this process of national emergence, and often represented the most important institution when it came to making a distinction between their own culture and other cultures and nations, and thus managed to preserve the awareness of a separate nationality.

Such a close connection between nationality and church also developed in Slovenia and Croatia. In these two countries, however, the Catholic Church was discredited because of its collaboration with the National Socialist regime during the Second World War, so that its position was severely weakened in the face of the emerging Communist system after 1945. The Catholic Church in Slovakia also had to accept such a weakening of its position, since it had cooperated with the German occupying force. In Poland, however, the church was partly involved in the resistance against National Socialism, and was able to

gain a strengthened political position from this after 1945. Poland also represents a special case insofar as Catholicism in this country was able to function for centuries as a national feature that distinguished itself from Protestant Prussia and Orthodox Russia. Not so in Slovenia, where Catholicism did not represent a distinguishing feature, since the surrounding area was also Catholic. All in all, one can say that the church was especially stable in those areas where it managed to create a close link with the interests of the people, be they social, political or national interests, i.e. where the church was not on the side of the rulers, but on the side of the people (Höllinger 1996).

Apart from the degree of political repression, of modernisation, the issue of belonging to a certain denomination as well as the social embodiment of the church in the people, its historic role in the process of national formation and its political position during the Second World War, it is, of course, possible to find further reasons for the resilience of the churches during the socialist era, dependent, for instance, on the degree of contact with foreign countries, the degree of cooperation with the socialist state, whether they formed a small or a large religious community, or whether a religious community was in a religiously pluralistic situation or had a religious worldview monopoly. Undoubtedly, however, the listed factors<sup>5</sup> represent significant reasons that are able to contribute to explaining the regional as well as temporal differences in the degree of alienation from the church and of secularisation in the post-Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

5. Some of the explanations given in this article are close to those presented by Steve Bruce (1999: 89–120). However, my work is based on a greater variety of data, as will be seen in the following sections, and my work takes into consideration a broader range of explanatory factors. His two most important explanatory factors for the analysis of the vitality of religions and churches are modernisation and the relationship between church and national identity. His aim throughout is to falsify the rational choice approach. He achieves this by concurring that greater religious diversity can go hand-in-hand with lower religious vitality and that a lesser degree of religious diversity does not necessarily lead to a lower degree of religious vitality. Although it is necessary for the investigation of religious development in Central and Eastern Europe to include the two factors mentioned above, it is important to take into account other factors, for example, the degree of repression, the peculiarities of the denominations investigated, the impact of history (for example, the role of the churches during the upheaval of 1989 to 1990, the financial resources available in the individual churches, the training of church employees and so on).

## **Changes in the religious landscape after the social upheaval of 1989 to 1990**

The different dimensions of religion

In almost all of the previously Communist states of Central and Eastern Europe, the collapse of socialism was directly followed by a considerable upswing of religiousness and church adherence. Poland was the exception, where the degree of religiousness and church adherence was already exceptionally high before 1989, and where, directly after 1989, there was a slight decrease in reference numbers, as well as East Germany, where the church had played a conspicuous role in the process of social upheaval and therefore, directly afterwards, largely had the benefit of the people's confidence, only to gradually lose it again within a short period of time (cf. Pollack 1998b).

Even though there is much evidence for religious growth in many Central and Eastern European countries for the years immediately post 1989, it is not clear how the development continued after that. Were there patterns of development similar to those that have manifested themselves in Western Europe, or have completely different lines of development emerged in these countries? This question, already raised at the beginning of this article, will now be examined. In relation to this, it makes sense to separate different religious dimensions, and to ask how these dimensions are interconnected. For the analysis of the Western religious developments, it is common to separate church adherence from religiousness. Whereas the former is normally gauged by the frequency of church attendance, the indicator for the latter is mostly either the belief in God or one's self-assessment as to whether or not one is religious. In the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, however, two further religious dimensions may be discerned that influence the modifications in the religious field: first, a form of non-individual church adherence that manifests itself in a high level of trust in the church, while, simultaneously, there is a personal dissociation from church and religion – a phenomenon that is seldom to be found in the West, although it is not completely unknown. Second, a widespread belief in magic and occultism can be observed in the Central and Eastern European countries. There is, of course, also evidence of these phenomena in Western Europe, but in Eastern Europe they seem to have more quantitative significance than in the West.

The four religious dimensions distinguished here are thus as follows:

- 1 Personal religiousness, mainly expressed here by the two indicators 'belief in God' and 'self-assessment as being religious'.

- 2 Personal church adherence, covered here by the indicator 'church attendance'.
- 3 Impersonal church adherence, covered here by the indicators 'trust in the church' while taking little part in church life, for example, in the church service.
- 4 Occultism, expressed here through the indicators 'lucky charm', 'faith-healer', 'prediction of the future', 'astrology'.

The central question at this point is how the different religious dimensions will develop in the future, how they will correspond to one another, and whether the connection between them is more likely to become stronger or weaker in the future. Of course, social change may take some time to work through into changes in religious behaviour and orientations. In certain respects it is too early to be sure of tendencies, but some tentative statements about the religious development after 1989 to 1990 can be made.

1 *Personal religiousness*: taking Slovenia as an example for the development of personal religiousness, one detects a rise in religious self-assessment between 1988 and 1992. This becomes especially clear when one looks at the group of those who define themselves as not being religious (Table 2). The proportion of this group reduced from 30.7 per cent in 1988 to 23.2 per cent in 1992. In the whole of Yugoslavia, on the other hand, 21 per cent defined themselves as being religious in 1985, whereas by 1990 this figure had risen to 43 per cent (Pantić 1990).

The proportion of those describing themselves as being religious also significantly rose in Hungary following 1989 (Table 3). There was a rise not only in the percentage of those who defined themselves as being religious in their own way, but also in the share of those who saw themselves as being religious according to the teachings of the church. In contrast, the proportion of those perceiving themselves as not religious decreased between 1988 and 1993 by about thirteen percentage points.

If we take a glance at the religious development in *Czechoslovakia*

**TABLE 2. Self-assessment as being religious in Slovenia 1988 to 1992 (%)**

	1988	1990	1992
Religious	56.3	60.7	60.2
Not religious	30.7	26.3	23.2
Neither-nor	13.0	13.0	17.7
n =	100 (2075)	100 (2074)	100 (1035)

Source: SPO, RI FSS, University of Ljubljana (Toš 1993: 29)

**TABLE 3. Self-assessment as being religious in Hungary (%)<sup>a</sup>**

Year	<i>I am religious . . . according to the teachings of the church</i>	<i>in my own way</i>	<i>I cannot decide whether I am religious or not</i>	<i>I am not religious (that sort of thing does not interest me)</i>	<i>I have a different faith; I am decidedly not religious</i>	<i>Not answered</i>
1988	12.3	45.8	5.2	26.6	8.7	1.4
1989	13.1	44.2	6.2	27.3	8.5	0.7
1990	15.6	50.4	5.9	23.9	4.0	0.2
1991	16.0	52.8	5.4	20.8	4.5	0.5
1993	19.0	57.8	3.7	13.9	5.0	0.6
1996 <sup>a</sup>	13.5	46.0	6.5	25.2	8.7	0.1
1998	17.4	55.0	8.7	14.4	4.3	0.2

Note:

<sup>a</sup> Accumulated from the years 1993 to 1996 from different samples (n = 59.910)

Source: Tomka 1995: 18; information via written correspondence by Miklós Tomka

(Table 4), we can observe the same tendency. There also, the degree of religiousness – measured in this case according to belief in God – rose sharply after 1989. Whereas in the 1980s 22 per cent to 23 per cent declared their belief in God, the number rose to 29 per cent in 1990, and to 34 per cent in 1991.

Further, in the *Ukraine*, more than two-fifths of those questioned in a representative sample responded ‘Yes’ to the question of whether their relationship to religion had developed more positively, whereas only 3.2 per cent stated that their relationship to religion had deteriorated (Jelenski and Perebenesjuk 1998). In *Russia*, 22 per cent of those questioned confessed that they currently believed in God, but had previously not believed in him (ISSP 1991: Variable 33). Whereas in 1990, according to another survey, there had been 29 per cent who claimed to believe in God, the number had almost doubled to 47 per cent by 1996 (Furman 1997: 25).

In view of this unusual increase in religiousness, reported to be the

**TABLE 4. Belief in God in Czechoslovakia (%)**

	1980	1985	1989	1990	1991
I believe in God	22	22	23	29	34
I believe in the possibility of his existence	25	26	26	28	31
I do not believe in God	53	52	51	43	35

Source: Mišović 1991: 9

case in different countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the question arises whether, as is common in value research, one can really presuppose that deeply anchored value orientations, to which one undoubtedly also has to assign a belief in God or individual religiousness, are, in fact, relatively stable, and can only be changed on a fairly long-term basis (Inglehart 1995). The rapid religious change in the Central and Eastern European states provokes more the question of whether cultural processes of change and social structural, economic and political transformations are not more closely interconnected than previously assumed. As far as the religious field is concerned, a special cultural resilience and a resulting time lag between social economic and cultural change are certainly not discernible. One could, of course, ask whether profound changes are at all the cause for the rise in these numbers or vice versa, whether this rise genuinely reflects current change, or whether it does not rather mean a return to old cultural patterns. To examine this would naturally mean going beyond the scope of this survey.

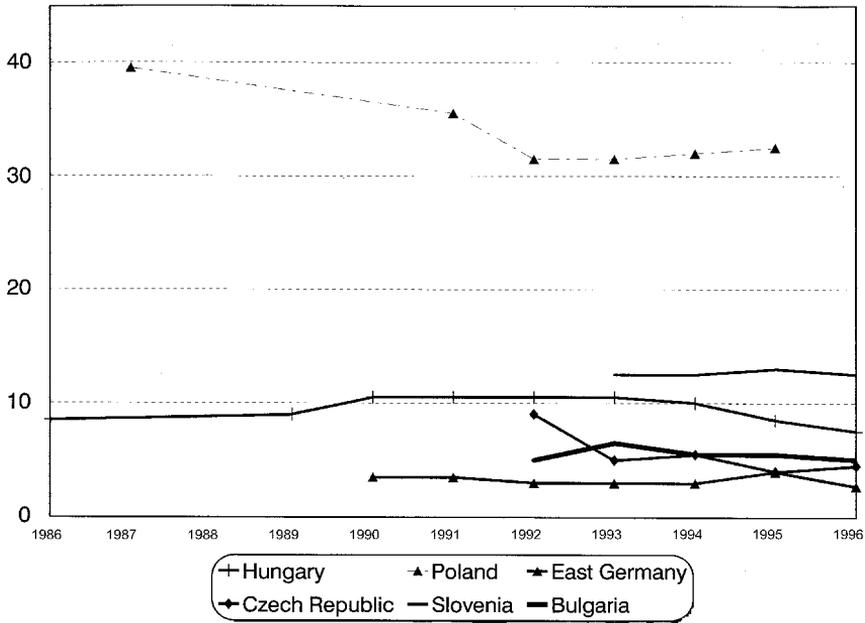
2 *Personal church adherence*: the data rendered in Table 5 show a distinct rise in the frequency of church attendance in Slovenia. Whereas only 12.4 per cent of the population regularly went to church every week in 1988, the number of those claiming to do this had almost doubled four years later.

Church attendance, however, did not increase as rapidly in other countries as it did in Slovenia. In Russia, for example, the proportion of those who went to church at least once a month hardly rose at all, from 6 per cent in the year 1991 to 7 per cent in 1996 (Furman 1997: 26). In Hungary the rate of church attendance even fell between 1991 and 1996, as was also the case in Poland (Figure 1). This, of course, poses the question whether personal religiousness and church attendance are beginning to drift apart, as we have seen happen in Western Europe. This issue will be dealt with in detail below. First of all, the development of the two remaining religious dimensions must still be examined.

**TABLE 5. Church attendance in Slovenia 1988 to 1992 (%)**

	1988	1990	1992
Regularly (once a week)	12.4	13.0	22.7
Occasionally (less than once a week)	44.3	47.6	41.0
Never	43.3	39.4	36.3
N =	100 (2.075)	100 (2.074)	100 (1.035)

Source: SPO, RI FSS, University of Ljubljana (Toš 1993: 28f.)



Note: <sup>a</sup> attendance as per year (0–52)

Source: International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)

Figure 1. Church attendance in selected Central and Eastern European countries<sup>a</sup>

3 *Impersonal church adherence*: when examining the spread of impersonal forms of church adherence with regard to the Orthodox countries, one can indeed detect the emergence of a form of non-individual church adherence for the years following 1989 that is not typical for the Western European countries. Surveys demonstrated that individual religiousness in many Orthodox countries was much lower than in a large number of Western European countries, but that, at the same time, confidence in the church was much stronger. This high level of trust in the church was only loosely connected to individual religiousness and individual, active church attendance.<sup>6</sup> The individual barely

6. Of those who have complete or partial confidence in the church, between 53 per cent and 65 per cent in Russia never go to church, whereas in West Germany the percentage of those to whom this applies comes to only about 6–7 per cent. In Russia, the proportion of non-believers from the group of those who have complete or partial confidence in the church lies between 23 per cent and 37 per cent, in West Germany only between 5 per cent and 8 per cent. Vice versa, in Russia, 68 per cent of those that do not go to church still have complete or partial confidence in the church, whereas in West Germany the proportion is below 10 per cent. The proportion of those who have complete or partial confidence in the church from the group of non-believers in Russia amounts to 60 per cent, in West Germany 10 per cent (ISSP 1991: Variables 23, 65 and 31). I thank Anja Sokolow, Frankfurt/Oder, for carrying out the statistical calculations.

participated in church life, and there was also nothing else that connected him personally to the church. As can be seen in Table 6, *trust in the church* in 1991 was very much stronger in *Russia* than in all other listed Western European countries. In Russia, 75 per cent of those questioned claimed to have trust in the church, in West Germany only 28 per cent, in Great Britain as little as 19 per cent. Trust in the church in Russia even surpassed the rate of trust in Ireland, where only 46 per cent confessed to have confidence in the church.

If, on the other hand, one compares the frequency of the average church attendance in one country with that of the others, then, with a proportion of 5.5 per cent of church-goers per month, Russia lies behind even the strongly secularised country of East Germany (7 per cent), and very much so after West Germany (24 per cent) and Great Britain (21 per cent).<sup>7</sup> In Poland, the rate of monthly church attendance accounts to 76 per cent, and, in Ireland to 80 per cent (ISSP 1991: Variable 65). In addition, if one looks at the frequency of prayer, Russia, again, occupies the lowest position in the whole of Europe (ISSP 1991: Variable 57). The extremely high degree of trust in the church thus does not go hand-in-hand with a high level of religious or church practice. If the Russians turn to the church, they do not do so because of individual needs in the realm of religion or church.<sup>8</sup> Their attachment to the church is based far more on the wish that the church may be of use to society (Furman 1992, 1997: 27). This corresponds to the fact that, in 1991, the percentage in Russia of those believing that the church had too little power was by far the highest in Europe (ISSP 1991: Variable 30). The church was intended to work as an integrating factor, to impart societal values, to fulfil social tasks, and to convey a normative foundation to society at large. At the same time, the Russians, like no other nation, perceive their country to be anomic, polarised and disrupted. There is no other country in Europe that has such high values for nihilism and fatalism as Russia (ISSP 1991: Variables 43 and 41). It is obvious to conclude that there is a connection between these nihilism and fatalism values, and the high expectations as regards the church.<sup>9</sup> In view of the experienced tendencies of anomy in society, the church

7. Even of those who believe in God, only about 18 per cent attend church at least once a month in Russia (Furman 1997: 26). By way of comparison, 45 per cent of the faithful in East Germany attend church (ISSP 1991: Variables 31 and 65).

8. Possibly this, however, is changing now, if we think of the extremely strong rise in the belief in God that has taken place over the past few years.

9. In fact, the correlation values in Russia are significant (Pearsons  $R = 0.242$ , when fatalism and trust in the church are correlated, or  $0.118$ , when nihilism and trust in the church are related to one another. In West Germany, the comparative values are lower or non-significant).

**TABLE 6. Trust in the church and religious organisations in selected European countries 1991 (%)**

	<i>G-W</i>	<i>G-E</i>	<i>GB</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>IRL</i>	<i>PL</i>	<i>RUS</i>
1	7.2	4.8	4.9	15.6	15.4	10.4	37.6
2	21.0	15.5	14.1	32.4	30.8	22.2	37.1
3	35.9	28.9	40.2	29.3	34.9	40.7	17.0
4	21.2	19.6	27.2	10.7	12.5	15.1	4.1
5	14.6	31.2	13.7	12.0	6.5	11.5	4.2

*Notes:*

1 Complete confidence                      3 Some confidence                      5 No confidence

2 Large amount of confidence            4 Very little confidence

*G-W* = West Germany; *G-E* = East Germany; *GB* = Great Britain; *H* = Hungary; *IRL* = Ireland;*PL* = Poland; *RUS* = Russia*Source:* ISSP 1991: Variable 23

is thus obviously meant to take up integral tasks, and it is mainly assigned this societal function.

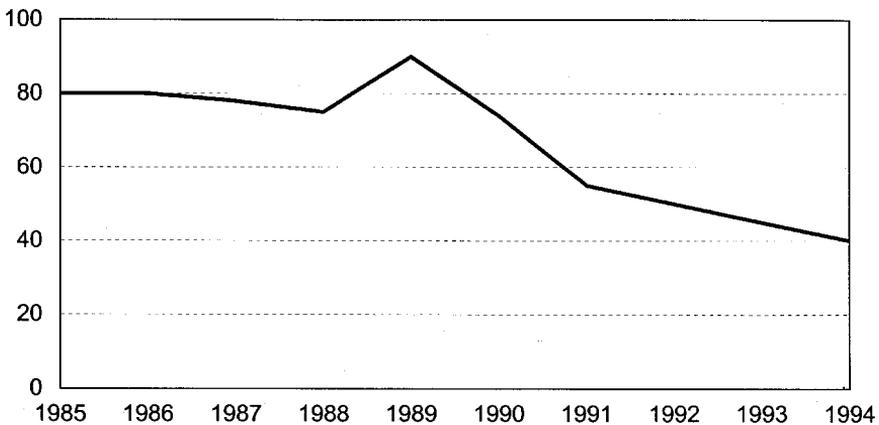
We also come across the pattern of non-individual church adherence in the Ukraine. There, too, the proportion of those having confidence in the church is as high as in Russia (75 per cent). Simultaneously, however, the individual need for church and religion tends more to be low. The proportion of those who believed that religion was useful to society was distinctly greater than the proportion of those who regarded religion as being helpful to themselves personally (Jelensky 1997: 6).

Even in East Germany, the expectations regarding the church in 1990 were mainly of a societal nature, and less individually motivated. Although, in East Germany, the share of those committed to the church was lower than in almost any other country of Central and Eastern Europe, in 1990, more people than anywhere else agreed with the statement that the church should openly give its view on social problems such as those of the Third World, of racial discrimination, disarmament or environmental pollution (Zulehner and Denz 1993: Variable A 20). Far fewer expected the church to take a stand on such issues as extra-marital relationships, family life or the moral distress of individuals (*ibid.*: A 19, 20). Thus, also in East Germany in 1990, the church was viewed more as a social authority than as a pastoral institution which solved individual problems. Of course, the values for confidence in the church were still much lower in East Germany than in, say, Russia or the Ukraine, even though, in comparison to the degree of individual religiousness and church adherence, they were relatively high (*cf.* Table 6; Zulehner and Denz 1993: Variable 11).

Looking at the development of confidence values for the period after 1989/90, however, one must acknowledge that, since the time directly

following the upheaval, confidence in the church has clearly decreased in many countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In Russia, for instance, the share of those who believed that religion was indispensable for the governing of a country fell from 44 per cent to 21 per cent between 1988 and 1991 (Furman 1992: 22). Whereas, in 1988, the number still amounted to 74 per cent in favour of the church influencing social life, this fell to 48 per cent in 1991 (*ibid.*).

The decline in confidence in the church was especially dramatic in Poland, where the percentage of those trusting the church plummeted from 87.8 per cent in 1989 to 40.5 per cent in 1994 (Figure 2). Attitudes towards the trustworthiness of the church are, of course, always related to views of other institutions. If we compare trust in the church with confidence in other institutions, we can state that, in spite of this dramatic collapse, confidence in the church in Poland is still comparatively high. Only 9.9 per cent of those questioned had confidence in the Sejm (the Polish parliament), 9.4 per cent in the legal system and courts, and a mere 2.3 per cent in the parties (Borowik 1998). In addition, compared to the United States and Ireland, the confidence value in Poland is still relatively high. In the USA, only 40.5 per cent of those questioned say they have full or partial confidence in the church, and, even in Ireland, those having a fair amount of trust in the church only amount to 46.2 per cent (ISSP 1991: Variable 23). Thus, the numbers in these highly religious countries are not significantly higher than in Poland, where the high confidence values were able to develop due to the direct political relevance of the Catholic Church for the



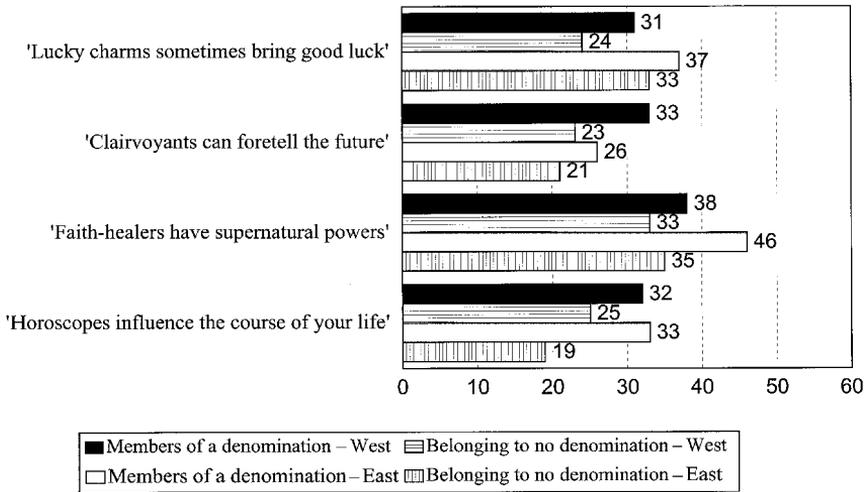
Source: Borowik 1993: 12, Borowik 1998

Figure 2. Trust in the church in Poland (%)

transformation processes in the political arena. Besides, confidence in the church after the time of social upheaval also decreased in East Germany, where, immediately after 1989, it rose further than expected, considering the relatively low degree of church identification (cf. Pollack 1998b).

These changes in the attitude towards the church, as seen above, create the impression that the church is able to play an especially significant role in situations of political upheaval and crises. In these situations, the perception of religious and political functions creates a unity, so that the churches are able to be of relevance to society as a whole – something that also applied to the period before 1989, to the last years of a few Communist states, such as Poland or the GDR, when the political situation in these countries was already extremely tense. This close connection between religious and political fulfilment of a function dissolves with the emergence of functionally divergent social conditions, where the political sphere no longer dominates the whole of society, but only represents one field in the context of various social sections, so that churches lose their unique function. The high expectations regarding church, and the partially high trust put in the competence of the churches in acting socially, would consequently be a transitional phenomenon that would, of necessity, lose its significance with the progression of social modernisation processes.

- 4 *Occultism*: apart from the form of non-individual church adherence, there is a further feature in the religious field that is discernible for the Central and Eastern European countries: the large extent to which *superstitious and occult concepts* are adopted. Many states, such as East Germany, Slovenia, Russia or Bulgaria (cf. Artemoff 1996: 27; Bogomilova 1998; Kerševan 1998), are reported to have a conspicuously high level of belief in faith healers, lucky charms, the possibility of foreseeing the future and the influence of the stars on human life. In East Germany, for example, all indicators relating to church and religion are distinctly lower than in West Germany. The differences are very diverse regarding such issues as belief in God, self-assessment as being religious, belief in life after death, frequency of church attendance, participation in church life, frequency of prayer, etc., constituting, on average, a difference of 30 to 40 per cent (cf. Pollack 1996). With regard to statements on the occult, however, the differences between East and West Germany disappear. When it comes to believing in faith healers, lucky charms, the prediction of the future or astrology, the East Germans agree to the corresponding statements to basically the same degree as the West Germans (Figure 3).



Source: ISSP: Variables 66–9

Figure 3. Occultism in East and West Germany in comparison (1991) (%)

The connection between religiousness and church adherence:  
processes of individualisation in the religious field

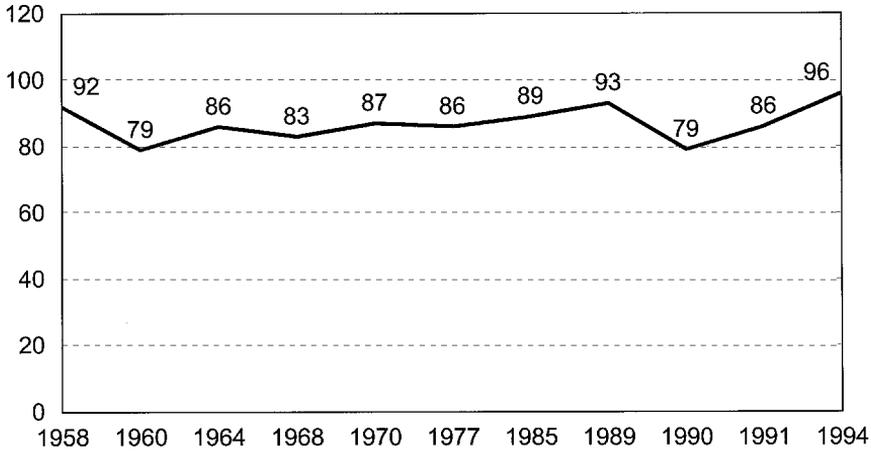
In identifying the change in the relationship between the different religious dimensions after 1989, one is able to discover a weakening in *the connection of personal religiousness and personal church adherence*, even though it does not disappear altogether. When scrutinising the available data on religiousness and church adherence, one distinctly gets the impression that the Central and Eastern European countries are going through a similar development as the states of Western Europe. There, also, a process of alienation from the church is taking place, while there is a corresponding individualisation of religion, even though it is erroneous to treat religiousness and church adherence as two variables independent of each other (on this issue cf. Pollack 1996, 1998a). Thus, the connection between religiousness and church adherence is also gradually dissolving in the Central and Eastern European countries.

In *Russia*, for example, the number of believers clearly increases from 1990 onwards, in spite of a slight decrease in the years between 1992 and 1996 (Furman 1997: 27). One can hardly speak of a rise in church attendance, however. During the 1990s this remained at between about 6 to 7 per cent (at least once a month) (Furman 1997: 26). In the *Ukraine*, the proportion of those calling themselves religious increased by one-third between 1993 and 1996: from 42 per cent to 56 per cent. The number of religious communities, as an indicator for church adherence, increased by

only half between 1993 and 1996: by 17 per cent. Whereas religiousness clearly rose until 1996, the speed in the rise of church adherence – measured here according to the number of religious communities – clearly decreased from 1988 to 1997, especially between 1993 and 1995, although the tendency of development still remains positive (cf. Jelensky and Perebensjuk 1998). In *Hungary*, church attendance clearly fell between 1991 and 1996. On a scale ranging from 0 (= never attend church) to 52 (= attend church every week), Hungary reached a value of 10.5 in 1991, and only a value of 7.5 in 1996 (see Figure 1). If, on the other hand, one looks at the development of religiousness, then there is much less of a decrease from 1991 to 1996 (see Table 3). In 1991, 68.8 per cent of those questioned in a representative national sample described themselves as religious, whereas in 1996 the proportion was 59.5 per cent. A decrease by almost 30 per cent in church attendance parallels a decrease by only half as much in people's self-assessment as being religious. If one also includes the time before 1991 in this examination, it is even possible to observe that the religious self-assessment of the population until 1996 has more or less remained the same. After a sharp rise in religiousness in the years 1989 to 1993, in 1996, the number fell to the level of its starting point in 1989.<sup>10</sup> From 1996 to 1998, it again rose sharply (Table 3). In *Poland*, the divergence of individual religiousness and church adherence can be observed to an especially high degree. There, the frequency of church attendance, on a scale of 0 to 52, fell from 39 in 1987 to 33 in 1995 (Figure 1). Simultaneously, however, belief in God – used here as an indicator for religiousness – remained, all in all, at the same level from 1958 to 1994, in spite of considerable fluctuation between 1989 and 1994, and, after a distinct collapse immediately after 1989, it rose to an even higher level than before (Figure 4).

The distinction between religiousness and church adherence, as can be observed in Poland, is also implicit in the fact that, when asked, the people say that every individual should decide for himself what his relationship is to church and religion, and not make himself dependent on the church. When comparing the given answer of 'Each should decide for himself' with that of 'Each should obey the church', 67.8 per cent stated that each person should make his own decision as to what form of faith to practise, and only 29.8 per cent believed that one should follow the church in this. When asked how one should behave when it came to the question of politics, morals and sexuality – in other words, questions of a non-religious nature – the proportion of those who believed that it was the individual's

10. This could also be the result of measurement effects, since the value for 1996 has been accumulated from different surveys between 1993 and 1996.



Source: Borowik 1993: Appendix, 1998

**Figure 4.** Belief in God in Poland (%)

own responsibility to decide, and who were against subordination to the decisions of the church, was even higher (cf. Borowik 1998).

Even if there is a recognisable process of individualisation in the religious field of the previously Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe – proven here especially for Central European countries – one must still be aware of the limits of this process. The distinction between religiousness and church adherence does not mean that one dimension is detached from the other; neither does a disconnection of that nature take place in the countries of Western Europe. Rather, a comparison of countries reveals that the degree of religiousness is high where church norms and rules of conduct are adhered to, whereas it loses significance where these rules are less strongly accepted. In *Poland*, church adherence and religiousness are more or less equally high, in *Hungary*, both dimensions are at a lower level, and, in *East Germany*, the further weakening of the one dimension causes the other to decline even more sharply. If a slight divergence of the two dimensions is discernible in Poland, the equally strong representation of the two dimensions is of greater import. However, whereas, in Poland and Hungary, a slight divergence of religiousness and church adherence can at least be detected, this can hardly be said for the *Ukraine*. There, it is much more the case that, in spite of the different speed at which the dimensions of religiousness and church adherence are increasing, they are developing along the same lines. This means that, generally speaking, even when the connection between religiousness and church adherence weakens, it still does not dissolve completely, and the process of weakening is least discernible in Orthodox countries.

There is a further phenomenon which corresponds to the partial individualisation of the religious, as can be observed in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe: the *emergence of smaller religious sects and groups* in these countries. What especially springs to mind are the new religious movements, such as Scientology, Hare Krishna, Osho, the Unification Church, but also the spreading of the Seventh-day Adventists, the Pentecostals and other special evangelical communities. Whether the non-traditional religious movements and groupings have come over from the West, or whether they are autochthonous, they do, in any event, represent a serious rival to the native national churches, which often react to their new competitors by attempting to exclude and delegitimise them. Especially by influencing legislation, the national churches attempt to secure their own position of supremacy, and to curtail the small religious communities in their possibilities of action. Even though the public dispute about the new religious cults and special religious communities is controversial and polemic, it continues to be the case that so far these groupings are, statistically speaking, of little consequence (Bogomilova 1998; Roth 1998).<sup>11</sup>

An attempt to explain the changes in church and religion since 1989

How, then, can the religious processes of transformation after 1989, the processes of uplift immediately after 1989, the ensuing weakening of this uplift and of individualisation, be explained?

1 One important, and perhaps the most important, explanatory factor can be seen in the *lifting of the political and state repression* of religious communities and the faithful after the collapse of Soviet Communism. Even though church work in some places was still occasionally seen to be obstructed after 1989, it must be maintained that, in correspondence to the collapse of state socialism, the possibilities of the churches and religious communities to act within society were, all in all, clearly extended. Now, in almost all countries of the former Eastern bloc, they are permitted to offer religious education for children and youths, to teach religion in schools, to do social as well as charitable work, and to take advantage of public relations and the media. Thus, they have incomparably more possibilities to relate to social problems than ever

11. This does not exclude the fact that the increase rates of these small communities are high. In Poland, for example, there were forty-eight such small groups in 1989, but 123 in 1997 (Borowik 1997: 18). Nevertheless, the numbers of members are still so low that, statistically, they can be disregarded.

before. Furthermore, the abolition of political repression has meant that many people's fear of harassment and of being at a disadvantage has subsided.

- 2 In order to explain the upswing related to church and religion, it is often pointed out that, after the collapse of state socialism, church and religion functioned as the providers of a new ideological orientation, and thus had taken the place of Marxism–Leninism. After the demise of Communism, the population of the Central and Eastern European countries had been left in an ideological vacuum, which had made it especially easy for representatives of these sects and new religious cults to win over large parts of the disorientated population. With their fundamentalist and reductionist principles, the representatives of these sects were providing the people, who were searching for a meaning and a hold, with the security they longed for (Gandow 1990: 227; Kolodny and Philipovitch 1997: 302).

Whoever argues in such a way, however, is overestimating the Marxist–Leninist achievement in providing ideological orientation, and its acceptance by the population. It is also overlooking the fact that broad sections of the Central Eastern European population had already turned towards church and religion before 1989. Prior to 1989, the stronger interest in religious questions was quite possibly, among other things, caused to a large degree by the fact that many people had turned away from the aims of Marxism–Leninism and the emancipatory social utopias of socialism. Then, religion really did fulfil the task of being an alternative authority to socialism, and provided some with a system of alternative values. At that time, the religious actions and statements by the church were, to a large degree, of *political importance*. By acting religiously under the conditions of state socialism, the church simultaneously had a political effect, since, in a politically perfectly organised system, where any deviant action was politically conspicuous, the church had a highly politicised status, due simply to its different nature in terms of organisation and ideology. If, vice versa, it is one of the functions of religion to transcend what is approachable, natural and normal, then any political statement issued by the church that does not comply with the system already tends to mean that the church is taking advantage of its religious function. Even by insisting on the truth, as opposed to the lie that has become normal, or insisting on examining one's own conscience in view of the lack of conscience encouraged by the state, means that the church does not only interfere politically but thus also acts as a religious institution, and, in this respect, quite minds its own business, which is preaching the Gospel. This simultaneity of political and religious task fulfilment was perhaps, in some countries (e.g. East Germany, Poland or Romania) again given directly during the upheaval,

when the church, in its attempt to speak up responsibly and truthfully, managed to have a political effect, and thus became a carrier of hope, a moderator and advocate of the political change that was striven for. The depoliticalisation of society that took place after the period of upheaval, meant, however, that *the church lost its immediate political function, and became one social institution amongst many*. In a functionally differentiated society, i.e. a society whose individual functional fields, such as economy, law, politics, education, medicine, religion, etc., increasingly become independent of each other, and no functional area is in a position to dominate the other any longer, church and religion can no longer claim to be the foundation of the whole of society. When the majority of a society influenced by Catholicism, such as *Poland*, refuses to be told what to do by the church on political, moral and family issues, this is a clear indication of an already fairly advanced development towards a functionally differentiated society. According to the opinion of the majority of Poles, the church must exist, and naturally they consider themselves to be faithful Catholics, but the moment the church exceeds its given area of responsibility, attempts to influence non-religious areas of society, or even attempts to establish itself as a general ruling authority within society, it is denied allegiance. The confidence losses of the Catholic Church can be explained by its efforts to exert political influence (e.g. on the voting decisions of the Catholics), to lay down universally binding rules of behaviour, and to establish itself as the final, all-party moral authority. Over 60 per cent of Poles agree with the statement that the church has too much power (ISSP 1991: Variable 30).<sup>12</sup> The individual must be responsible for his own life, but no social institution, not even the church, has the right to take away his responsibility for himself. That is the way most of them think.

- 3 It is precisely this tendency towards *functional differentiation, cultural pluralisation and individualisation* that the churches in the Central and Eastern European countries often have difficulties with. Not infrequently, they want to be a *guiding moral influence to the whole of society*, legitimise the political order on religious grounds, and provide society with a mental foundation. By virtue of this intention, however, they increasingly meet with social resistance the more the societies of the European East are modernised. Whereas, in the direct phase of upheaval, the churches were frequently seen as advocates of modernisation and opening up to the West, they have, in the meantime, become *critics of westernisation tendencies* in the Central Eastern

12. By way of comparison: in Russia, only 7 per cent, and in East Germany, 35 per cent of the population agreed with this statement (ISSP 1991: Variable 39).

European countries.<sup>13</sup> This, of course, particularly applies to the Orthodox countries. But not only. Even in *Poland*, which certainly considers itself to belong to the Western modern age, a substantial number of bishops criticised the modern Western consumer society, the moral liberalisation that was connected to the opening up towards the West, as well as the principle of competition and cultural pluralism (Bingen 1996). The European West and Communism were occasionally even equated with each other. Both were viewed to be morally decadent by a considerable number of Catholic clergy. Especially in Poland, the church finds it exceedingly difficult to understand that it is no longer the guiding cognitive and moral institution of society as it was under the conditions of Communism, and to accept the differentiation and pluralisation of society that have now taken place. The Catholic Church is slowly opening itself up to the modernisation process. If, however, one attempted to re-create unity, and to re-institutionalise the church as the unshakeable foundation of the fighting members and society, then this, under the conditions of differentiation and pluralisation, would, of necessity, not lead to a stronger homogenisation of society, but would in the end only strengthen the effects one was attempting to combat: differentiation and pluralisation, but now increasingly also within the church.

4 The church's attempt to win (back) comprehensive influence over society, however, does not only widen the variety of what is possible, but, not infrequently, also leads to a situation of polarisation. What is conspicuous is the fact that countries in which the Catholic Church has as strong a position as in Poland or Hungary are simultaneously reported to have strong anticlerical movements (Adriányi 1996; Kasack 1996: 8). Frequently, these anticlerical movements are led by previous communists, but, beyond this circle of incorrigibles, there is obviously also a social response to these movements. The activities of the anticlerical forces have been sparked off by this restorative attempt to re-establish the church as an active institution that is binding on the whole of society. The battling of both forces against one another represents a *political power struggle*, a fight for access to social resources, and the extension of the respective field of influence. This political struggle in most post-Communist countries revolves around the following points:

- the legal position of the churches and other religious groups, and, regarding this, especially the question of whether the national

13. Even in Russia, the Orthodox Church, between 1988 and 1990, pursued a pro-Western policy of opening up. During this time, it was still viewed as a symbol of democratic change and the return to Europe (Filatow and Furman 1992). In the meantime, however, it has turned to the authoritarian and romantic traditions of its history (cf. also Furman 1992; Artemoff 1996).

churches have a legally more privileged status than the minority religions;

- the return of church property that had been confiscated under Communist rule;
- the introduction of religious education in schools;
- the establishment of the church as a political and moral authority in society.

Even though the arguments about the political, legal and moral position of the churches in society are partly conducted in a very controversial fashion, as, for instance, in *Poland, Hungary, the Ukraine or Russia*, there are also examples of the emergence of a constructive dialogue between the religious communities, and, increasingly, between state administration and religious groups, as can, for example, be proved in the cases of *Estonia* and *Latvia* (cf. Krumina-Konkova and Gills 1998; Lehtsaar 1998). If some of the churches in the Central Eastern European countries have difficulty nowadays in integrating themselves in the developing pluralist tangle of different intermediary organisations and institutions, then this is also a reflex reaction caused by their outstanding position in past history as preservers of the national identity in times of foreign domination.

- 5 Apart from the *abolition of political repression, the position of the churches as an intellectual and ideological alternative to the socialist regime that collapsed, the processes of modernisation and functional differentiation*, there are also the *internal religious factors* that are of importance to the religious transformation currently taking place. Even though church and religion are strongly dependent on social conditions, their fate is not wholly determined by exterior factors. Rather, in order to understand the religious changes, we must also look at the situation within the religious communities themselves. What is then noticeable are the enormous *financial problems* that almost all religious communities in the Central Eastern European countries suffer from. Apart from the financial issue, it is obvious that there are also *difficulties in recruiting and training suitable church employees*. In many countries, such as *Russia, the Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, the Czech Republic*, but partly also in *Poland*, the priests are mainly very old or very young. Where the former often lack strength and flexibility to adapt to the new conditions, the latter lack experience. The bad training of church personnel not only means that many church duties are not carried out professionally, but also that any contact with the more highly educated turns out to be extremely tense and complicated. Often, the churches and religious communities are not capable of approaching and attracting intellectuals, even though it is often precisely in these circles that a certain religious interest can be

detected. A further problem within the church is caused by the fact that, often for centuries, the churches *were cut off from the developments of society and the church in the West*. Even within the Catholic Church in Hungary or Poland, a pre-Vatican form of theology is frequently practised (Tomka 1996b). The processes of modernisation and renewal that have taken place in the Western churches and denominations over the past forty to fifty years must now be laboriously adapted and caught up with by the churches of the East. Finally, the position of the churches has also become difficult, as *a pluralisation of ideological offers within the field of religion* has taken place. Small, charismatic religious communities are pushing their way on to the market, as are new religious cults and meditation practices that are supported from abroad. They compete with each other, and threaten the religious monopoly of the large national churches. Often, the smaller religious communities are not only more active and versatile than the large churches, but they invariably receive massive financial and cognitive support as well as personnel from the mother communities abroad. It is therefore not surprising that many of their offers are more attractive, especially to young people, than those of the traditional churches. They are not only more modern, up-to-date, Western, but often also more practical and related to everyday life. Thus, for example, foreign missionaries frequently offer courses in English or business studies.

The social situation of church and religion has dramatically changed since the collapse of the Soviet Empire. Their status has risen conspicuously in almost all Central and Eastern European countries. Whether, after the revival of church and religion, processes of alienation from the church will dominate again, or individualisation will accompany the increasing process of modernisation in the religious field, or whether church and religion will remain more closely linked to one another than in Western Europe, cannot yet be clearly assessed at this point in time. A lot speaks for the fact that, after the general renewed upswing of church and religion over the whole of Central and Eastern Europe, the differences between the countries will increase, and processes of religious individualisation will become more and more significant in many Central and Eastern European countries.

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