

Roman Catholic Fundamentalism Against Women's Reproductive Rights in Poland

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Abstract: *After the collapse of Communism, social and political conditions in Poland led to the development of Roman Catholic fundamentalism, generated by the Polish Episcopate, which aspires to play a political role, strengthened by 'the Polish Pope'. This paper focuses on the Church's current political campaigns on abortion, contraception and sex education. It shows how Catholic women's groups, who are against gender equality, participate in meetings where instruments for implementing gender equality are being discussed and promoted. Thus, Catholic fundamentalism is being mainstreamed partly by women working actively against women's rights. Some politicians and policymakers are now calling for cooperation between feminist women's groups and fundamentalist women's groups as an excuse for inaction among those who do not want an active feminist women's movement to influence public life.*

FOR the last two centuries, the Catholic Church has been connected with the fight for Polish independence.¹ At the end of the 18th century Poland was partitioned between Russia, Prussia and Austria and regained its independence only in 1918. In the interim, those fighting for the freedom of the Polish state had also to defend Catholicism against the Russian Orthodox and Prussian Protestant Churches,² and in turn the Catholic Church gave moral support and hope when uprisings failed.³ Between the first and second World Wars the Polish Catholic Church lost much of its power and political influence, and attitudes towards the church changed. Some leftwing and peasant political parties were openly anti-clerical.⁴

Before World War II, 65 per cent of the population of the country had been Roman Catholic. Because of the Holocaust, border changes and population displacement, the number was over 90 per cent after the War.⁴ Today, religious minorities and non-believers constitute no more than 5 per cent of the society.⁵

The Communist regime imposed on Poland after the War by the Soviet Union tried to restrict the Church's influence, particularly between 1949 and 1956. Hundreds of priests and lay Catholic activists were arrested; some were even killed. Religious practices were drastically limited and many Catholic publications and organisations were shut down.¹ Nevertheless, the Polish Communists did not destroy religion in Poland. Instead, people continued to attend church and through religious practices and rituals they expressed their freedom of belief, one of the few freedoms they could not be deprived of.

The strong historical link between religion and patriotism is one of the most significant reasons why the Communist government did not succeed in limiting the power of the Church and also why they more or less stopped trying to do so. The Church became more liberal in the 1970s and gained political strength when Karol Wojtyla became Pope in 1978. Paradoxically, under Communism the Church became stronger than ever before in the history of Poland, an unexpected side effect of the totalitarian reg-

ime. Its power culminated in the 1980s when the non-religious, political functions of the Church were at their height. In church, people could speak freely against the Communists, while those in political opposition, no matter what their religious and political beliefs, could hide and get shelter. Church policy was to emphasise ritual practices,¹ and rituals, feasts, mass processions and pilgrimages have never been celebrated more sumptuously than during the years of Communism.^{6,7} Between 1975 and 1985, 1500 Catholic churches were built in Poland⁸ and church-building has continued in the 1990s.

When Communism collapsed in 1989, political parties and other democratic institutions were formed, and there was no apparent need for the Church to carry on its own political activities. It has turned out, however, that the Church has not 'adjusted' to the new political circumstances by concentrating only on its religious role. Instead, the Church hierarchy has started to campaign for what it considers is due the Church for years of political support, such as the right to give religious instruction in schools, the criminalisation of abortion and the removal of the separation of church and state in the new Constitution.

Unexpectedly for the Church, most of the society seems not to support this political involvement and does not approve of their demands for religious instruction in schools, an anti-abortion law and others. Up to 70 per cent of people surveyed think that the current involvement of the Church is too high,⁹ and it has been criticised for these attitudes, including by liberal lay Catholics and a few priests. Opinion polls show that in 1989, 89 per cent of respondents believed the Church served Poland well, while in 1991 only 59 per cent agreed with this and in 1992 only 45 per cent.¹⁰ Lay and moderate Catholic commentators have attributed this dramatic loss of popularity to the hierarchy's political campaigns, their aggressive and demagogic tone, the contempt they seem to have for their political opponents, their expectations of unconditional loyalty and their lack of acceptance of pluralism within the Church even though their influence on government policy has increased.¹

Thus, in the most recent parliamentary elections of 1993 and the presidential elections of

1995, the Christian national parties were defeated and candidates supported by the Church lost in favour of left-wing parties, ie. Aleksander Kwasniewski of the Democratic Left Alliance won over Lech Walesa, the first Solidarity leader and a very observant Catholic. Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek, Secretary of the Polish Episcopate admitted¹¹ that this had to be treated as a failure of the Church as a moral authority and called for the Church to confine itself to its religious mission rather than aiming for political leadership.

Catholic fundamentalism in Poland today

Perhaps 20 per cent of Polish society is extremely traditional,¹² mainly older, less educated people living in the countryside who are represented by a number of small Christian national parties, particularly the Christian National Union. This party was founded in the early 1990s and became very influential with the support of the Catholic Church. In both the Parliament and Government they contributed significantly to the introduction of religious instruction in schools (1990), the anti-abortion law (1993) and the Concordat with the Vatican (1993). As a result of these, however, they were voted out of Parliament in the 1993 elections.

Catholic fundamentalism has always existed within the Church, but it became more visible when Communism collapsed. The Episcopate, led by primate Józef Glemp, has adopted a fundamentalist and no-negotiation position on all the above-mentioned issues and local churches have been active in organising letter-writing campaigns and collecting signatures on petitions supported by the Church hierarchy. Open opposition to fundamentalism within the Church has not yet occurred. Many people have complained that they have been pressured or forced to sign anti-abortion petitions in church after Mass, even those who do not support this. Although a liberal wing exists among the clergy, of whom the priest and professor Józef Tischner from Kraków is a popular representative, this part of the Church is neither numerous nor politically influential.

The 'Polish Pope' and his cult inside Poland have significantly strengthened the development of religious fundamentalism in the country, where the majority believe him to be one of

the most important Poles of the present day. His anti-choice position, which he expresses emphatically every time he speaks to the Polish people, has had a significant impact on individual Catholics. However, even he has recently lost some favour. While he is still seen as the moral and religious authority by 90 per cent of the people, only two-thirds accept his authority on social and political issues.¹³

The Catholic media have grown very quickly in the 1990s and several national and many local papers and magazines have started up. The most effective, however, are national Catholic radio stations, the most popular of which are Radio Maria and Radio Joseph. Public television also carries many Catholic programmes. The broadcasting of religious services is not considered a priority for the Catholic media. Rather their main goal seems to be to promote the views of the Catholic hierarchy.

If Polish society does not support the political involvement of the Church, how and why have they been achieving their political goals one after the other? Political commentators have not written much on this subject, but the general feeling is that this comes from the political elite since 1989, most of whom were in the former anti-Communist opposition. Even many of those known to be non-religious behave as if they believe that the Church deserves something for their support in the past. Others seem to have given in to pressure or used this as a way of demonstrating how Christian their values are.¹

What is really interesting is why the politicians of the Democratic Left Alliance, who are from the former Communist party and who won the parliamentary elections in 1993 in large part because of their anti-clerical stance, continue with the self-same policies. It seems that they have inherited the conviction that nobody wins in Poland if the Roman Catholic Church is against them. Now, although the experience of the last years shows differently, they are trying to avoid open conflict with the Church before the next parliamentary elections take place in 1997. In fact, the same appears to hold true for almost all politicians.

One of the most significant examples of how this is operating is the introduction of religious instruction into state schools in 1990 through an instruction issued by the Minister of

Education in spite of the fact that the Polish Constitution guarantees the separation of church and state. Such a change should have been possible only through Parliament, not a government minister. Although it is generally believed that the Parliament would not easily have passed such a law, apparently they would also not dare to oppose the decision of the Minister of Education after the fact.

After six years of religion in schools, people seem to be used to it and the majority accept it. However, there are still a significant number of Catholics who would prefer to have their children receive religious instruction outside school, which is no longer provided for. In line with other political activity, religious instruction in the schools has been used not only for religious reasons but also for ideological purposes. For example, quite often the anti-abortion film 'The Silent Scream' is shown to children and pressure is put on pupils to ask their parents to sign petitions in support of anti-choice campaigns.¹⁴

Anti-abortion activities

At the same time as the activities of the fundamentalist clergy have increased, a lay movement against legal abortion was established. Abortion was legalised in Poland in 1956 and has been available more or less on request for almost 40 years. Although exact figures do not exist, it is estimated that there are from 180,000 to 300,000 abortions per year.

The first organisation to become influential politically was the Pro-Life Federation, followed by several Catholic women's organisations. These became visible after the 1994 Cairo conference and intensified their efforts in connection with the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing. Thanks to easy access to the public and Catholic media, they have been quite effective in promoting anti-choice positions, collecting signatures on petitions and holding anti-choice demonstrations in front of the Parliament.

Open action against the reproductive rights of women, particularly against abortion, had started before 1990, but the main offensive took place in 1991-92 and finally resulted in a restrictive anti-abortion law in 1993. In that short time, several bills were debated and

rejected by the Parliament. The first was tabled in March 1989, three months before the official end of the Communist regime in June 1989.¹⁵ The next attempt was in 1990. Fundamentalist MPs hurried to 'make this gift'¹⁵ to 'the Sainted Father' Pope John Paul II, before his visit to Poland in 1991. This bill also fell.

The most restrictive bill was tabled in 1992 by members of the Christian National Union. Under that bill, abortion would have been legal only to save a woman's life, and any woman who underwent an illegal abortion and any doctor performing such an abortion would be penalised with up to two years in prison. This bill evoked strong opposition in the country.

Two Members of Parliament initiated a grassroots movement called the Social Committee for a Referendum,¹⁶ which called for a national referendum on abortion so that people themselves could decide whether abortion should be criminalised or not. Thousands of people across the country got involved in collecting signatures in support of a referendum, and over 1,300,000 signatures were collected but these were finally ignored.

The Parliament did reject the bill, but it was sent to the Extraordinary Parliamentary Commission, together with a more liberal bill, which had been proposed by the Women's Parliamentary Group. A new, compromise bill was drafted and passed in January 1993.

According to the new law, which has been in force since 1993, abortion is legal only if the woman's life or health are threatened, when the pregnancy is the result of a crime, or in cases of severe fetal abnormality. The law turned out to be even more restrictive in practice than on paper; many women have been denied abortions even though they have legal grounds. However, this has not stopped abortions from taking place.¹⁷ An 'abortion underground' and 'abortion tourism' to other countries have both flourished.

In 1994 a bill was passed by the more left-wing Parliament which amended the 1993 law and made abortion legal on social grounds, but the President, Lech Walesa, vetoed the bill and the initiative failed. According to recent opinion polls, 52 per cent of people believed the present abortion law should be changed and 29 per cent disagreed.¹⁸ Among those who believed that the law should be changed, 59 per

cent were in favour of legal abortion with some limitations and 22 per cent supported the right to abortion unconditionally.

Language has played a significant role in the public debates on abortion in these years. Abortion has often been compared by the fundamentalist opposition with concentration camps, a holocaust, the death of civilisation as well as simply murder. The language of women's right to choose and women's reproductive rights has not been affective enough to counter such language.

The debates surrounding the anti-abortion law have seen new concepts introduced into official Polish language. In the Polish Criminal and Civil Codes 'fetus' has been replaced by 'conceived child'. Even the medical community is using this term, in spite of its ideological sense. Another new expression, adopted first in the 1993 anti-abortion law is 'mother of a conceived child' instead of 'pregnant woman'.

In 1996, the Parliament has again undertaken the liberalisation of this law. The Extraordinary Parliamentary Commission debated the issue for over three months in early 1996 and drafted a bill in which: i) abortion would be legal if the woman was in difficult life circumstances, ii) sex education would be introduced into schools, and iii) to encourage wide use of contraception several brands of oral contraceptives would be subsidised by the State. In this new bill, the previously accepted legal terminology for pregnant women and the fetus was restored.

In the final round of voting on 23 October 1996, the new bill was passed by 228 to 195 votes with 16 abstentions. In the two months prior to that vote, the trade union Solidarity took a leading role in trying to defeat the bill as part of their aspirations to leadership in the right wing coalition in the 1997 elections. Before the voting, the head of Solidarity put pressure on political parties of the centre to adopt an official anti-choice position, with some success, and after the final vote he declared his intention to challenge the new law in the Constitutional Tribunal.

Anti-contraception activities

Under the Communist government, contraceptive services were never well developed. The

network of family planning clinics did not cover the whole country and failed to popularise family planning in the society. Contraception has never been treated as a priority by the health service, and with the Catholic Church preaching against it,¹⁵ 45 per cent of the population have never used any modern method of contraception.¹⁹

When the fundamentalists won the Parliamentary battle against legal abortion, they also intensified their efforts to limit access to contraception. Consistent propaganda against family planning is included in sermons as well as during confession and as part of religious instruction in schools. The Catholic media and Catholic organisations who promote natural family planning also run campaigns against other kinds of contraceptives. On one hand, they use religious arguments (using contraceptives is a sin) and on the other hand, quasi-medical arguments (contraceptives are dangerous for health and for the quality of sexual life).

Polish Catholic religious norms mandate going to confession in order to receive absolution at least several times a year. Without confession, people are unable to accept communion. During confession, however, many priests ask women directly whether they are using a contraceptive. When a woman admits she is, the priest puts pressure on her to stop;¹⁷ if she does not agree, he denies her absolution after her confession. Some women who are using contraceptives therefore do not tell the truth. Others try to find a priest who does not ask these questions. All this strengthens hypocritical attitudes among Polish Catholics.

Many medical doctors do not provide women with adequate family planning information or services. Many others do not promote contraceptives because they do not have sufficient knowledge themselves. Medical schools teach only four hours on family planning throughout the whole course of study and they concentrate mainly on natural methods. Among students at the Silesian Medical Academy, 96 per cent had insufficient knowledge of fertility regulation methods.²⁰ And there is not much hope that doctors' qualifications will be improved in the near future.

There is also a significant group of doctors who are against contraceptives for ideological

reasons, which the Federation for Women and Family Planning documented while preparing a series of reports on women's reproductive rights in Poland. The Federation heard from women who experienced a range of abuses, being denied a prescription for the Pill because it is against Catholic teaching, or because contraception equals abortion. Many women, and not only in small towns, have complained that doctors do not want to prescribe contraceptives and they are forced to go looking for a doctor who will. A number of doctors will recommend only natural methods.

Some doctors admit privately that they do not promote contraceptives to women because they are afraid of Church criticism. A majority of doctors follow the instruction of the Medical Council, to provide contraceptives only at a woman's own request.²¹

It must not be forgotten that, in spite of strong opposition within the medical community, it was a medical body which first agreed to significant restrictions on abortion in Poland. The Code of Medical Ethics adopted by an Extraordinary General Assembly of Doctors in December 1991, allowed abortion only on medical and criminal grounds. In fact, it is not possible to say what attitudes predominate among doctors but only that fundamentalist thinking among doctors is influential no matter what their numbers.

From time to time various campaigns are undertaken against contraceptives. For example, about two years ago fundamentalist groups organised a campaign against the IUD by saying it was an abortifacient, and that its use would result in children being born with an IUD in their heads. Last year, they attacked condoms on the grounds that they contained holes big enough for sperm and HIV to pass through.²² This information is then quoted by non-religious media and is taken as correct.

There is currently a public debate in progress over whether the Pill should be subsidised by the State. The Church and anti-choice groups are vehemently protesting against it, using such arguments as that contraceptive subsidies will remove needed support from heart or cancer patients and other seriously ill and dying patients.²³

Such misinformation campaigns help to maintain the low, although slowly growing, con-

traceptive prevalence. According to a recent government report only 2.2 per cent of Polish women of reproductive age use the Pill.²⁴ Church propaganda affects mainly the poorest women and the least educated. Many believe that by taking the Pill or using an IUD they would be doing something morally wrong and sinful, so they avoid it. According to a 1995 survey 49 per cent of respondents believed that using contraception was against the Catholic faith.²⁵ According to a 1992 survey, 46 per cent of those who described themselves as believing deeply in Catholicism were using coitus interruptus.²⁵

As for sterilisation, under current Polish law, sterilisation has never been legal. In the Penal Code sterilisation is considered as bodily damage and can result in a prison sentence of up to 10 years unless it is done on medical grounds.²⁶ Lack of access to contraceptive sterilisation significantly limits Polish women's contraceptive choices.

Sex education for traditional ends

In the 1970s a subject called 'Education for family life' was introduced in the Polish school curriculum. Theoretically, it included some elements of sex education. As there was no textbook available for this subject, what was actually taught depended on the individual teacher and his/her knowledge, views and commitment to the issues. Some teachers provided good information and others tried to avoid these 'difficult questions'.

In 1987 the Ministry of Education introduced a new textbook, written by a well-known sex educator, Wieslaw Sokoluk,¹⁵ which provoked a lot of discussion in the Catholic and lay press. Conservatives criticised the book for its openness and directness on the issue of sexuality, and the Polish Episcopate supported those who demanded the removal of the book from the school curriculum. Under this pressure, the Ministry of Education removed the book from the textbook list in 1988. This was the Catholic Church's first public involvement in the debate on sex education, but not the last.

In 1993 the new anti-abortion law obliged the Government to introduce sex education. However, as a direct result of Church pressure, the way the Ministry of Education is fulfilling this obligation is highly unsatisfactory. Accord-

ing to a recent study, the introduction of the sex education programme, following the Ministerial order, was not preceded by any training of teachers or preparation of textbooks. Hence, only 10% of schools said they could implement the instructions of the Ministry of Education easily.

*'There is chaos in terms of the subjects and the organisation of classes. Neither the teachers nor the students have a consistent programme to follow and subjects are treated at random. Nobody controls what effect the classes have on the education, socialisation, patterns of behaviour....'*²⁷

Sex education classes are variously being taught by school counsellors (23 per cent), Polish language teachers (19 per cent), biology teachers (25 per cent), nuns and priests giving religious instruction (3 per cent) and a miscellany of others. Self-evaluation on the part of those teachers is low: 60 per cent said that neither they nor their colleagues were qualified to teach the subject and the criteria used in the study to assess this independently confirms these teachers' self-assessment.

The level of knowledge about sexuality and reproduction among Polish youth is poor. In addition to a lack of basic knowledge, many false beliefs are cherished by young people. The most frequent are that it is harmful to wash during menstruation, that masturbation is physically and mentally harmful, that one cannot get pregnant from the first intercourse, that prevention of pregnancy is a woman's problem, that contraceptives are harmful, that withdrawal is 100 per cent effective in preventing pregnancy, that alcohol has contraceptive influence, and that pregnancy can be prevented by covering the genitals with vinegar, taking a hot bath after intercourse or inserting soap in the uterus.²⁷

The sex education programme under preparation by the Ministry of Education since 1995 encompasses Catholic teaching on sexuality and a patriarchal model of the family in which a woman's main role is that of mother and wife, thus perpetuating the stereotypes of the past. The only contraception that is recommended as acceptable is natural family planning.

The majority of textbooks recommended by the Ministry of Education for sex education are

based on the Church's teaching on family planning. These books are biased and inaccurate, and they ignore contemporary knowledge about contraceptives. They are particularly harmful since they are directed at the youth, who are the most vulnerable to propaganda. For example, they say that contraception is morally evil, that it is important for women to bring virginity into marriage and that men and women have different sexual needs and behaviour.²⁸ The following quotes from the book *In Search of Real Love*, which is recommended by the Ministry of Education for use in schools, are typical:

'Even if contraceptives only had the effect of preventing conception and even if they did not damage babies in the initial stages of life, and even if they were not harmful to a woman's health, using contraceptives cannot be treated as appropriate human sexual behaviour because of the moral evil it does to the human being... The moral evil behind using contraceptives comes from the fact that sexual contact is limited solely to pleasure, completely excluding the possibility of parenthood.'

*'When will people finally become aware that fertility means health? Contraceptives, which destroy fertility, destroy people's health.'*²⁹

This particular book is similar to the majority of such manuals and textbooks that teachers can choose from. These are promoted not only by the Ministry of Education, but also by local school boards and other school authorities. To what extent they are being used by teachers has not been documented.

Feminism vs fundamentalism: women's groups in Poland

The first Polish women's groups appeared in the 19th century, and by the time of World War II there were a lot of women's organisations in Poland. Under post-war Communism, however, the development of autonomous, non-governmental organisations was not allowed. Instead, specific social groups and communities could have one official organisation to represent their interests. Women were officially represented by the League of Polish Women. After the democratic changes in 1989 various NGOs, including

women's organisations, came into being. The most active and publicly visible were those fighting to keep abortion legal.

In 1992, nine of these groups established a pro-choice coalition called the Federation for Women and Family Planning. The Federation lobbies MPs on abortion, prepares reports on the consequences of the restrictive anti-abortion regulations and other aspects of women's reproductive health, advocates and organises grassroots action in support of legal abortion, and provides basic information on reproductive health through a series of publications and a telephone help-line. Its list of supporters in Poland has reached circa 5,000 people and is steadily growing.

Another significant women's initiative was established in connection with the Polish Committee of NGOs for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The Committee, a coalition of 15 groups, prepared a report, which points out in what spheres women are particularly discriminated against. The report attracted a lot of attention from the Polish media. Following active participation in the Beijing Conference, the Committee has continued its activities and is presently promoting the Platform for Action among local groups and in the media and is monitoring the implementation of the Platform by the Polish government.

Roman Catholic bishops are increasingly attacking the feminist movement and its activities. A recent example is a statement by the Polish Primate Józef Glemp, who used (or perhaps one might say abused) the religious celebration of Corpus Christi Day to speak out against feminists, abortion, contraception and sex education on 6 June 1996 during the main procession in Warsaw of about 15,000 participants:

'The feminist movement, with its slogan of women's liberation from traditional roles, is in fact aimed at the destruction of stable marriage, which in turn will lead to the unhappiness of women themselves.'

The next day, a well-known Catholic journalist wrote in the most popular Polish daily newspaper³⁰ that he longed to hear a sermon that was only theological – not about birth control, feminists, homosexuals or bad politicians.

Catholic women's groups have also been formed and mobilised in recent years, espec-

ially before the Beijing conference. In reaction to the report of the Beijing NGO Committee, they launched their own report on women in which they tried to prove that women in Poland are not discriminated against.²³ That report also opposes legal abortion, hormonal contraception and condoms and protests against state subsidies for the Pill.

Fundamentalist Catholic women's groups appear to have become involved in preparations for Beijing mainly to criticise the Conference and the Platform for Action and minimise their importance. Since then, however, they are being invited to all the national bodies where feminist women's NGOs are invited. Their strategy in those bodies is similar to the strategy adopted by the Vatican in the International Conference on Population and Development and was best demonstrated in the National Committee for Beijing, established by the Government Plenipotentiary for Family and Women's Affairs, whose main goal was to prepare the government report on women.

Throughout the debates the Catholic women's groups opposed all those parts of the government report which referred to reproductive and sexual rights. Finally, they said they could not agree with the contents of the report and withdrew from the National Committee. They also mobilised the Catholic media to publish letters and petitions against the government report and the Government Plenipotentiary as a feminist.

No official body dealing with women's or family issues would dare to ignore Catholic women's groups at the moment. This is a real paradox. Although they are against gender equality, they participate in meetings where

instruments for implementing gender equality are being discussed and promoted. Thus, the position of Catholic fundamentalism is being mainstreamed.

Some politicians and policymakers are now calling for cooperation between feminist women's groups and fundamentalist women's groups as a pre-condition of partnership and cooperation with the Government. This is a perfect excuse for inaction among those who are afraid of a well-developed NGO movement and want to neutralise it and limit its impact on public life – and for those who do not want to provoke the Roman Catholic hierarchy. If the feminist movement were to accept that such a partnership were either necessary or feasible, it would augur ill for women.

Fundamentalist forces, although not numerous and lacking broad support in the society, have succeeded in gaining significant victories. It is obvious that without strong pressure from the Roman Catholic Church, these could not have been achieved. Some of these, such as religious instruction in schools, can be considered secure. Others, such as the anti-abortion law, they have just lost. But by prioritising the need to gain political victories, the Catholic Church has been losing something very important – the confidence, the trust and the support of many people.

The feminist women's movement, on the other hand, poses one of the main challenges to the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy's political efforts to push women back into a traditional mould by denying them contraception, abortion and an education on sexuality and reproduction that is empowering.

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Résumé

On trouvera dans cet article une analyse des conditions sociales et politiques de la Pologne qui ont conduit, après l'effondrement du communisme, au développement d'un catholicisme romain fondamentaliste. Celui-ci a été généré par l'épiscopat polonais, qui aspire à jouer un rôle politique, et renforcé par 'le Pape polonais'. Le document met en lumière les campagnes politiques que mène actuellement l'Eglise en matière d'avortement, de contraception et d'éducation sexuelle. Il montre comment des groupes de femmes catholiques, opposés à l'égalité des sexes, participent à des réunions sur la discussion et la promotion des moyens d'assurer l'égalité entre les sexes. C'est de cette manière que des femmes militant contre l'égalité des sexes favorisent le fondamentalisme catholique. Certains décideurs ou politiciens appellent maintenant à une coopération entre les groupements de femmes féministes et fondamentalistes, excuse d'une inaction chez ceux qui ne veulent pas qu'un mouvement actif de femmes féministes influence la vie publique.

Resumen

Este ensayo analiza las condiciones sociales y políticas en Polonia que condujeron al desarrollo del fundamentalismo católico tras la caída del comunismo. El fenómeno fue generado por el episcopado polaco, que aspira a desempeñar un papel político, y reforzado por el 'Papa polaco'. Este ensayo se centra en las actuales campañas políticas de la iglesia vinculadas al aborto, los métodos anticonceptivos y la educación sexual. En él se muestra que agrupaciones católicas de mujeres, opuestas a la igualdad entre los sexos, participan en reuniones en las que se discute y promueve medidas dirigidas a la implementación de dicha igualdad. De tal modo, el fundamentalismo católico está permeando las corrientes más aceptadas, debido en parte a mujeres que trabajan activamente en contra de los derechos de la mujer. Algunos políticos y encargados de la formulación de políticas exhortan ahora a la cooperación entre agrupaciones feministas y agrupaciones de mujeres fundamentalistas, para justificar la falta de acción por parte de quienes quieren evitar la influencia de un activo movimiento feminista en la vida pública.