CHURCHES AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Research Project funded by the European Commission
The Project “Churches and European Integration” studies the political role of the Churches in Europe since the Second World War. The topic is approached by using the methods of Church History, History, the History of Ideas, and Systematic Theology. The studies of the Project are conducted in five European countries (Finland, Sweden, Germany, Great Britain, Estonia), which allow the Project to benefit from their respective research traditions and methodological approaches.

The post-war process of European integration is a focal point of interest in this Project. By integration we understand not only those inter-state processes of economic, military and political integration, and forming alliances, but also the kind of thinking, programmatic work and action, which aimed to increase the common understanding of the various European nations and to promote peace. The Project studies the impact of Churches and various international Christian and ecumenical organizations as well as ecumenical dialogues and activities on these developments. The geographical centre of the study is Western Europe. The organisations studied include mainly Protestant and Orthodox churches. These reflect the reality of many ecumenical organisations in Europe. However, there is also inclusion of the Catholic churches as the various case studies show.

The assumption behind the Project is that in studies of recent European political history it is not enough to study the processes of political decision-making and those political changes which result therefrom. It is also necessary to focus on the attitudes and values of people, on the interpretation of these attitudes and values in historic situations, and on the ways in which they affect people and their visions for the future.

We feel that Churches and Christian organizations have been and still are important actors in forming ideological perceptions and opinions amongst Europeans. Churches and Christian organizations have also in the past ‘secular’ century acted as pioneers in international co-operation. In order to understand the recent past it is therefore worthwhile to analyse the attitudes and the model of action adopted by the Churches. The aim of the Project is to promote discussion and evaluation of its results amongst other researchers, and by Churches and non-governmental organizations. It is also assumed that this work will challenge political decision-makers both nationally and internationally to think about the importance of values in making political choices and in European political life as such.

Social and Political Issues as an important part of the Tradition of the Churches

Throughout history the political dimension has had an important role in the teaching and in the practice of the Churches. In Christian preaching and theology, ethics and morality have always been central. The issues of the just society, social responsibility, and the questions of war and peace, have been key questions explored by the Churches.

Common ground can be found in the teaching of the Christian Churches, but differences also occur. Theological differences have led – even in the recent past – individual Churches to seek socio-ethical solutions which differ from those found by another Church. A certain passivity in Lutheran Churches to tackle the political developments in the Third Reich within and outside Germany can be given as an example. After the Second World War the crisis of Lutheran social ethics was debated in many countries. This led to many changes. Also other Churches have tried
to learn from the mistakes they have made, and thus revise their social ethical approaches. But even today it is typical for the Churches to aim to settle their social and ethical activities according to “the theological frames” which can be found in the theological tradition they represent.

The Churches have their own specific traditions, but at the same time they have inevitably been political actors, and therefore been also stamped by the times. When studying Churches historically, it is therefore worth asking to what extent the Churches have at a particular time, in their statements and actions, settled to follow the common political trends of the moment, and to what extent they have had something independent to offer.

**Research Questions posed by the Churches and European Integration Project**

The Churches and European Integration Project analyses how the Churches perceived the situation and the problems of tense, divided, Cold War Europe, and what kinds of programmes and plans of action were developed amongst the Churches in order to support and to encourage European integration and the welfare systems promoting it broadly conceived. The project also studies the ways in which this work was motivated, and what kind of importance and impact the activities of the Churches provided to unifying Europe.

The perspective of the Project also covers the political reality of the 1990s, which followed the Cold War. It is asked, how the Churches succeeded in leaving the Cold War setting behind, and what was their analysis of the new situation. The Project also studies how the Churches created new models in order to approach the new social and political challenges and crises.

Based on studies conducted in five European countries, the results of the Project can never hope to produce a complete analysis of the situation. The case studies of each country are carried out independently. The aim is to reach a comparative approach in the final conclusions.

In this Project, the concept of European Integration is understood broadly. It comprises economic, political and military co-operation, which took place in Cold War Europe, but also the ideological manifestations and the lines chosen which were typical for the time and for the historic situation. When we discuss the role of the Churches in European Integration, we include those actions and thinking of Christians and Churches which fit to this definition.

The churches are both political actors, and creators of ideological perceptions. They have and have had different kinds of national roles and political self-understandings at various times. Also other religious denominations have played an important role in defining the national role and the political self-understanding of a given church. This was particularly visible during the Cold War.

The dialogue between cultures and religions is not as such a target for the study at hand, but current reality acts understandably as context to our study. The comparative approach in this project focuses on the attempt to compare the political roles and the self-understanding of the Churches in various historical contexts. This takes place through analysing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the churches as political actors. This analysis is the basis for trying to understand the quality of the political performance of the churches. It is still the reality, that Christianity and its values remain a factor influencing the political mindset of many Europeans. The Project aims to bring the political context into dialogue with our research findings. An analysis of this kind is a valuable source of information for the churches to ease their own self-understanding and the evaluation of their own motives and action even today.
Levels on which the Project studies the importance of the Churches in the Process of European Integration

The work of the Churches promoting the process of European Integration is as impossible to separate from the reality of Cold War, as it is impossible to discuss European Integration without this background. The Project approaches its theme at a general level, and in separate case studies. The latter provide more analytical and detailed information on the realities of five different European countries.

The starting-point of the Project is the assumption that the anti-religious element in Communist ideology implied that the relationships of Churches to the Communist states would be problematic. Due to this, Christians in the Western world tended to see the entire ‘Eastern block’ as an anti-Christian entity. The first focal point is the Project’s examination of the political and ideological attitudes behind European integration. It is also central to find out what kind of picture of Communism there was in the Churches, and how it changed. The Project examines also how the Churches viewed the general conditions for European unity, and what kind of Europe they would have wanted to build. What did they think of integration and its needs? What kind of future did they think that Europe should have? Did they think the Churches should have had played an active role in creating it?

Another major question which the Project asked is how Christians and the Churches saw the international situation of the time and its place in history. Special attention is paid to the changes in these understandings in various countries at different times - for example, the influence of the various crises of the Cold War.

Central too is the examination of the practical activities of the Churches; the level of actions. The Project studies whether the Churches were involved in planning and in the realization of political, economic, and military models of co-operation. It is also asked, what kinds of activities did the Churches create and realize by themselves both nationally and internationally. Points of interest are, for example, research activities, projects, organizations, aid work, peace activities, and radio work.

The Project also examines the perspectives offered by those theological approaches chosen by the Churches. It studies social ethical statements and manifestos in which a socio-ethical perspective on the situation in Europe can be found. Additionally the Project studies those theological discussions and consultations which the Churches launched across the Iron Curtain. What was their motivation to do so? The question is asked whether common denominators can be found for the activities of the Churches and Christians to promote European integration during the years of Cold War. What was the reasoning given to this work? Did these denominators or the reasoning change through the time?

Finally, the Project studies the impact of the work of the Churches and Christian organizations on the process of European Integration.
Key findings of the various work packages – Political roles of the Churches and their Significance in the Process of European Integration

The Issue of peace in the ecumenical dialogues during the Cold War and their implications on the lives of the churches
by Heiko Overmeyer

European integration was no topic of the bilateral theological dialogues in the Cold War; only at the end of those dialogues was Europe discussed. In those discussions the expression of the ‘house of Europe’ was the centre of attention: This house was supposed to include all European countries, not only the Western European Countries or those countries with Roman-Catholic or Protestant traditions. It was important for the participants of those late dialogue sessions that Europe should be more than an economical community: Problems of human rights, of peace, of justice and of pollution were supposed to be solved in a community to be called Europe.

But even if the issue of European Integration was discussed only at the end of those dialogues, a few aspects have to be taken into consideration which can be useful when talking about the Churches and European Integration: First, the dialogues showed that the churches were able to talk with each other as a (more or less important) part of their societies and to cross the political borderlines even after the Second World War and even in times of political crisis. Especially in these times churches tried to make sure that the different political systems stayed in contact. Secondly it can be seen that churches in Eastern Europe were controlled by the communists. But on the other hand the dialogues show that they analyzed and discussed even political problems on a theological background – and even the communists were not able to control this. One can suspect that churches can not be controlled in their evaluation of political problems and will evaluate political aspects (like integration) on the background of their theological and ethical traditions. And thirdly it has to be remarked that some churches were able and wanted to act together in the field of social and political problems in spite of all theological differences.

Two aspects have to be taken into account: first, what kind of influence do the different churches still have in their societies: In Western Europe their influenced decreased, but what about the Eastern Europe societies? And secondly, have the aspects which have been discussed between the different churches during the Cold War only been valid in the times of the Cold War or are they still valid today. If that is the case churches can maybe play a role in the European Integration.

Churches in the context of recent political and economic changes in Europe
by Pauliina Arola

The accelerating process of globalisation represents both global progress and global fragmentation. Economically, politically and technologically the world has never seemed freer - or more unjust. The accelerated process of globalisation and especially its implications to national economies, nation states and national cultures have created worries in many European churches. It seems that these concerns – being the concern for the future of the welfare state model or the future of the Slavic identity – seem to mould greatly the social and political understanding of the churches.

The aim of the work in this study has been to offer an argumentative analysis of the contemporary normative social teaching of the European churches through carefully selected, comparable material. The role of churches in the context of recent political and economic
changes in Europe is studying from through analysis the various responses of European churches to globalisation.

It seems to be valuable to search for a general paradigm on globalisation which the churches present. Some of the churches studied advocate a more globalist, others a more sceptic approach. It has been also possible to separate those churches with a more holistic view on globalisation with its multiple aspects from those with economically dominated globalist view.

Additionally the reasons differ when the motivation of the churches to entering into globalisation debate. Often the interest are national – weather being preservation of national welfare state or moral concern. There is also a variety in the focus on economical, political (governance) or ethical issues. This influences the self-understanding of the churches in these debates on globalisation.

It seems that there are differences in first of all, how the church presents itself and to what relation it takes to the phenomena or globalisation as well as to whose interest it implicitly or explicitly advocates. The churches present moral, social and political, environmental and capitalist criticism on the current project on globalisation. In these categories the criticism can be divided into liberal/secular, ecumenical as well as to more traditional or fundamentalist approaches. Some churches are in clear resistance to the “mainstream globalisation discourse”.

Additionally the role of state and the role of European institutions in governing globalisation differ. Some see the European Union as an active global policy maker, others as a defender of welfare structures and for some it still remains a non-player.

The political commitments of Western Christianity by Aila Lauha, Riho Saard, Suvi Kyrö, Pia Latvala, Aappo Laitinen and Ville Jalovaara

The aim of the study was to describe and analyze the manifestations and backgrounds of Western Christian acts towards the Communist East and to describe Cold War-inspired religious phenomena in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. The study was planned to concentrate on one specific Western Protestant Church, namely the political and ideological attitudes, and the political role and programme of the Lutheran Church of Finland. How did the Lutheran Church of Finland see the international situation of the Cold War period, the blocs, Communism as an ideology, and the future of Churches and Christianity in Europe?

Research carried out so far has shown that Western Churches were actively involved in political questions during the Cold War. The reasons for this varied from country to country. The study was focused on the actions of the Evangelical Church of Finland and its relations to Communism during the 1960s and 1970s. The research has dealt with the key people and groups inside the Church who defined the relations of the Church to political movements and questions. An important part of this research has also been to discover the reasons behind the Church's abstinence from activity in questions concerning Communism.

Several studies have underlined the fact that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland followed the course of affairs of international politics and monitored the political situation of the Cold War period with keen interest. Its actions were, however, in most cases defined by the interests of the Finnish State. The reason for the Church's interest was the widely accepted concept of strong national unity, even though these nationalistic notions were not followed blindly. The Lutheran Church saw Communism as an anti-Christian ideology and considered the USSR a threat not
only to Finland’s independence, but also to the entire Christian world. The church had a clear notion of what was desirable: Finland’s fall into the Eastern Bloc would have jeopardized Finland’s independence and been fatal to the Church and to Christianity in Finland.

However, the Church had the problem of deciding when and where to express its political views. In addition, it was not clear who was in the position to act as the spokesperson for the Church. In practice, the role of the Archbishops and their connection to political leaders was proven to be decisive.

The Church did not take part in European politics. Although it wanted Finland to be part of the Western, non-Communist world, it did not participate actively in formulating distinctively political agendas (e.g. European integration). The international connections of the Church were constricted mainly to ecumenical relations and relief work. From the late 1960s onwards, there was a strong willingness amongst the youth to become conscious of the problems of the Third World and social ills as well as the peace question. Although there was no clear Leftist orientation in the political ideology of the Lutheran church, there was a growing tendency to take the question of worldwide responsibility more seriously, especially in the 1970s. The analysis and criticism of Communism was relevant in the Church during the entire period under examination. The issue was dealt with extensively, and usually critically, for example in Christian books published in Finland. In relation to Finnish Communists, the criticism was gentle whereas the international Communist movement was more heavily criticised. The reason for this was the Church’s willingness for dialogue with the domestic labour movement. In issues relating to the USSR, the Church had to face a difficult situation. The leaders of the Church were fully aware of the violations of the freedom of religion in the Soviet countries, but it was not clear whether the Church could and should bring it up on an official level.

The Lutheran Church of Finland was involved in ecumenical activities and the social ethical policy of the Ecumenical movement was well known. The Church also had functioning bilateral relations to several protestant churches behind the Iron Curtain. In addition, the Lutheran Church negotiated with the Orthodox Church.

The research has partly confirmed the pre-conception that the Lutheran Church of Finland considered national unity and its position to be of great importance. Similarly, the Church did not give up its anti-Communist policy, but it was careful in its comments. Developments in international politics were observed, keeping in mind the situation in Finland. The Church only took part in political conversation within the framework of the official foreign policy of the Finnish government. This foreign policy was supported even if it was not necessarily approved. This research has, however, uncovered different courses of action within the Church. There were opposition groups within the Church that were not silenced, for example, the circles that smuggled Bibles and criticised the USSR for violations of human rights. The research has also shown that the Church was more active in politics, and a stronger opinion-maker during the Cold War period than what was previously assumed. In addition, this research has proved that the government was interested in the policy of the Church and the statements it issued.

*The Churches in the context of the Cold War and European integration: the British perspective*

by Philip Coupland

Focussing on the period from the 1930s to recent times, Glasgow has uncovered and analysed the involvement of the British Churches in debates about international relations, with particular reference to Britain’s part in the process of European integration.
One of the aspects of Britain’s recent history is this nation’s ambivalent relationship to the process of European integration. Whilst Britons can be said to be united with the peoples of the continent by their common religious heritage as the one-time nations of ‘Christendom’, at the same time they have been divided from Europe by centuries of religious conflict and the transformation of Britain into a world power and bastion of ‘Christian civilization’.

Glasgow’s research has revealed an important, but a hitherto little examined aspect of this area of political culture and its influence on foreign policy. This work has shown both the salience of Christian symbols and narratives in the political culture of the 1940s and 50s and the intimate, multi-dimensional and often morally complex networks of political influence between the Churches and the State. In so doing, WP5 employs one of the most influential concepts in the humanities in recent years: identity. By deconstructing the overlapping national and religious identities central to the ambivalent attitudes of Britons to their nation’s place between continental Europe and the American superpower, Glasgow has provided a new and illuminating perspective in the historical study of national identity and European integration during the crucial years of the early Cold War.

It has been shown that whilst ‘Europe’ did have a special place in Christian discourse, the Churches followed a path of disengagement similar to that of secular political forces, abandoning pro-European positions for exclusive emphases on the Empire and the Anglo-American Alliance. Political, cultural and theological assumptions, compounded with elements of denominational conflict, were all influential. In particular, the Churches’ close involvement with British imperialism through overseas mission, the intimacy of Church-State relations and the then dominant theological discourse yoking political power to religious ideals were all highly influential.

In consequence, whilst the Churches in the mid-Twentieth century were potentially an influential force, their potential to positively influence British participation in creating a united Europe was largely unused. Concluding its survey with Christian perspectives on British entry to, and membership of, the European Union, WP5 shows that, whilst the Churches have continued to speak on these questions in more recent decades, their influence is much diminished in a nation whose culture and institutions are increasingly post-Christian.

The cultural and social impact of the Nordic churches on European integration
by Anders Jarlert

The study concentrates to the cultural and social impact of the Nordic churches on European integration. Due to the theological reorientation of the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church in Sweden has changed its pastoral strategy from denominational demarcation to an increasing pluralism. Post-Conciliar ecclesiology was the prerequisite for an official dialogue with the leaders of other churches and denominations, which in the Scandinavian case led to collaboration principally with the Lutheran National churches. An apparent result of this change was that the former very common anti-Catholic attacks in the media became increasingly rare. Another is the increased interest in Catholic forms of piety and liturgical practice, especially within the Church of Sweden.

The positive view on European unification of the Roman Magisterium, reflected in official statements of the Swedish Catholic Church, has – together with the ecumenical dialogue - served
to create a more positive view on European integration within the Swedish society. Ecumenism can thus be regarded as an important step towards a European integration.

On a popular and local level, however, the role of the churches in the process of European integration as solely an expression of ecumenism can be questioned. It seems rather as if the churches’ international involvement has been related to their basic conception of society; this entailed that missionary, prophetic, confessionalist and ecumenical trends lived side by side.

The Swedish non-Lutheran Christian denominations (the so-called Free churches) have sometimes been able to cooperate with Swedish Catholics in matters of doctrine, something that might have positive implications for integration of immigrants in Sweden. However, there is still a lot of scepticism among Free church voters of the Christian Democratic party, as well as in political circles on a national level, towards Roman Catholicism of a South European form (in, for example, Mariology and morality), which has had negative effects on their views on European integration.

The developments of integration on a non-political, societal, attitudinal, local, maybe even individual level have to a great extent walked hand in hand with the actual possibilities of international contact - the development of tourism and the knowledge of foreign languages. The other churches present at sites of pilgrimages are to a much greater extent accepted and influences are more readily imported. Increased knowledge and understanding are also explicit or implicit goals of many pilgrimages.

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The political commitments of East European Christianity since the Cold War: The Estonian Case
by Riho Altnurme

Results of the study show that the political role of the churches has been rather passive in the period between the WWII and collapse of the Soviet Union. There is a difference in countries and confessions and the division line between the Roman-Catholic church and protestant (mostly minority) churches is rather convincing. The Roman-Catholic Church in Lithuania, Poland has served as a centre of a resistance, whereas in countries like Estonia, Latvia the church has been mostly collaborant and only the individual pastors have participated in political actions. Still in both cases the churches have been the symbols of the order different than Soviet and many dissidents have started contacts with the churches throughout the period.

The official contacts between the churches in East and West have helped to keep the contact with the Western world throughout the Soviet period. The example of Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC) has been observed, starting from 1950s, when official contacts with Western Churches were re-established. In this period no other contacts with the West were almost impossible. The churches have got the literature and have mediated also personal contacts to some extent. The parish members have got the possibility to hear the guests from the West.

The influence of Western culture on the Estonian mentality through contacts with Western Church members became increasingly possible at the end of 1980s. The friendship churches and Christian organisations among them Taizé movement have influenced the understanding of Estonians about Europe. Still the society in general is partly rather anti-clerical.

Concerning the role of churches in the late process of the access into EU in candidate countries it must be stressed that the Roman-Catholic church has been quite active in the candidate
countries before the vote for EU to support the access. Whether it was a successful behaviour for the Lutheran church in Estonia to be active in this debate is still to be questioned. The church has issued the statement in favour of the EU but there have been too many influential persons and organisations who have asked the same. Still it may help to improve the relationship between the society and the church when church takes the positive stand towards the goal supported by the majority of the people.

The significance of the Churches for political Changes in Eastern Europe and its theological and social background
by Katharina Kunter

The study is based on a case study of Christians and Churches in the Transitions in the Czech Republic 1977-2003. Both, Christians (Catholics and Protestants) and the Church, played important but diverse roles during the political changes of the late eighties and nineties in the Czech Republic. Some of them supported oppositional groups like the well-known Charta 77 and participated in different democratic movements of the civil society, while others were more reserved and less enthusiastic about the new political order and cautious about new forms of pluralism, economy and secularism after 1989.

Starting from that point WP-8 describes some specific historic elements of the social and political engagement of Christians and Churches in the period of the end of communism and in the transitions since 1990. It discusses some underlying historical and mental dispositions of opposition, cooperation and support as well as the positive reception of human rights, models of democracy and pluralism which were special for some Czech Christians. Finally it asks for the specific Czech Christian vision of Europe - in the end of communism and in the period of transitions.

The study uses an historical approach and is based on an argumentative analysis. Resources are archive files, documents and published papers as well as a series of interviews in Prague and Berlin (2002/2003) with a) clerics and ministers who took an active part in the changes and the transitions and b) members of the new generation (20-30 years old) who grew up during the transitions and still reflect their attitudes to the church and theology in a changing society.
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