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# **Trust in Organisations: Religious Elites and Democracy in the Post-Communist Czech Republic**

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## **Abstract**

My research establishes that the elite of the Catholic Church in the Czech Republic demonstrate a strong commitment to the norms of tolerance, plurality, and public participation. This finding (the existence of democratic virtue within theocracy) challenges the contemporary consensus around the work of Robert Putnam and others that there is an inverse relationship between civility and associational hierarchy. I explain this finding by showing how the organisations and networks in which the Bishops were involved during Communism, for example Charter 77 and the prison universities, functioned as 'schools of democracy.' These 'schools' produced the strong civil values of Czech Bishops still in evidence today. The argument indicates that Putnam and other social capital theorists should move beyond the formal level of associations in their search for the causes of civic virtue.

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## **About the author**

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## **1 Introduction**

Democracy, it is argued, depends upon not only 'practices and institutions' but also 'certain ideas, sentiments, and habits' (Banfield, 1992:23). These sentiments and ideas are often referred to as the civic virtues, or civility, a commitment to the norms of plurality, trust, tolerance, and concern for the public good. (see for example Bellah et al, 1991; Etzioni, 1995; Sandel, 1982). The contribution of these norms to making democracy work are held to be their facilitating role in the success of collective projects enacted from various points in the political community.

Obvious places for the origin of collective projects are the seats of Parliament or executive power. Authors such as Putnam and de Tocqueville emphasise the positive role of customs of civic involvement for the greater performativity of representative government (de Tocqueville, 1994; Putnam et al, 1993). They hold that, if prevalent in the citizen body, virtues of trust and participation help those who are charged with governing to carry out their tasks. It is, for example, simpler to carry out a project such as a census if people are willing to participate in the scheme, to fill in their forms and post them off. It would be tedious, if not impossible, if in every government project, the courts were the regular resort, as in the case of the UK poll tax, to secure an adequate level of cooperation. Evidently, as Tocqueville argued, a strong civic society can make for strong government. Yet, that said, it would be difficult if some individuals or groups always cooperated and contributed and others never did. It is far easier, Taylor argues, to make, for example, a commitment to paying one's tax if you are confident that others are doing likewise. Taylor argues, therefore, that 'free societies require a high level of mutual trust.' (Taylor, 2000:93)

While participation and trust oil the wheels of projects from above, these norms have, at the same time, functions broader than those that ultimately feed into the state or the realm of formal Government. The civic virtues also play their role in facilitating what Hall describes as societal 'self-organization' (Hall, 1998:54). Here, virtuous outputs are retained within the realm of civil society and feed back into the community, serving as a resource for projects of self-government. Indeed, trust, commitment, and participation are fundamental to these kinds of interaction since they lack that last recourse to violence or domination that underwrite the schemes of formal representative government.

If participation needs to be activated by trust - confidence that others will also participate - it equally needs another kind of trust: trust that there is a benefit in, or some value to be had from, cooperating or participating with others. People, Taylor points out, can hardly be expected to participate in decision-making if they believe that their voices are never heard and that their preferences never count. Trust certainly lubricates cooperation but it also needs a recognition of the reality of plurality. Taylor argues that:

If a sub-group of the ‘nation’ considers that it is not being listened to by the rest, or that they are unable to understand its point of view, it will immediately consider itself excluded from joint deliberation. A people must be so constituted that its members are capable of listening to one another...This demands a certain reciprocal commitment. It is the shared consciousness of this commitment which creates confidence in the various sub-groups that they will be heard. (Taylor, 2000:93).

Finally, this commitment to the views and interests of others requires tolerance, the inescapable accessory to the principle of pluralism, which is necessary Banfield argues to ‘encourage...the making of concessions’ (Banfield, 1992: xii; Hirst, 2000)

In sum, civility has a role in easing two distinct kinds of interaction; on the one hand, those ‘promises and commitments enforceable by law’ (Sklar, cited in Stewart 2000:58), and on the other those promises made outside law, the making and keeping of which rely instead on ‘moral or social persuasion’ (Stewart, 2000: 59). This second kind of promise is as crucial to democracy as the first because there are significant limits to the extent that cooperation and participation can be enforced or legislated for. And yet, without such participation, democracy is democracy in name only, in danger of becoming Rose’s ‘broken-backed democracy’; a democracy that is ‘inefficient and often ineffective, and supported by its citizens as a lesser evil rather than because it is good in itself’ (Rose, 1998:5).

While the norms of plurality or tolerance were superfluous to the single culture of Communism, the norm of participation was, on the contrary, in high demand. In successive Soviet and satellite regimes it became the responsibility of *all* citizens to strive for the attainment of public goods. At the same time this summons to solidarity was empty of what Stewart describes as the dialogical requirements at the core of today’s participatory models (Stewart, 2000). Taylor’s dictum that deciding together

means deliberating together (Taylor, 2000) was irrelevant to the role of a Leninist state which dictated both the content of the common good and the means of arriving at it.

The legacy of this top down, elitist management is evident today. People did not trust each other under Communism and, in comparison to Western Europe, they do not trust each other now. (see for example, Mishler, 1998). This is the starting point for much sociological commentary on Eastern Europe. Sztopka talks of a ‘culture of mistrust’ that has developed in the post-communist societies of Eastern Europe, Smolar of the atomisation of society (1996:33), and Gellner of the ‘moral vacuum in the east’ (1996:6) Many, such as Putnam, believe that this lack of ‘civil norms’ holds severe consequences for the reform of the region: ‘without norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement...amoral familism, clientelism, lawlessness, ineffective government, and economic stagnations - seems likelier than successful democratisation and economic development.’ (Putnam et al, 1993:183).

## **2 The Causes of Civility: Putnam and Organisational Structure**

The concerns of Gellner, Szstompka et al have unsurprisingly led to a revival of interest into questions surrounding the origins and causes of civic virtue. A growing body of research has built upon de Tocqueville’s proposition that the norm of mutual respect derives from the associations of civil society, that in the act of association itself one learns the ‘habits of the heart’ so essential to democracy. This basic premise that the civic virtues can be nurtured through the act of participation in public ventures has become an axiom of democratic theory. At the same time, the argument has failed to specify adequately what it is about associational life that can guarantee these functions. If it is the case that ‘associations instil in their members habits of cooperation, solidarity, and public-spiritedness’ (Putnam et al, 1993: 89-90), an important and related question must be, ‘which kinds of associations do so, under what circumstances, and with what effects for the polity?’ (Edwards and Foley 1998a:15).

The recent American revival of interest in these question has centred around the work of Robert Putnam, who is regarded as the pivotal author in the contemporary post Tocquevillian debate over what makes democracy work. Putnam’s research into the civic traditions of Northern Italy concluded that the cause, or source of civility, is trust. Individuals act civilly when they can trust, when they are confident that, their

actions will be reciprocated by others. ‘It is necessary,’ Putnam maintains, ‘not only to trust others before acting cooperatively, but also to believe that one is trusted *by* others.’ Without trust, good will and joint action are unlikely. (Putnam et al, 1993:164).<sup>i</sup>

If trust is the source of civility, this begs the question of trust itself. For Putnam, like de Tocqueville, the answer lies in associations, or what he otherwise describes as ‘networks of civic engagement.’

Networks of civic engagement facilitate communication and improve the flow of information about the trustworthiness of individuals. Networks of civic engagement allow reputations to be transmitted and refined...trust and cooperation depend on reliable information about the past behaviour and present interests of potential partners, while uncertainty reinforces dilemmas of collective action. *Thus, other things being equal, the greater the communication (both direct and indirect) among participants, the greater their mutual trust and the easier they will find it to cooperate.* (Putnam et al, 1993:174, emphasis mine).

Putnam notes that not all associations are equally good at facilitating communication. ‘A vertical network’, Putnam writes ‘cannot sustain social trust and cooperation.’ ‘Vertical flows of information are,’ Putnam contends, ‘often less reliable than horizontal flows, in part because the subordinate husbands information as a hedge against exploitation.’ Additionally in vertical networks ‘sanctions that support norms of reciprocity against the threat of opportunism are less likely to be imposed upwards and less likely to be acceded to, if imposed.’ (Putnam et al, 1993:174).

It is then, the *quality of horizontality* that is key to the production of trust. And as such, Putnam, in his conclusion to his investigation into what makes democracy work writes, ‘membership rates in hierarchically ordered organizations (like the Mafia or the institutional Catholic Church) should be negatively associated with good government.’(Putnam et al, 1993:175). And that, ‘In today’s Italy, as in the Italy of Machiavelli’s civic humanists, the civic community is a secular community.’ (Putnam et al, 1993:109). In sum, for Putnam, the deeper the communicative structure of an organization the greater the amount of trust between its members and the greater its capacity to produce civic citizens.



Putnam’s work has been criticised for (among other things) neglecting the roles of the state and the public sphere (see for example Cohen 1999; Tarrow 1996). Nevertheless, his general proposition that the functions associations have for democracy depend in part on their internal structure is supported by some of his most trenchant critics. Cohen, in a view that has been echoed by many others, maintains that ‘only associations with internal publics structured by the relevant norms of discourse can develop the communicative competence and interactive abilities important to democracy.’ (Cohen, 1999:63). Given the broad consensus that democratic structures are decisive to the acquisition of democratic attitudes, it is not therefore surprising that many theorists attribute to the hierarchical, theocratic, male organization that is the Catholic Church a weak potential to produce individuals bearing the virtues described in the opening paragraphs of this paper. Contemporary authors concerned with identifying the type of associations capable of fostering democratic virtues tend not to search among the traditional religions for support for their work.<sup>ii</sup>

### **3. Research**

Is Putnam right? Are ‘hierarchically ordered organizations’ sub-optimal producers of civility? Are they, as he asserts, ‘negatively associated with good government’? (1995:163) In what follows I present findings from a study of Catholic religious elites in the Czech Republic. This research draws on the authors’s interviews with the key members of the Czech Bishops Conference carried out in October and November 1998 and September 2000.<sup>iii</sup> The first series of findings are presented under the heading of ‘Organisational Conflict’ and discusses whether the evidence confirms or disproves Putnam’s contention that heirarchical organisations breed conflict and distrust. This is followed by a second series of findings placed under the heading ‘Organisational Attitudes’ that considers Putnam’s view that civic virtues are weakly correlated with ‘vertical networks’ such as the Catholic church.

#### **3.1 Organisational Conflict**

I consider Putnam’s proposal that hierarchical organisations are ill-suited to resolving discord through an examination of the management of the main conflict to emerge

within the Catholic Church post 1989. This is the issue of the so called ‘secret clergy’ which has centred on the legitimacy of the pre-1989 ordinations of priests and Bishops.

Under Communism, it was illegal for a priest or bishop to be ordained without the permission of the Czech state, and since many aspiring candidates were unable to get state approval, ordinations were often carried out in secret by Bishops either within the Czech Republic or across the border in Germany.<sup>iv</sup> These priests and Bishops became part of what today is variously referred to as the Underground Church, the Silent Church, or the Secret Clergy. However, early in 1990 it was discovered that, contrary to the rules of the Roman Catholic Church, at least 200 of these ‘secret clergy’ had been married. The process of resolving this problem was begun by the Czech Catholic hierarchy but shortly thereafter was taken out of the hands of Czech Bishops to be managed by the Vatican.

The course adopted by the Vatican was regarded by those involved as highly unsatisfactory. The willingness in principle of the ‘secret clergy’ to cooperate in an investigation quickly came into tension with the Vatican’s demand for compliance, a model of conflict resolution which was strictly hierarchical and non-discursive. For example, Fr. Kratky, one of the underground priests subject to investigation complained: ‘We told the (Vatican) Bishops everything they wanted to know but we were not called to a dialogue.’ (The Tablet, 28 March, 1992). A view echoed by Fr. Ventura who commented ‘All the steps he [Cardinal Ratzinger<sup>v</sup>] has taken suggest a tendency not to talk about the problem - so what we are doing here right now (talking about it) is done against Cardinal Ratzinger’s wishes.’ (Esras, 1993o). The married Bishop Jan Konzal described the Vatican’s instructions to undergo re-ordination as an ‘insurmountable obstacle’ (Esras, 1993e).<sup>vi</sup> And Fridolin Zahradnik, a married man, consecrated as Bishop in 1968, insists that as long as Rome’s reasons for doubting his ordination are not explained to him he will continue to say mass. (The Tablet, May, 1991). Some of these clergy have refused to comply with the Vatican’s instructions<sup>vii</sup> and have built up a small, hardened, and vocal opposition. Zahradnik, for example, has actively campaigned for the rights of the ‘secret clergy’ and attended the ‘Fair for an Open Church’ at Salzburg under the banner, The Once Silent Church Silent No More.’ (The Tablet: 16 May, 1991).

In sum, the major dispute that arose within the Czech Catholic Church post-Communism was managed by the Vatican authoritatively and non-deliberatively,

spreading suspicion and frustration among those who insisted on having their voices heard. In this respect, it seems that Putnam is right. His argument that vertical networks impede and disable communication and thus breed distrust does indeed gain support from the case of the Czech ‘secret clergy’. And, if the relationship between the Underground Church and the Catholic hierarchy ended here, this would certainly seem to bear out Putnam’s pessimistic view of the democratic functions of Catholic Churches. Importantly, however, there is more to the relationship than this. Once one moves on to the views of the *national* hierarchy, a different attitude towards communication with subordinates is clearly visible, an attitude that is moreover sharply at odds with that adopted by the Vatican.

From the very beginning of the Vatican intervention, the Czech national hierarchy advocated a substantially different approach to the matter of the ‘underground priests’, a self-consciously open and considerate one, in the hope that ‘delicate cases’ would, in the words of Fr. Halik, be ‘resolved amicably, if the Vatican shows humanity and understanding in dealing with them’ (The Tablet, 20 October:1990). The Vatican’s approach attracted strong criticism: Bishop Maly argued, ‘The Vatican authorities issued guidelines and these guidelines were secret. Our diocesan Bishops had them in their hands but they were prevented to show them to those people who were being touched by them. And this secrecy working between Bishops and priests had the impression that our Bishops hide something that is against them and this tension increased, grew and grew.. It was a mistake because the best manner to solve problems is to be open and not to hide and not to keep it in secret.’ A view supported by Fr. Daniel Herman: ‘This model [the Vatican’s] was not optimal. I think that the Congregation [for the doctrine of the faith] or the Bishops conference in the discussions with these people must feel very very sensitive to what they suffered, and to speak with them in the atmosphere of brotherhood and not so directly.’ Empathy with the Secret Clergy was also in evidence among other members of the Czech Catholic elite. Thus, Bishop Hrdlicka: ‘among them I have many colleagues and friends, who I esteem very much, they are very brave persons.’ and Bishop Lobkowicz ‘I have also in my town several of these men, I knew them all before and I know them as a people and members of the church, believers and we are all friends. I can say.’ This distinction between the attitude of the Vatican and the attitude of the national elite was clear to some of those most critical of the way the secret ordinations were being

investigated. For example, Fr. Ventura, one of the married priests under investigation, commented: 'Archbishop Vlk and our Bishops greatly wish and try to help us resolve the situation.' (Esras, 1993o).

The case of the 'secret clergy' shows to an extent that the Czech Bishops' Conference has adopted a reflective and critical attitude towards the organizational structure with which it has so recently become re-united, not only with respect to the married priests on whose behalf the Bishops have intervened with the Vatican, but, on a range of other issues, the Bishops have repeatedly emphasised the non-hierarchical values of communication, transparency, openness. For example, Herman remarked 'We [the Czech Bishops Conference] are preparing now the plenary council of the Czech Catholic Church. We will create here really the platform of the dialogue. Surely these very living or sensitive questions must be opened in this process of the council of the church here.' Similarly, Bishop Maly commented: 'there are groups which would like to discuss more about questions like the ordination of women, the celibacy of priests, and the direct election of Bishops etc' And Bishop Lobkowitz expressed the hope that 'perhaps the church of the future will be less clerical, more civic. The role of a priest or religious man of the consecrated life is great and it will be always here. But perhaps in another measure'.

Putnam's contention that hierarchical organisations breed conflict and distrust is, at the least, complicated by the evident resistance of the Czech Bishops to elitist and non-discursive approaches. This evidence of 'civility' within the church is given further support by a second series of findings on 'Organisational Attitudes'.

### **3.2 Organisational Attitudes**

The research for this section sought to establish the views of the Catholic elite on the two key indicators of civility: first, publicspiritness or participation; second, recognition of, and respect for, plurality. The aim of the research was to establish whether, as Putnam argues, civic virtues are indeed weakly correlated with 'vertical networks' such as the Catholic church.

### ***Publicspiritness and Participation.***

Religion typically 'has a strong public facet to it' (1998:9) and is 'concerned with the whole of life - with social, economic, and political matters as well as with private and personal ones' (Bellah *et al*, cited in Monsma and Soper, 1998:9). In this respect the Czech Bishops I interviewed showed themselves to be no different from their counterparts elsewhere in Europe in their desire to participate in the public realm. The objective of the Czech Catholic Church is, Fr Fiala argued 'looking after the needs of her believers *and serving society as a whole*' (Esras, 1993c). Alongside this desire to participate in the public, Czech Bishops also demonstrate a commitment to collective goods rather than purely personal interests. Bishop Hrdlicka argued: 'I very much agree with the social teaching of the church...the market makes sense but the first value is the common good. Not only egotistical intentions but to guard solidarity'. And Bishop Lobkowicz: 'The former Prime Minister [Vaclav Klaus] sees the civil society only as a market matter, it is very pragmatic. The President [Vaclav Havel] imagines civil society probably in a different way. And of course I would be probably on the side of the President, because it is hard to accept the life of society only in the pragmatic market economy. [The] view of the former Prime Minister [is] only the best ones can succeed and the rest is something like trash.' Finally, where the Czech Catholic Church is keen to be able to participate in the life of society, it is equally keen that others should also be able to do so. Fr. Herman, the spokesperson for the Czech Catholic Church argued: 'We must support also the responsibility of a concrete human being. In the Communist society everything was supervised or controlled by the state and there was practically no subsidiarity in the life of the cities or in the villages or parishes...you know to use my own responsibility in my own small circle of my life.'

These excerpts demonstrate that the Czech Catholic Church is certainly a virtuous organisation with respect to participation and publicspiritness. However, as I suggested earlier, these virtues are not *sufficient* to meet the requirements of modern democracies. The problem is that modern democracies have many groups committed to their own particular versions of 'the public good', thus, the key democratic virtue is not *whether* one is committed to the public good but *how* one is committed. Modern democracies require citizens who can recognise the irreducible reality of pluralism, and who have the communicative abilities to negotiate between various versions of the

public good. In brief, democracy ideally requires participants who have the skills to be able to engage in the democratic process, participants who are able, as Taylor argues, to deliberate together *before* deciding together. (Taylor, op cit)

### ***Recognition of and Commitment to Plurality***

Interviews with the Czech bishops demonstrated both a recognition of plurality and also a commitment to plurality. In contrast to elitist notion of the ‘common good’, the views of these religious elites resonated more with the processual approaches advocated by writers such as Bellah et al who hold that ‘the common good is the pursuit of the good in common.’ (Bellah et al., 1991:9).

Bishop Maly: ‘Now there is a pluralistic society - and Christianity is *one* among other offers - and [we must] accept this position.’

Fr. Daniel Herman: ‘It is the church’s politic to cooperate, or to create, in cooperation this mosaic of the life. *Not* to supervise everything, *not* to create their own Catholic virtual world but to be a part of the normal life, of the normal society.’

Bishop Duka: ‘We have constantly to bear in mind that some six million people in this country feel themselves represented by different forces. The church must act and plan in terms of a wider cooperation with non-Catholic churches as well as other social institutions in our country.’ (Esras, 1993b)

Bishop Maly: ‘We are not a dominating community but we are a community which can show another style of life, another style of thinking, another style of future communication. And in this I see a chance - because the path of the church is to accompany the society’.

Bishop Hrdlicka: ‘It is better to work with the freedom of the human, better to inspire him, than to command.’

Fr. Daniel Herman: ‘Its my *private* opinion, of somebody who was born and lived in a very secular country. I prefer to live in the atmosphere, in this secularism, than in one very very super catholic country. I prefer the atmosphere of freedom, of changing, of free changing of ideas. You know because when I will visit the church, I must know *why*’.

Bishop Hrdlicka: ‘The church is above all, praying and encouraging their members to be able to enter a dialogue with society’

Fr Herman ‘It’s sure that for instance with the Communist Party it’s very hard to cooperate but ... it is not the most important thing if do we agree to each other but to be able to be in dialogue.’<sup>viii</sup>

And regarding pluralism within the church, the Bishops commented -

Bishop Hrdlicka: ‘We are now preparing a big plenary assembly which will be a dialogue among all people from levels within the church.’

Bishop Maly: ‘It is a very difficult question - one must respect the Vatican decisions, but on the other hand, I would say these questions are alive and in the mind and thinking of believers and it isn’t possible to say simply *stop it, stop it*. Therefore it is hidden and it continues to live and personally I’ll aim for an open discussion for a patient discussion...I am not for the solution to hide those questions and to say it doesn’t exist’.

Bishop Lobkowicz: ‘I think these people who are criticizing the church they are looking for a dialogue ... This belongs to democracy. It would be bad if on a certain point one side would like to speak and would not let the other side to express itself.’

Fr Herman: ‘What could we offer to the society when we are not able to live in a dialogue within the church? I think that it’s a very counterproductive apostolate. I think that we must learn very much about the culture of dialogue within the church and I hope and I will help to this developing of this culture of dialogue.’

Alongside this interview material I place two examples of the Czech Bishops intervention in controversial public issues; prostitution and racism. These examples serve to illustrate not only the Bishops attitudes or civility, but also their willingness *to act* on their civility.<sup>ix</sup>

Prostitution emerged as a controversial issue in the Czech Republic following a report on the industry by the Czech Statistical Office.<sup>x</sup> The sex industry in the Czech Republic is poorly regulated making prostitution the most dangerous occupation in the country. Additionally, the failure to regulate the industry has made the country an attractive place for the illegal trafficking in women and children. Despite this, the issue receives scant public or parliamentary attention. The report for the EU was the first official in-depth description on prostitution showing it to be a massive industry. It appeared in the run up to the elections making it all the more likely that it would be buried quickly, and indeed it was clear that politicians were not going to commit themselves to the question. ‘It’s a moral question more than a matter of legislation, so

it is difficult to find a common position.' said Ivan Langer, the deputy chairman of the main opposition Civic Democratic Party (ODS). (Prague Post, 10 April 2002).

Against this background, Bishop Maly intervened in a manner that placed the issue squarely on the political agenda. He argued publicly for the legalisation of prostitution, insisting, 'it isn't enough simply to moralize, to judge, but it is necessary to do something.' (The Prague Post, 10 April, 2002). Although Bishop Maly spoke as an individual, it was, as Radio Prague put it 'no secret that many Czech Bishops are of the same opinion.' The radio station commented:

The fact that a dignitary of the Catholic Church should be the one to call attention to these issues – especially in pre-election time – is a slap in the face for Czech politicians ... Czech politicians remain at odds over whether or not prostitution should be legalised...but whatever their position, none of them have shown a serious inclination to take the matter further and act on it. (Cesky Rozhlas 7 (Radio Prague), 5 April:2002)

The Prague Post added, 'If a good Catholic like Maly can summon the compassion needed to suggest the sex trade needs regulation, why, we wonder, do ostensibly enlightened national leaders idle?' (The Prague Post, 10 April, 2002).

A second and highly controversial issue in the Czech Republic is racism. Racist attitudes in the country are consistently high and the number of deaths and attacks has been a source of comment by the European Union.<sup>xi</sup> In this context, the Czech Bishops have been an exceptionally critical voice. Not only was tolerance emphasised by the Bishops in my interviews,<sup>xii</sup> but the Bishops are also actively involved in fighting against racism. In March 1998 the Bishops Conference issued a pastoral letter specifically addressed to intolerance against racism. The Spokesman for the Bishops Conference stated 'Racially-motivated crimes are becoming increasingly more frequent and the situation is unbearable. The Catholic Church realises that it must raise its voice,' (CTK [Czech News Agency]13 March 1998). The stance of the Catholic Church has drawn the attention of the European Union. Commissioner Van den Broek, for example, commented, 'We value the role of the church in the integration of Romanies,' and added 'In general I think that the main participants in the civic society, and the church is undoubtedly one of them, play a great role in informing the public,



highlighting the standards and values that unite us in the EU' (CTK, 26 May 1996). Racism was again raised in the Bishops Letter on Social Issues in 2000:

Fear of foreigners predominates in the minds of a considerable number of our citizens. However the most serious problem in our country is the co-existence of the majority of the population and our domestic Romany nationals. The Churches emphatically warn against extremist groups who proclaim xenophobia, racism and hatred against all who are 'different.' As a part of their responsibility for the life of society, the Churches consider *the protection of human rights as one of their priorities*. We call on legislators to gradually amend our laws so that they are in harmony with international conventions on human rights in every aspect. (Czech Bishops Conference, 2000:Section 61)

## **4 Analysis**

If 'civil organisations' can be understood as an ideal type, and commitment to plurality one of its measures, the Catholic Church is, in general, a weak version of the type. The Catholic Church is formally a theocratic organisation, not a democratic one. 'The Church', as the ex-Cardinal Ratzinger pointed out, 'does not find a source of its faith and structure from the social principles during each moment in history' but has 'the duty to be a bearer of a superior faith.'<sup>xiii</sup> As such, it is not surprising that Catholic hierarchies are rarely regarded as the optimal arrangement for nurturing the ability to recognise and reckon with difference. This proposed inability to cope with difference might be expected to be even more likely in Eastern Europe which missed out on the radical impulses of Vatican II. In Eastern Europe Catholics found themselves re-integrated into the church's trans-national structure under the leadership of Pope John Paul, whose strategy Gill describes as 'aimed at recovering a substantial portion of pre-Vatican II orthodoxy...and to reassert hierarchical control over a Church that had experienced increasing decentralization since Vatican II' (Gill 1998:177).<sup>xiv</sup>

I argue however that an inability to cope with difference is *not* the case with the Czech Catholic Church. My research shows that Czech Bishops have both a keen sense of the values a productive commitment to participation or the public good might involve and an interest in developing these values within their own organisation.

Putnam has contended that 'the basic contrast between horizontal and vertical linkages, between 'web-like' and 'may-pole-like' networks is reasonably clear' (Putnam et al, 1993:173). However, the opposing attitudes described in this research between the Vatican and the Czech National hierarchy on a range of issues greatly complicates this contention. Just where in an organization hierarchical relations break down and more democratic ones begin is clearly a crucial issue in assessing the possibilities of an organization's actual or potential contribution to the elaboration of civic norms. If the line of command in the Czech Catholic Church begins at the Vatican and moves down to the Czech national hierarchy and then to the disenfranchised priests, it is a line at the same time that encounters definite points of resistance. The point to be drawn here is that it is important neither to predict nor read action off from the official non-democratic theocratic form of the Catholic Church. Indeed variations in attitude amongst Catholic organisations on a whole range of issues from homosexuality to democracy show that we cannot always derive the actions of catholic elites from the structures within which they are embedded. Yet, this is precisely the assumption of Putnam and a host of others working in social capital research.

I argue that there are two reasons for rejecting such a strategy in the analysis of the case of the Czech Catholic Church. First, the majority of the elite in today's Czech Catholic Church were, under Communism, either imprisoned or had their licences as priests rescinded. They represent as such the case of an elite that has been separated from its organisational structure for a substantial period of time. Second, the vertical and authoritative dimension of organised trans-national Catholicism that Czech Bishops now - post the collapse of Communism - find themselves a part of, is one clearly resisted, or at least contested, by them. Certainly, as Putnam argues, vertical authoritative structures are *not* conducive to discursiveness, but the traditional vertical structures of the Catholic Church held no place in the lives of the present day Czech Bishops when they lived under Communism and their impact upon these Bishops today is uncertain and contested. We can conclude that the search for factors responsible for producing the demonstrated civility of the key figures of the Catholic Church should *not* - contra Putnam - seek a cause in the Church's official internal structure.

## **5 Counter-Argument: Historical Structures and Networks**

This research began by describing a Catholic church with members who are highly civil. Following this I showed that Putnam’s theory fails to provide an answer to the question of the origins of that civility. So, where then *do* the civil individuals that head the Czech Catholic Church come from? I suggest that a useful beginning is to distinguish the history of *individuals* from the history of their *organisations*. In short, if networks and structures are held to have a pedagogical effect on ‘their bearers’ there is no reason why the relevant organisational structure has to be the one in which the actor is currently embedded. Putnam does not separate out actors from their networks and therefore fails to create the space within which to consider the effect of other structures or networks that actors may have been engaged in. In short, we should consider not just an actor’s association *but also an actor’s associational history*. The organisational structure of the Catholic Church may well not be conducive to the building of social capital, yet religious organisations are not necessarily the sole organisational experience of the clergy. In the Czech case those Bishops and priests who were imprisoned under Communism, or refused a priest’s licence, lived their lives in alternative networks and organisations whose potential as sources of social capital should also be taken into account.

In what follows I will suggest that a useful place to search for the production of the civic values of Czech Bishops is the variety of organizations and networks in which the Bishops were involved under Communism. The aim here is not to provide an in-depth account of the impact these organisations had on the Bishops, but to propose that there are a number of sites other than the church where the qualities of the Czech clerical elite were fostered. I suggest that these alternative sites of networks and organisations had a strong formative influence on Czech Bishops, encouraging values of tolerance, plurality, and public mindedness, in short, civility. These networks were both consciously political (both secular and religious) and networks of everyday life.

## Religious Networks under Communism

<b>Political</b>	<b>Secular:</b> Charter 77	<b>Religious:</b> The underground church
<b>Everyday Life</b>	Work	Prison

### Work

Most of today’s Czech Bishops had their licences to practice as priests rescinded by the Communist state and were consequently forced to seek normal employment. Priests were notoriously assigned some of the most unpopular jobs under Communism. For example, Cardinal Vlk worked as a window cleaner and Bishop Ljavinec as a street cleaner. Bishop Maly was employed as a boiler-stoker and also for a period of time as a night cleaner in the metro. This forced employment offered the Bishops an opportunity to meet people outside of the narrow confines of the church. For example, Maly’s two fellow stokers, also Charter 77 signatories, were today’s Chief Rabbi of Prague, Karol Sidon, and the poet Andrej Stankovic. (Prague Post: 23 November, 1994). Yet, commenting on his work Maly extolled the benefits of losing his license to practice: I am paid badly, but I live with the people...I ride trams and buses and have to worry about food, and I no longer live in the parish house isolated from the man in the street. Now I am the man in the street.’<sup>xv</sup> Reflecting on this experience years later, Maly said, ‘Living like this helped me to understand better the thinking and behaviour of ordinary citizens. *And it forced me to express my faith in a very civil way.*’ (cited in Dunn, 1996:41). This experience of ordinary life is one regularly emphasised by the church’s elite. Fr. Herman explained: they know this normal daily life. They lived before the collapse of Communism like workers or street cleaners and like normal people and I think that it was a time for them of the so called ‘University of Life’. This personal experience is very important. (interview, 2002). And commenting on one of

the most popular figures in the church, Fr. Halik, who worked under Communism with alcoholics, Herman remarked, ‘he doesn’t live in a virtual reality. He knows normal daily life.’<sup>xvi</sup>

## **Prison**

It was not only through work that the clergy found an opportunity to meet and live with the non-clerical. Many of the key figures in today’s Czech Catholic Church were incarcerated for periods of time ranging from a few months to 15 years. There is ample evidence that these experiences offer a useful line of enquiry for investigating where Czech Bishops learned to trust, to cooperate, and to value solidarity. Bishop Otcenasek, who was imprisoned for 13 years, explained that in prison ‘it was strictly forbidden even to hear a confession, to baptise somebody, to pray together. Everybody in the cells ... had to pretend that nothing was happening, that some were asleep, others moving about slowly, so as not to arouse the slightest suspicion of the guards because all that was a punishable offence.’(Estras, 1993i). Fr. Fiala describing his experiences in prison commented: ‘We were 28 in the cell, there was no mattress for me left so I had to lie on a sort of bench, but it was quite an interesting school for me because there were many political opponents of the regime, they were interesting company...*one learned to pray, learned solidarity*’(Estras, 1993c). And Bishop Duka discussing his prison term with the now President of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel: ‘In Plzen, in 1980-81, we spent a number of months together, my term was shorter than his, and our conversations took place within the framework of the so called prison university where politics, literature, philosophy, religion were discussed and I think some of these conversations are reflected in the last of sixteen ‘Letters to Olga’ in which he discusses religious themes among others.’ (Estras, 1993b).

## **The Underground Church**

Apart from the life of work and prison, priests were involved in underground religious networks. Again, the Bishop’s comments reflect an appreciation for the experiences the restraints of Communism presented. Bishop Koukl: ‘Under totalitarian system I was making some spiritual exercises with other people illegally in the mountains. *So the bishop gets closer to believers.*’ Fr. Fiala discussing his time in the underground

said: 'It was a very interesting and adventurous life...we formed various communities, at work, in the places where we lived, in various areas of Prague and in the country...we remember those times fondly. We had fun even at work.' (Esras, 1993c). And Bishop Maly remarked, 'I was very involved in the work of the so-called underground church. I lectured, I organised biblical lessons ... I prepared couples for weddings, I said holy Masses. All the things that were impossible to do in churches I did in somebody's apartment. At the same time I had a manual job.' (cited in Dunn, 1996:40).

## **Charter 77**

Both Bishop Duka and Bishop Maly<sup>xvii</sup> were involved in the Czech human rights organisation Charter 77.<sup>xviii</sup> The organisation consisted of three main groups: the reformist Marxists expelled from the Communist Party after 1968; the members of the repressed churches and religious associations; and playwrights and artists. Despite being a generally informal group, the organization's leadership structure nevertheless had a fixed rule that there be a rotating set of three spokespersons; one from each of the three groups that comprised Charter 77. This ensured that contrasting viewpoints were equally represented. It was an arrangement that the Catholic dissident, Nemcova, argued, turned the organization into something akin to a 'school of democracy.' 'All statements had to be approved by representatives of the different streams, so they had to reflect shared purposes rather than particular interests.' (Luxmoore and Babiuch 1995:293). And, 'if agreement proved difficult, previous spokesmen were summoned ... to give help and advice' (1995:300.)

There was no reason why this 'unity' or plurality should have generated anything beyond strategic calculation or inculcate any genuine feelings of respect or tolerance towards other members. At the outset this was the view of some of the participants. Benda described the unity of Charter 77 as 'a defensive unity, a unity born of necessity which in its present form is incapable of achieving anything more concrete than it has already.' (Benda, 1985:120). Bishop Duka remarked that, 'for many Christians the presence of communists in the Charter remained a problem' with the Christians convinced that the ex-communists would 'just use the Charter as an instrument for their own return to power' (cited in Luxmoore and Babiuch, 1995:297).

Nevertheless, over time, communication between the organisation's member began to have an effect on how they regarded each other. Sustrova argues that the need to reach a consensus on all documents that were released made 'the absolute priority in Charter 77 - simple mutual understanding.' (Luxmoore and Babiuch, 1995:300). The initially pessimistic Benda found that 'this unity among people of disparate opinion and background is a great forum of learning.' (Benda, 1985:120). And Duka noted that the suspicion between the Christians and the Communists lessened when 'both sides had more experience of working and suffering together.' (Luxmoore and Babiuch, 1995:298)

Certainly, as Putnam argues, membership rates in organisations and networks can be regarded as an important factor in developing the democratic virtues. However, in the case of the Czech Catholic Bishops, it seems that it is their experiences in organisations and networks *under Communism*, rather than post-Communism, which may have provided the more important civic education. The Czech Bishops in this study learnt their values from the counter-communist and democratic networks they belonged to pre-1989. These values still exist, even if the networks and associations do not. Putnam emphasises the importance of horizontal membership over vertical ones. My argument is, that within a *formally* vertical or hierarchical organisation, such as the Czech Catholic Church, there may exist highly civil or 'horizontally inclined' individuals.

## **6. Conclusion**

Civility is often held to be the most important, even crucial, element of civil society. Not only is civility necessary to the success of representative democracy, but it is also essential to the maintenance of a civic sphere where self-government is made possible because of 'spontaneous cooperation, governed by collective notions of fairness and just desert, not regulation or rules imposed by authority' (Deakin, 2001:60).

This norm, or virtue, of civility features prominently in many discussions of civil society but as something described and applauded rather than explained. Perhaps this is what explains the remarkable success of Putnam's book, 'Making Democracy Work' (1993), which sets out to explain *why* people are civil. His explanatory model has now become so popular that his followers are frequently referred to as the school

of social capital theorists. For Putnam, the source of civility is horizontal associations. Horizontal associational membership, the more the better (even in overtly non-political associations), inculcates values and habits critical for democracy:

A host of studies have been built on this assumption, that cross cutting memberships breed mutual respect. The difficulty with these studies however, is not in their emphasis on the importance of membership, but in the assumption that levels of civility should be derived from *extant* membership. Yet a methodological strategy that adopts as an indicator of tolerance the number of groups people are presently in, ignores an individual's *associational history*.

Putnam (2000) argues that homogenous social groups such as the Catholic Church produce what he calls an 'exclusive' type of social capital that has social effects that are 'fragmenting, divisive and anti-pluralistic' (Putnam, 2000:475). My argument is that 'exclusive' or what Putnam also calls 'bonding social capital' cannot be regarded as the inevitable product or the necessary correlate of formally homogenous social groups. This leads to another problem with Putnam and other social capital theorists: the rigidity of the organisations that appear in their studies. The Czech Catholic Church may be formally hierarchical but, as this research shows, the Bishops take a highly reflexive and critical approach to their organisation. In Putnam's model, there is no sense of the fluidity or mutability of organisation. Organisational hierarchies, however, do not just act upon their members, they are also resisted by them. Czech Bishops are not only committed to their own democratic values, but they are also committed to democratising their organisations. The case of the Catholic Church in the Czech Republic proves Putnam wrong. Not only can Catholic churches be civil, they also have the potential to produce civil members.



## Notes

<sup>i</sup> ‘In a world of saints, perhaps, dilemmas of collective action would not arise, but universal altruism is a quixotic premise for either social action or social theory. If actors are unable to make credible commitments to one another, they must forgo many opportunities for mutual gain - ruefully, but rationally’ (Putnam, 1993:164).

<sup>ii</sup> For example, Cohen contrasts organizations that produce ‘democratic competence’ with ‘hierarchical, authoritarian association such as the Mafia (which) can easily generate skill in strategic action’ and the Catholic Church which ‘can generate loyalty’. (Cohen, 1999: 63).

<sup>iii</sup> It also draws from unpublished transcripts of interviews with religious elites carried out by ‘Estras’ film company. The Estras material is held in their archives.

<sup>iv</sup> For a long period only three of the 13 Czechoslovakian Catholic dioceses had Bishops as the Czechoslovakian State and the Vatican could not agree on the choice of candidate. Many of the hierarchy in today’s Czech Catholic Church were ordained in secret, for example Cardinal Vlk, Tomas Halik, and Vaclav Maly.

<sup>v</sup> Cardinal Ratzinger is head of the Vatican’s ‘Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’. It was known by its old name ‘The Inquisition’ until 1964 and reinvigorated with John Paul II’s election to the Papacy. The role of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is to restrain any revisionist or schismatic tendencies. Essentially, its aim remains the same as that of the inquisition, to stamp out heresy. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected Pope Benedict XVI on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2005. Thus, in all likelihood, the previous administration’s policy towards the Czech ‘secret clergy’ will continue unchanged.

<sup>vi</sup> Where most accounts of the resolution of this conflict have tended to focus on the fairness or otherwise of *outcomes* my research was more concerned with *process* - the question of *how* these particular religious elites managed internal strife.

<sup>vii</sup> The Vatican’s instructions: first, to take a theological examination, second, to undergo re-ordination *subconditione*, third, to transfer to the Greek Catholic Church which allows priests to be married (a Greek Catholic Diocese was conveniently opened in Prague), and finally not to discuss the matter in public.

<sup>viii</sup> The Communist Party is an exceptionally isolated party in the Czech Republic, and Fr. Herman is one of the few public figures who meets with Ransdorf, the Party’s Vice-Chair.

<sup>ix</sup> Lack of space precludes more than two examples, or a lengthier discussion

<sup>x</sup> The report was requested by the European Union as part of a broader investigation into black economies in member and potential member states

<sup>xi</sup> Polls conducted by Stem and the Institute for Crime and Social Prevention for the Ministry of Justice on attitudes among school students show that 80% of all students would mind living next to a Romany family. Nearly 80% would not like a Romany as a marriage partner, and nearly 30% would not like a Jew as a marriage partner. (CTK [Czech News Agency], 25 July, 1996). A poll at the end of 1998 by the Institute for Public Opinion Research showed that 36% of people admitted to being indifferent to displays of racial intolerance, while 6% of people said that they approved of such displays (CTK (Czech News Agency), 21 Dec, 1998). According to the news agency ‘only a tiny minority were in favour of more mutual understanding and communication or creating better conditions for people of other races and nationalities’ (4 February, 1999).

<sup>xii</sup> Fr Herman put it plainly: ‘the racism and the xenophobia among the Czech population is terrible.’

<sup>xiii</sup> Associated Press, 18 November, 1995.

<sup>xiv</sup> For example, in 1994, partly in response to the Church of England’s ordination of women, the Vatican issued, through the offices of Cardinal Ratzinger, a three page statement that said the ordination of women should not even be a topic of debate. Ratzinger wrote that the ban on women priests is ‘irrevocable, a doctrine...that has a infallible character.’ (Associated Press, 18 Nov, 1995)

<sup>xv</sup> Irish Press, February:1985

<sup>xvi</sup> National Catholic Reporter, 9 Feb:2001

<sup>xvii</sup> Maly served as one of the Charter’s spokespersons and set up its adjunct organization, ‘The Organization for the Unjustly Repressed’ (Vons), with the ex-Revolutionary Youth leader, Petra Sustrova.

<sup>xviii</sup> Charter 77 was the major, non-state, political secular organization existing in the Czech Republic after 1968. The organisation’s aim was to secure the Government’s observance of the Constitution, more specifically, that the Government should ‘honour its human rights pledges under the 1968 international covenants of the United Nations, which had been reaffirmed in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and entered in the country’s Register of Laws the following year.’ (Luxmoore and Babiuch, 1995:291)

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