



4th Congress of the International Association of Free Thought

London, August 11th 2014, Conway Hall



**For the separation between Churches and
States!**

For justice for the victims of Churches!

For Free Thought!

Schedule

At Conway Hall, Free Thinkers from all over the world will gather again to discuss and act for the Separation between Churches and States, for justice for the victims of religions and against the public funding of churches.

Here is the programme draft for August, 11th, 2014.

9.30 am: under the presidency of IAFT spokesmen Antonio Vergara (Chile), Fernando Lozada (Argentina) and David Silverman (USA), with the help of David Gozlan (France). Speakers:

Keith Porteous Wood, Executive Director of the British National Secular Society (NSS) and IAFT spokesman, will give an account of the Churches' crimes and for justice to be done to the victims.

- Nina Sankari (Poland), Maria Montello (Italy), Francisco Delgado (Spain) along with Fernando Lozada (Argentina), IAFT spokesman, will speak about the situation in their respective countries.

Christian Eyschen (France), IAFT spokesman will conclude and submit an IAFT solemn statement.

12/2 pm: IAFT International Council's meeting.

2 pm: International Meeting for the Separation between Churches and States.

Speakers, under the joint presidency of Jean-Sébastien Pierre (France), Keith Porteous Wood (Great-Britain), Christian Eyschen (France) and David Rand (Canada), IAFT spokesmen:

- David Gozlan (France)
- Paul Wattiez (Belgium)
- Léo Igwé (Nigéria)
- Albert Riba (Spain), IAFT spokesperson
- Gautier-Ernest Ngumbu (France)
- Constantin Ozon-Iancu (Roumania)
- David Silverman (USA), IAFT spokesperson
- Message from Soja Eggerickx, IHEU president
- Francisco Delgado (Spain)
- Elbio Laxalte (Uruguay), IAFT spokesperson
- Antonio Vergara (Chile)
- David Rand (Canada), IAFT spokesperson
- Monica (Chile)
- Babu Gogineni (India)
- Jean-Sébastien Pierre (France), FNLP president
- David Gozlan (France)

Messages read by:

- Georges Saad (Lebanon)
- Max and Meg Wallace (New Zealand)
- Alfredo Nortega (Peru)
- Mario Benitez Reyes (Paraguay)
- Alejandro Fernandez (Chile)

Moornin Session

IAFT Congress

Keith Porteous Wood

(Executive Director of the National Secular Society and IAFT spokesperson, GB) p. 4

Nina Sankari

(Vice-présidente of Atheist Coalition, Poland) p.9

Maria Mantello

(President of National association of Freethought « Giordano Bruno », Italia) p.14

Fernando Lozada

(IAFT spokesperson, Argentina) p.18

Francisco Delgado

(Spain) p.24

Christian Eyschen

(Vice-président of FNLP, IAFT spokesperson, France) p.30

Keith Porteous Wood TALK AT CONWAY HALL,

11 AUGUST, 2014



It would take far longer than we have today to catalogue all the clerical abuse of which we are aware, that is available to all from public sources. And rather than set out all our work on this over the last ten years, I will concentrate on some analysis and conclusions - and more importantly on what we can all do next.

We should start by defining our terms. I'm going to use the phrase "child abuse" throughout my talk because it is the commonly used phrase and it is short. But a more accurate phrase is "child rape and other violence towards minors, including psychological and physical violence as well as sexual".

Why are we focussing on the Catholic institutions?

Undoubtedly the greatest amount of child abuse takes place within the family and the wider circle of friends. Most of the rest of the abuse takes place in institutions, particularly those where the children are not in contact with their parents.

Evidence is emerging, particularly in the UK, of celebrities and politicians in the past using their power in order to secure access to children to abuse them and to escape justice. Sometimes that kind of abuse occurs within institutions, such as the BBC or in hospitals or schools. This reminds us of another aspect of abuse: the misuse of power. And going back a few decades, no one was more powerful in the parish context than the local priest, or in a school in particular, the teachers. This power enabled them to do whatever they wanted, unquestioned, confident that any accusations made against them would always be dismissed.

Institutions have been particularly prone to abuse because their occupants are largely cut off from society

and are under the power of the staff. We are focusing on clerical abuse in religious setting, especially institutions, for important secular reasons. These include the significant religious power of staff in such institutions, at least in the past. It has given clerics much greater opportunities to abuse minors in their charge; and religious institutions have all too often evaded the secular justice to which their civil counterparts are subject.

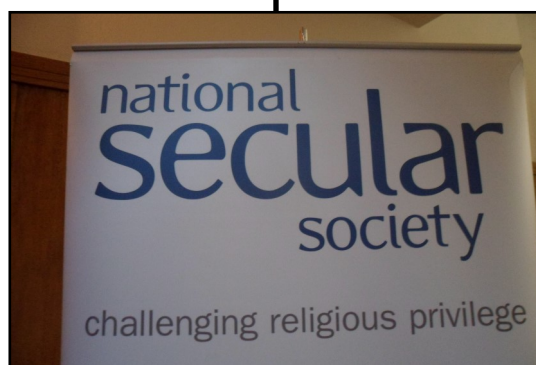
Child abuse is doubtless perpetrated by clerics of most if not all religions and denominations and is routinely covered up. I am aware of this in Jewish and Muslim and Anglican settings.

So why have we focussed more on the Catholic Church; is this some kind of veiled anti-Catholicism? Of course not. The scale of abuse uncovered in recent decades has been far more in the Catholic Church than all the other religions put together. It is not credible to suggest that the revelations are motivated by anti-Catholicism, and that abuse on a similar scale in other denominations all religions has gone largely unreported.

What is behind the problem?

This is not a new problem, it has been one for at least a thousand years, and probably since the early days of the Church. We don't have time to go into all of the causes, but I will summarise what I believe to be the main ones. In many predominantly Catholic countries there was an obligation to marry, the only exception being for those going into religious life, and they were forbidden to marry. Those who felt unable to marry, perhaps because they were not heterosexual or could not form relationships with adults of the opposite sex, could escape censure by joining the religious life as a priest, nun or other religious.

Doing so of course did not assuage the sexual frustration of these people or indeed their heterosexual colleagues either. They would all be cooped up in an enclosed institution away from the public gaze and with



a ready supply of children they could dominate. All too often this led to child abuse. Often this abuse became endemic, and there would be too many perpetrators involved for the hierarchy to suppress, even if they wanted to do so. And perpetrators high in the organisational structure would realise that the only survival strategy for themselves and their institution would be to suppress and deny any accusations and to make sure they were not disclosed to the secular authorities. And when the scandal became public, and child protection officers were appointed, they would try the hardest to become one.

Anyone seeking to design circumstances to maximise child abuse, be it physical, psychological or sexual could be hard pressed to improve on the Catholic institution model.

In what countries is the abuse absent and worst, and why?

I would like to examine briefly some of the variation in incidence of known child abuse in different countries. Why is Ireland, as far as we know, the country with the greatest Catholic child abuse per capita? This is doubly puzzling given Ireland's reputation for humour and hospitality. The clue may be that the Irish tended (but much less now) to be deeply religious. I believe their piety empowered the religious to the extent that they could do exactly as they wished without fear of challenge. In the remote instances of a public complaint to the police about anything the Church had done wrong, the police would routinely contact the Bishop. Presumably he would make reassuring comments and then do nothing, and the problems just continued.

Around 100 years ago, the Irish seceded from the United Kingdom, and the departing British establishment left a power vacuum that was opportunistically assumed by the Church. The new Republic's government was almost entirely staffed by Catholics and I suspect that many were even more loyal to the church than to their state. The church was in effect a department of the government, or was it the other way round? Either way, there was no separation of church and state.

In other words, the principal cause of the problems in

Ireland has been the absence of secularism. And this applies, perhaps not quite to the same extent, in other countries with major problems. The ability of the Vatican to require all accusations to be sent to its own sovereign state, beyond the reach of the secular authorities is both the antithesis of secularism and a continuing cause of the failure to prosecute so many perpetrators of clerical abuse.

There are many countries in which significant child abuse has been reported and new ones appear regularly. The absence of reports does not mean there is no problem. Often there is a conspiracy of silence until some brave person speaks out or some previously hidden document comes to light. This frequently encourages others to come forward.

I was astonished to hear the Holy See's representative at the United Nations, Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, tell the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in January that: "In the west is the shortage of priests and in the West where there is the most abuse."



Maybe he wanted us to conclude that abusive priests were not being sacked in the West because of the shortage of them and that did not apply to the rest of the world. However, the Vatican has been maintaining for decades that the problem is only

in one particular area – part of its cynical strategy to minimise its seriousness. As more and more revelations have come to light, that area has had to be progressively enlarged. I am convinced it is worldwide.

A more credible explanation for the concentration of reports about the West could be that there the press is much less regulated and that it is much harder to bury scandal. And the lesser the opportunities for perpetrators to get caught and brought to justice, the greater the likelihood will be of abuse.

Furthermore, it is generally accepted that incorrigible offenders in the West have been sent to the developing world, away from the prying eyes of the press, but where it seems extraordinarily unlikely that vast majority will not have continued their nefarious activities. My expectation is that we will hear more and more about disturbing levels of away from the West, and indeed this is already starting to happen in South America.

The nature of the abuse and its effects



And we shouldn't ignore non-sexual abuse; physical cruelty, seemingly often sadistic, perpetrated particularly by the Christian Brothers and some nuns was the institutional norm. The main effect for the few victims I have spoken to was to motivate them to leave the Church.

A few victims of sexual abuse coped by blotting out the memories of it. One woman I know had bottled up the knowledge for over 40 years, not even having told her husband. But for many, if not most, the prolonged abuse leads, at best, to personality change, inability to trust people or form relationships, withdrawal and depression. And in a significant number of cases it leads to drug and alcohol misuse, destroying the victim's life and that of those around them. This sometimes leads to serious injuries to the victim and others, and even death.

An abuse lawyer told me at the UN that a significant proportion of his victim clients have attempted suicide, some successfully. Such pathology and tragedy will self-evidently blight the lives of the remainder of the family and close friends, with the consequences even marring future generations – for example from family breakdown and financial consequences.

The Pope has recently acknowledged such problems. But even under the new Pope's regime, just as under that of his predecessor, lawyers tell me that the Church continues to resist all calls for compensation and disclosure of the identity of abusers or for their prosecution.

Work done to date

My involvement in this topic started from being in Boston, Massachusetts - the USA's largest Catholic diocese at the very time that the revelations surfaced about the Archbishop of Boston -. The Archbishop was Cardinal Bernard Law and he was accused of covering up abuse on a massive scale. This was the work of one investiga-

tive journalist whose suspicions were raised and to his credit, he just wouldn't let them go.

Before long, Law was called to give evidence in court and was clearly getting into deeper and deeper water over the veracity or otherwise of his testimony

and there were calls for his resignation. The Pope, then Jean Paul II, rather foolishly intervened publicly rejecting these calls, the Catholic faithful of Boston took no notice and law was forced to resign. He also fled to the Vatican, in effect a fugitive from justice as the state troopers had been on their way to his palace when he fled. And massive sums were paid out in compensation. Was he publicly castigated by the church, defrocked – or at least stripped of his rank? On the contrary, he was promoted, put in charge of a prestige basilica in Rome, remain on the pontifical Council of the family, and even officiated at the Pope's funeral. And all of this set off alarm bells and I discovered that the Vatican through its diplomatic nom de plume the Holy See is a signatory of the UN convention on the rights of the child. Prompted by some of the excellent work by Catholics for Choice in Washington, I ascertained the number of Articles of the Convention of which the Holy See appeared to be in breach, and there were many.

We repeatedly raised these allegations of breaches at plenary sessions of the UN Human Rights Council, courtesy of the International Humanist and Ethical Union over a period of three years. One breach was indisputable: the Holy See's failure to file mandatory five-year reports; they were something like 10 years overdue. They eventually filed, I believe in response to the pressure, and the Committee on the Rights of the Child examined their report, as they do for each member state.

The Holy See's report, however, was very short on detail on clerical child abuse. This report was prepared while Pope Benedict was still in post, so maybe this was not a surprise. The Committee's later requests to the Vatican for more information have been almost entirely ignored, even after Francis became Pope.

We responded to the invitation by the Committee for submissions to set out our concerns. We joined abuse victims' representatives at a private meeting of the

Committee whose members cross-examined us on our submissions. Around six months later, in January this year, representatives of the Holy See were cross-examined, in public. They still conceded little ground, ignoring or avoiding the Committee's many questions and requests. The Committee issued its concluding observations, which were highly critical. These received spectacular and unprecedented publicity around the world. The Vatican issued press statements both after the hearing and after the concluding observations, impertinently derided the Committee and shamelessly misrepresenting its criticisms. However their attempts to spread misinformation were completely overwhelmed by the unprecedented negative coverage, worldwide.

Some child abuse also came within the UN Convention definition of torture. Coincidentally, the UN Committee against Torture reported a few months later and came to many of the same conclusions. They largely escaped Vatican censure by wording their criticisms rather more tactfully.

Most shocking of all is that the Holy See refused to accept that it was responsible under either Convention for the worldwide activities of the Church, which it appeared to be trying ludicrously to pretend was an entirely different organisation over which it had no control. The Vatican representatives refused repeated requests to release the database of accusations of clerical abuse which under papal diktat are held centrally in the Vatican. This refusal itself was a breach of both Conventions.

The Popes' attitudes

Francis is certainly trying to eradicate the Vatican Bank's rampant money laundering, and courageously spoke out against the Mafia in July; despite the close links they have, or had.

The big question is whether the new smiling Pope Francis wants to initiate proceedings against those thought to be abusive clerics, and even if he does will he be able to?

A further explanation could be that there is so much to lose from coming clean about the past but he doesn't feel he can do it, or his colleagues will not allow him to.

He has appointed a Commission to look into clerical

child abuse, but it has no authority. Why does he need to seek advice when the UN Committee has told him at least the most important steps, which are common sense? My instinct is to dismiss this as a public relations exercise and/or an attempt to restrict any further investigations to be carried out internally behind closed doors.

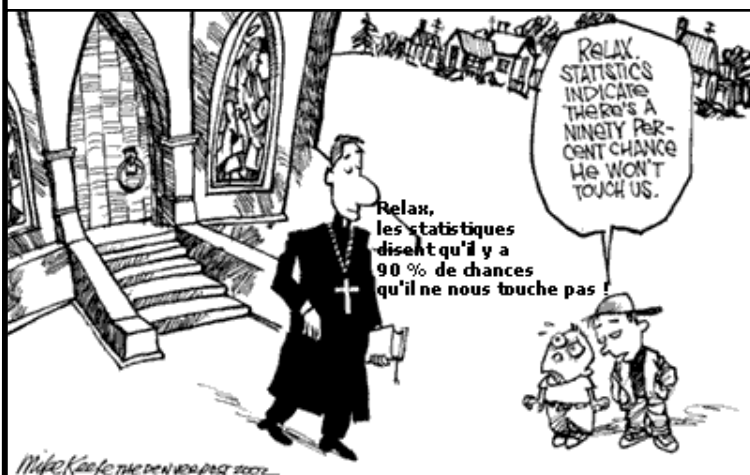
The early signs are not promising but it is too early to be sure.

Conclusions and what we need to do

I want to end on a positive note.

I suspect that the current levels of institutional abuse are much lower than they have been in the past. Certainly in Western Europe and I suspect in most places in the world religious officials no longer enjoy that absolute power, and children have become more aware about child abuse and I believe more confident and more able to report it.

Public attitudes have changed so dramatically over recent decades. A man finding a lost child in a shopping mall would now hesitate to comfort the child and take it by the hand to seek help. Children too are



much more savvy, aware of places where they can report their concerns and be believed, and able to do so with mobile phones, wherever they are. And a potential perpetrators realise these greater risks to them. Similarly, institutions realise the vast reputational and financial implications of allowing child abuse to occur.

Even more important than achieving justice for past abuse is doing everything possible to prevent abuse in the future. We need to encourage our own nations and the international community to pressurise the Vatican

and Catholic Church throughout the world to report all reasonable suspicions of child abuse to the relevant local secular authorities, and also require the Vatican database to be released.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child examines a country's record, every five years. Survivors' groups should be encouraged to submit complaints to them about abuse problems in that country.

And there is something we can all do in our own countries that is nothing to do with the United Nations, or specifically the Catholic Church. The single most effective measure, I believe, is for laws throughout the world to make it a criminal offence not to disclose reasonable suspicions of child abuse to the civil authorities together with the relevant evidence, the destruction or nondisclosure of which should also be criminal offence.

Very few countries in the world have mandatory reporting. That enables the Vatican to say that the Church should follow local laws, knowing that in the vast majority of countries failure to report is not unlawful.

The United Nations put pressure on Ireland to introduce such a law. Predictably, it declined to do so. Eventually, the UN prevailed and the law was introduced, but I understand without any meaningful penalties for non-compliance. This is another subtle reminder of the continuing power of the church in Ireland in high places in the state. But it is also a reminder to us that mandatory reporting laws need to include severe penalties for non-compliance.

But the climate is changing, certainly here in the UK. We are now actively considering it. Less than two years ago I was told from an authoritative source that senior civil servants completely ruled out any mandatory reporting under any circumstances. They would never explain the reason on the record, as it was clear that they thought such a law would end up overwhelming the courts and children's services. This was an appalling justification. The more likely that courts and children's services were to be overwhelmed, the greater the problem and the greater need for such reporting. Shamefully, evidence is emerging of paedophile activity by members of Parliament and the judiciary and in the government, sufficiently so for a formal enquiry to be launched. It now looks like the earlier refusals to countenance mandatory reporting may even have been made by officials concerned that such a law could im-



plicate them.

A positive outcome of a series of high-profile paedophile scandals is that the Prime Minister himself is prepared to back the introduction of mandatory reporting.

There is one respectable argument against mandatory reporting. It is that some children will be deterred from reporting for fear of the perpetrator, who could be a parent or a teacher, going to prison. And that will be tragic. My only defence is that mandatory reporting will I believe considerably reduce the incidence of child abuse. This will be directly where those in close proximity report abuse, which is brought to an end, and indirectly because abusers know that sustained abuse without arousing someone's suspicions is almost impossible.

We need to make sure that the law is as effective as it could possibly be. It is generally thought that it would be unworkable and inappropriate for the law to apply to everyone. The most difficult part is defining who the law applies to and in what circumstances. Obviously it should apply to those in institutions, hospitals and in professional contact with children. But it should also be wider: there is mounting evidence of celebrities abusing minors at the BBC which would have been impossible without arousing suspicions amongst the staff, none of which reported them, presumably for fear of reprisals or their jobs. Mandatory reporting would increase the likelihood that reporting and curb the abuse itself.

So I conclude by asking you to do everything you can in your own countries to raise awareness about this and have such laws introduced.

Intervention de Nina Sankari

Poland: 25 years in the shadow of the Church.

In defense of democracy against religious authoritarianism

Nina Sankari, Vice-President of the Atheist Coalition, Poland



Dear friends
freethinkers,

Last June Poles celebrated the 25th anniversary of the first free elections in Poland in 1989. In the great national feast took part senior officials from 50 coun-

tries, including U.S. president Barack Obama. The Polish Senate held a solemn meeting devoted to the victory of democracy over totalitarianism in Poland and in this region of Europe. The words 'freedom' and 'democracy' have been pronounced repeatedly. However, we have to admit the bitter truth that the changes that have occurred over the past quarter-century, have resulted not only or rather not so much in so desired freedom and democracy. In 25 years the Poland exchanged one undemocratic regime for another; a state atheism for a confessional state. Why? How has it happened? Is the course of Poland isolated and unique? What lessons can be drawn from the Polish experience? I would like to share with you my analysis on this subject. In my speech, I would like to present the itinerary of the Poland from the state atheism with the dominated Church to the current confessional state with the dominant church, showing factors, actors, their tactics and methods allowing to perform this change, and I would like to initiate a discussion on strategies of resistance against religious authoritarianism. The recent attacks of the Church and its political allies constitute a mortal danger for democracy. It is the fate of the democracy that is at stake now in Poland and I think that many other countries of Europe run the

same risk.

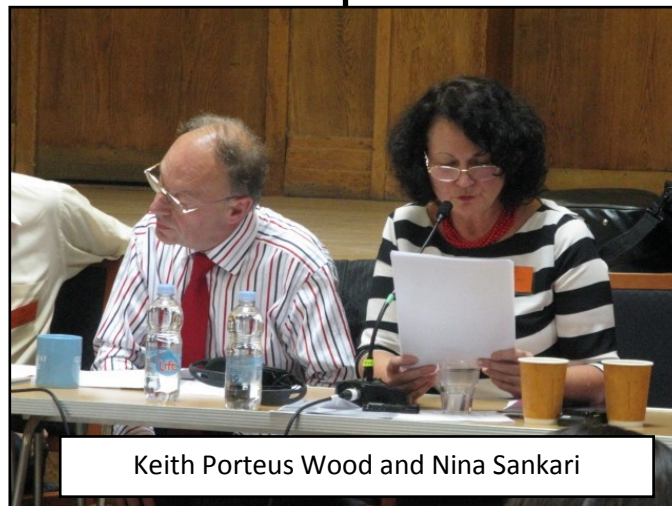
The famous democratic transition in Poland was accompanied by the systematic appropriation of power by the Catholic Church through its alliance with the conservative right. Since 1989, we have been witnessing a continuing de-laïcisation of Polish law and the creeping clericalisation in all areas of life in Poland. Let me briefly recall the stages of this process. Laïcité, the French model of secularism has never really existed in Poland. The introduction of civil marriage and divorce came to Poland in 1945 with the so called Communist system, the separation of Church and State was declared by the Polish Constitution of 1952. Socialist laicization based on materialistic philosophy was not limited to the elimination of religion and religious institutions from public life, but also from the social one. The Church considered to be the enemy of the system, its assets were nationalized. It was a one-way separation of churches and State, practiced under the State control.

After the fall of the Communist regime, reports between the churches and the State have been reversed. The concept of secularism associated with the defeated regime becomes a symbol of evil. The right wing allied Church spreading two opposing stereotypes: atheist = Communist = traitor to the motherland and good Pole = good catholic. Roman Catholic Church issued a heavy bill for its undeniable role in the downfall of the Communist regime: the change of "confessional" laws (1989), the Concordat (1993), the anti-abortion law (1993) and the new Constitution (1997, mark the stages of clericalization of Polish laws. The Polish episcopate opposed the separation of Church and State, the secularism or neutrality of the State are the principles enshrined in the Constitution*, the principle of autonomy and mutual independence (Art. 25)** replaces them. This same article formulates the principle of the "impartial" nature of the State towards the religious or philosophical beliefs of citizens, the State guaranteeing freedom of expression in public life. But this odd formula (the State is impartial, so is not a part in case of the conflict of religious convictions or beliefs) does not protect the State against the interference of the Church omnipresent and omnipotent. This formula allows the Church to locate the State as not being concerned by

the possible conflict which the parties are supposed to settle between them (and this is what the Polish episcopate declared recently). The Polish State largely finances the religious activities of the churches, especially those of the Roman Catholic Church. It is difficult to obtain exact figures; according to latest estimates the total of the public money transfer to the Church is up to 25 billion zloty (6.25 billion euro) per year. This sum includes direct and indirect subsidies (exemptions from taxes, various duties and contributions), donations from public companies, European funding etc. State finances chaplains in schools, army, police, fire-fighters and other services "in uniform", chaplains who benefit the State employee status. Contrary to the law of 1989 on guarantees of the freedom of conscience and confession, still in force, the State finances fully several Catholic universities and academies or theological faculties of public universities (former private religious faculties). The Act on education of 7.9.1991 introduced catechesis and the respect of Christian values as fundamental guidelines of education into the public school. The Act on the radio and television of 29.12.1992 obliges broadcasters, both public and private, to respect Christian values. The Family Code and the law on Protection of the child and the Civil Code of 24.7.1998 grant to ministers of 11 cults the civil officer status in the context of religious marriage. Article 196 on Projection of the religious sentiments is introduced to the Penal Code of 1997. The Property Commission (1989-2011) worked to return church assets nationalized after the Second World War. The Concordat removed Church land claims from any public control. The Church has claimed and obtained the return not only of property nationalized under the Communist regime but also those which have been lost at the time of the sharing of the Poland. For two decades the Property Commission, which compensated the Catholic Church with land and money, accepted the Church valuation of the land it wanted, putting the Catholic Church above the law in Poland. In 2004 the European Court of Human Rights ruled that this let the Polish Property Commission violate the right to a fair trial. The Catholic Church is currently the largest private landowner in

Poland. The Church engages directly in the political life of the country in many ways: encouraging them to vote for candidates supported by the Church, by "censuring" or opposing projects of laws or imposing others etc. The alliance of the throne and the altar allowed Grazyna Gesicka, Minister in the office of Jaroslaw Kaczynski to consider the Church as "one of the most important institutions of State." The arrival to power of the civic platform's Donald Tusk has not changed much: the Government has made concessions to the Church on all controversial matters, like fertilization in vitro, religion in public education etc. The Church imposes its moral and its negative views on abortion, contraception, sexual education, divorce, euthanasia, the LGBTQ rights, the Charter of fundamental rights, in vitro etc. Under its ipressure the Poland is "crucified". The cross is everywhere in public space: in the Parliament (the "parliamentary cross"), public schools and hospitals, posts offices, airports, stores etc. Religious symbols of other faiths are absent. Roman Church blesses everything: schools, hospitals, prisons, stadiums, public gardens, highways, railways, flags of the army, satchels of students. No official ceremony may dispense with the representatives of the clerical hierarchy and prayers, until the opening of a research institute where researchers made common prayer (once the blessed Institute) for scientific success. Religion accompanies the citizen from conception to death. 3-year old children start learning catechesis in the kindergarten and continue in primary and secondary schools. Lessons of ethics should be organized for non-believers or children of other faiths but due to lack of money and of goodwill it is the case only of a few hundreds of schools in Poland. Public TV program is plain of Catholic religious programs, not to mention the Catholic private media in Poland. Exorcists have access to schools and exorcisms sessions are organized at the National Stadium in Warsaw.

Also, it soon became apparent that democratic transformation would take place to the detriment of women, depriving them of their rights and aspirations. Sexual and reproductive women's rights have become the war booty of the Church and his political ally - the conservative right.



Keith Porteus Wood and Nina Sankari

For the liberals and the left, it was not too high a price to pay in exchange for the support of the Church in other areas, for example, for its consent to the accession of the country to the European Union. And there were many gestures: the Prime Minister Oleksy (1995-1996) tirelessly kneeling on all occasions or president Kwasniewski (1995-2005) riding with Jean-Paul II in "Papamobile". The Polish women have paid with their health and their life the cost of change. The anti-abortion law was passed in 1993, contrary to the view of public opinion and in violation of the fundamental principles of democracy. An initiative of citizens who collected 1.5 million signatures calling for a referendum on the issue, has simply been neglected. The restriction of access to abortion had started, step by step, before even the introduction of the 1993 Act. This is



done with the support of doctors, who, like in the Interwar Years, have been playing the conscience clause preventing them from performing abortions for free. A brochure "Contemporary Women's Hell: Polish Women's Stories" describes stories that give goose bumps. Like the case of Agata Lamczak died of sepsis because doctors have refused her a therapy that could have been harmful to the fetus. A description of the scene in which her mother and her companion beg physicians to intervene, recalls scenes of literature or films about the reality of another century when doctors asked the future father to choose the life to save: that of the mother or of the child. Another Agata, a 14-year-old pregnant girl, was denied the right to abortion, legal in her case, and was finally able to abort in an anonymous hospital the last day of the statutory limitation period thanks to the direct intervention of the minister of health, after many protestations of feminist associations. The protection of "life to be born" by hook or by crook, at any price, even at the cost of wo-

men lives became the symbol of the power of the Church and its political allies. Fortunately, some known cases, like that of Alicja Tysiac (refusal of abortion for medical reasons) or Barbara Wojnarowska (denial of prenatal test while she already had children with genetic defects) have found an answer in Strasbourg the European Court of the human rights where these women have won their lawsuit against the Polish State. A documentary directed by feminist filmmakers Claudia Snochowska-Gonzalez and Anna Zdrojewska "The underground state of women" shows what physical and mental risks, in addition to humiliation, run women forced to abort illegally. The abortion tourism accessible to wealthy women, is a well-known fact but the systemic violence against women continues. In 2000, the first manifestation of March 8 after the fall of Communism had a slogan "A democracy without women is a half of democracy." But, in reality, democracy without women is just no democracy at all.

It seemed that the Church got what she wanted. However, a few months ago, the Church launched an unprecedented offensive against not only the secular State, but against the very foundations of democracy. It is an open war against women, against democratic freedoms and especially the freedom of conscience and speech, against the system of power based on citizen rights. We are witnessing a strong intensification of anti-democratic actions coming from the conservative Catholic circles, including an open incitement of Catholic hierarchs to disobey the State laws, and the encouragement of aggressive Catholic commandos pushing the authorities to adopt solutions incompatible with the standards of the democratic state of law, using physical violence or the threat of its use (i.e. preventive censorship in the case of cancellation of the spectacle "Golgotha Picnic").

As usual, this offensive started with hostilities against women and especially against feminists. In 2013, the Church has found a new enemy - the gender ideology which has become a major cause of all evil in Poland: family disintegration, pedophilia, collapse of moral values etc. and has been described by the Polish bishops of a threat worse than Communism. «Gender destroyed the Poland, gender destroys the family, gender STOP» - launched Catholic fundamentalists. Archbishop Michalik, head of Poland's Episcopate, in the context of the multiple cases of pedophilia of priests in Poland has blamed feminists for the destruction of the



traditional family and the victims themselves: "Many of these cases of (sexual) molestation could be avoided given a healthy relationship between parents. We often hear that this inappropriate attitude (pedophilia), or abuse, manifests itself when a

child is looking for love. It (the child) clings, it searches. It gets lost itself and then draws another person into this". In the war against "gender" the catholic media have gone as far as to require to close 'gender studies' in the universities of Poland.

Then, in May 2014, 3 thousand doctors and students in medicine signed the Declaration of Faith (published under patronage of the Polish episcopate), recognizing "the primacy of God's laws over human laws", including the code of medical ethics. The signatories of the declaration announced that they will not violate the Ten Commandments by playing a part in abortion, birth control, in-vitro fertilization or euthanasia. This Declaration calls on Catholic doctors to refuse to perform even legal abortion for medical reasons. Prof. Chazan, a gynecologist and a signatory of this Declaration, an icon of the pro-life movement and the Director of the Holy Family Gynecology and Obstetrics Hospital in Warsaw, refused medical abortion in 'his' hospital to a patient carrying a severely malformed fetus. He made his patient wait additional weeks so as to see her carry the pregnancy beyond the 25th week, the legal period of medical abortion. The woman was forced to give birth to a non-viable child, virtually without a brain and born only to die short after.

For Prof. Chazan an abortion is "a murder, a death sentence". A few days later a public hospital in Wolomin (near Warsaw) has changed its statutes by introducing the total refusal to perform abortion, breaking Polish law because the clause of conscience concerns only individuals and not institutions. The Director of the hospital said that doctors at his hospital know how to

"convince a woman to love her child without regard to its sex or beauty. The Council of the city have approved the document. Catholic jurists (judges, lawyers, notaries) claimed their conscience clause as well. Catholic pharmacists also refuse to sell contraception by evoking the conscience clause. Recently, the Catholic teachers expressed their will to sign their Declaration on the primacy of the divine law over the human law. In response to protests from the Minister of education, the Archbishop Gądecki, Primate of Poland replied that the Polish Constitution does not guarantee the neutrality of the State but its impartiality which is also a blank and unfeasible statement. A few days ago 250 Polish researchers in Poznań wrote an open letter to defend a member of right prof. Pawłowicz who spread unfounded stereotypes about LGBT people.

One could cite such examples endlessly. I allowed myself to give these details not to impress the audience with the cases that seem unimaginable but to warn you once again. Poland is not an isolated case of such development. There are other countries in the former communist countries camp as Slovakia or Croatia who follow the same path. The collapse of the USSR and of the "Socialist" camp where the State dominated and controlled the Church resulted in the reversal of their roles. The change of the system caused also a stigmatization of the left associated with the defeated totalitarian regime and its accusations of being devoid of moral because atheist. The new left, mostly postmodernist, rejected universal values, taking relativistic positions and a positive attitude towards religion (e.g. liberation theology). The Liberals, busy with building the new system - neoliberal capitalism - were ready to make concessions without limits to the Church in exchange for its support (considering ambos as free tribunes for electoral campaign) or at least for peace with the hierarchy. In these conditions, the Catholic Church which in reality is quickly losing its believers (at least 2 million since 2003 in Poland) and the generosity of those who remain, exerts a disproportionate power through its political allies. Strongly undermined by pedophilia and finance scandals, it imposes its laws and retrograde opinions not by the strength of faith of believers but by laws voted through its political influence or simply by force (Catholic commandos).

« Poland "crucified" from Parliament to the nurseries, post offices and banks; women deprived of their rights to decide freely on their body and their fate, forced to

continue their pregnancies despite serious fetal malformations and to give birth to non-viable children; public school converted to Catholic madrasa where students have more lessons of religion than of biology; researchers undergoing pressure to restrict the freedom of scientific research; the artists with the mouth gagged; doctors and teachers encouraged to recognize the supremacy of the divine law over the law of the State, lawyers relying on canon law, priests who are above the law and deputies praying for rain. And finally - citizens, who without regard for their religion or lack thereof pay taxes for appropriation of public space, memory and history by the Catholic Church and its imposition of the rules of the confessional State, with the support of the political elites who profit from the alliance of the throne and the altar. When the State has withdrawn from the respect for the values of the Enlightenment - the foundation of modern liberal democracy - and gave up civic education to the Church and her dependent institutions, democracy is dying, leaving place to the populist authoritarianism - we can read in the Declaration in defense of democracy against the clericalization, launched by the Atheist Coalition. But we can note that the de-secularization is a present trend in Europe as well and might eventually create a similar situation in other countries. The France and the Spain are striking examples of a de-secularization conducted by the alliance of Church and the identitarian right who are the key actors of this process everywhere.

However, it seems that things can go even further. The senile capitalism (Samir Amin)) in its neoliberal form has exhausted its forces and calls for wars of oil or religions to survive. In Islamic countries we are seeing initiatives that 50 years before would seem the stories of a madman: the restoration of the Caliphate with religious rules of the times of the Prophet. However, let us not deceive ourselves, in Europe we are not immune to such crazy ideas either. The specter of neofeodalisme with feudal structures (oligarchies) and slave relationships is haunting Europe.

We, the children of the Enlightenment, who are fighting for freedom of conscience, for the emancipation of humanity against the forces of obscurantism and ignorance, must tighten our ranks and do anything to stop the retenebration, because "ignorance always leads to servitude" (Condorcet). In Poland, a country considered as hyper-catholique, we observe nowadays a se-

cular revival becoming more and more powerful. The recent actions of the Church caused protests of citizens who organize themselves, reveal sexual, financial and other abuse by Church, inform citizens and help them to free themselves from the pressure of the Church and carry out varied projects eg. The White Book of abuses in the field of confessions and "weltanschauung". Our Atheist Coalition, born at the beginning of this year, is an exemple of such activities. Last March we held the first "Atheists Dys" in Warsaw, with the historical reconstruction of the execution of Kazimierz Łyszczyński, the patron of Polish atheists and author of the "Treaty on non existentia Dei", March of Atheists, the Atheist Congress and the Round Table for freedom of conscience. In March 2015 we organize the second "Atheist Days" in Poland and we cordially invite you to join us in Warsaw!

* "We, the Polish Nation - all citizens of the Republic, both those who believe in God as the source of truth, justice, good and beauty, as well as those not sharing such faith but respecting those universal values as arising from other sources, equal in rights and obligations towards the common good - Poland, beholden to our ancestors for their labours, their struggle for independence achieved at great sacrifice, for our culture rooted in the Christian heritage of the Nation and in universal human values"

**"Public authorities in the Republic of Poland shall be impartial in matters of personal conviction, whether religious or philosophical, or in relation to outlooks on life, and shall ensure their freedom of expression within public life."

Intervention of Misses Maria Mantello at the London meeting AIFT, august 11 2014



The Free Thought Italian Association "Giordano Bruno" is honored to be part of the International of Free Thought and to participate to this important conference dedicated to the separation of the State from the

Churches. This is a subject which unfortunately is always present, even in the democratic States, where against the implacable secularisation, the Church wants to recover the lost ground.

The felicitous motto «Free Church in free State» is from the Italian Cavour and in this battle Italy has given her fundamental contribution. Let it be sufficient to recall the 20th of September 1870, when, with the takeover of Rome at Porta Pia, Rome was reconquered for Italy and Europe...for all the free world, leading to the collapse of the king-pope and of the theocracy. This was the realization of the dream of Mazzini, of Garibaldi and of many other heroes of the Risorgimento, among them all the anonymous romans who, on this 20th of september, took over the Capitol and put to flight the Pope's army.

This event concluded a road coming from far (away) and having passed by the martyrs of Free Thought and by the struggles and revolutions for the emancipation of the human being from the submission to the religious power that the Catholic Church had erected on the crisis of the roman Empire and ... that it still strives to impose today, taking advantage of the renewed alliances which one can define as « throne-altar ». « Neither gods, nor masters » is the motto of Free

Thinkers to create a society of men free and equal in the name of laicity, bastion of democracy.

And the separation between Church and State is called « secularity » (laicity) which is the most precious good to defend and propagate. Because without secularity there is only abuse of power by those who want to maintain the masses in a state of eternal minority: « asinian state » (stato asinino), as it was called by Giordano Bruno.

Secularity (laicity) is the right and the possibility for each one to develop himself with respect to the other persons, in order to « realise -as Hannah Arendt writes it- the state of plurality, that is, the fact to live as distinct and unique being among equals (peers) ».

And the secular challenge bears precisely today on the conquest of this equality. We ask the States to protect and promote the conditions so that everyone may structure himself and his existence in freedom and responsibility, without causing prejudice to others.

My freedom does not begin, as is usually said, at the moment where the other's freedom ends, but it unfolds itself at the same time as the other's freedom. It is in the mutual recognition of this simultaneity that one can reaffirm the safeguard of each one's right to be the master (owner?) of his own life. And this foundation of the secular morale is absolutely non-negotiable for the realization of the separation between one State and the churches.

Otherwise, one may expect the return of the Great Inquisitor, admirably described by Dostoiévski, who wants a flock-humanity that he flatters and dominates with these three forces: « the miracle, the mystery, the authority. »

In Italy, secularity has been proclaimed the supreme principle of the republican Constitution, guarantee of the democratic civic society. And the way of thinking



as well as the choices of the great majority of the italians -even those presenting themselves as believers or practising catholics- are certainly not regulated by the religious precepts.

A few examples.

In Italy, contraception and the provoked (?) abortions are certainly no longer taboos, moreover they are legal, even if, unfortunately, cases of boycotts and deviations (turning around?) of the law abound. One has to take into consideration

the plague of objecting gynaecologists who often render impossible the abortions in public establishments. But sometimes one discovers that these same gynaecologists practise paid abortions in private, above suspicion, establishments!



In Italy religious weddings are decreasing in number and the convenient judgments of the roman Sacra Rota, which in nullifying a wedding (as if it had never existed) have as consequence the suppression of maintenance allowance, begin to be contested by important arrests of the italian supreme Court, which thus intervene to make respected the principle according to which the « divine laws » have no precedence on the « human laws ».

The civil weddings now outnumber the religious ones, and nobody is shocked by the de fact unions... homosexual unions are no longer socially stigmatized as in the past.

The civic campaigns promoted by statal structures have been crucial in this domain, as also have been the actions of sexual education in public schools.

In Italy the catholic schools close because of lack of disciples, in spite of the unjust financing they receive from the italian State.

The Italians defend the public school, which is a constitutional organ for the promotion of independently thinking citizens and whose teachers are esteemed and appreciated.

Thus the cash offerings to the Church have decreased and this makes more scandalous the thousand of expedients with which, in the name of a Concordat condemned by history, the Vatican is privileged and even subsidized through generous exemptions on tax income and dues on its numerous commercial activities: hotels, restaurants, schools, sport centers, clinics, travel agencies, etc.

Rivers of money are flowing from Italy to the Holy See and are contributing to build his huge economical power.

But the Italians no longer live in the shadow of the church-tower. As elsewhere in Occident the religious phenomena has lost its centralness in their life.

The church is so well aware of this fact that it has created the

« pontifical council for the promotion of the new evangelization », a Vatican department designed to reconquer the faith and which, for obvious reasons, plays its most important game in Italy.

At least two episodes have been essential to make the Holy See understand the distance between its precepts and the behaviour of the Italians.

In 2000, in full Jubilee, it must have been disappointing for the Pope (Wojtyla, John Paul II), who was so confident in the reconquest of the youth, to learn that hundreds of thousands of his Pope-boys gathered in Roma to listen to him, had left the meadows of Tor Vergata University covered with used condoms, that the street employees collected the next day.

And also, during the « Englaro case », in spite of the vehement Vatican's campaigns to force keeping Eluana in a vegetative state, all the polls, including those ordered by the Vatican, said that the great majority of the Italians had no intention to be forced to survive intubated, as on the contrary the curia and the clerical members of the parliament would have wanted.

Thus this church rejected in the way of the common sense has increased its alliance with the political po-

wer, in a web of simoniacal deals to recover the power of social control.

And it tries to do it – not by chance- starting from the school and the family: these are the institutions that Pie XI with the « Divini illius magistri »- backed against the fascist concordate- wanted to be « subsidiary and complementary of the Church », to « form » with the Church a single sanctuary, sacred to the christian education (?).

And to day this old principle of « subsidiarty » which would want to reduce the State to a simple distributor of public money whose management would be left to private entities is « chewed all over » to attempt to embrigade the State school in scolar councils managed by « the most representative entities in the territory », but in fact the parishes and catholic associations which are actually, in a deep and organized way, the most present in the territory in view of their very wealthy sponsor. However until now this pernicious operation has not yet been successful.

It has been attempted to regain the family to its supposed sacrality by means of the celebrated « non negotiable principles » whose truth lies in the supposition that they would be written down in each individual at the moment of the (supposed) creation. These are principles which would be then, by supposition, superior (supreme?) because coming directly from a supposed god of whom the Church claims it has received through Revelation an eternal contract. No separation of the Church from the State, but rather eternal subordination of the State to the Church, as obsessionnally reiterated by Wojtyla and Ratzinger.

However, in the name of this tautology of « non negotiable principles », thanks to clerical politicians, in Italy the Church has succeeded in making derail the juridic recognition of non-married couples and the full protection of homosexuals, while unfolding its sexist prejudices framing women in the dualism: Madonna-Eve; Saint-Sorceress with systematic agressions related to the law on voluntary interruption of pregnancy stuffing public hospitals with objecting gynaecologists and trying, but with mediocre results, to introduce in the

State ambulatory consulting centers (they may issue prescriptions for contraceptive devices and the certifications necessary for voluntary interruption of pregnancy) the sadly celebrated « pro-life », that is people who usually march to Rome in the good company of clerical fascists on Mother's day.

The assault on autodetermination of individuals and autonomy of the secular State has been concentrical (??) especially in the two Berlusconi decades.

The reactionary forces have also succeeded in adopting a law on in vitro fecundation which sacralized the embryo and made of the woman body a receptacle in which one could have implanted the three authorized embryos, all of them and without any preventive analysis which could have eliminated potentially ill cells and given the possibility to the baby to be born in good health.

It is such an obscurantist and unconstitutional law that the magistrature has completely dismantled it with a multiplicity of judgments, even suppressing the taboo of the « heterologous » (??) fecundation... But the reactionaries are already fighting back.

The drama of Italy besides the Concordat (intolerable for a democracy and it must be abrogated as we have always demanded) is that of clerical politicians who, on the left as well as on the right, exhibits themselves in sickening parades of obedience to the Vatican curia.



A few reflexions on the Bergoglio effect

The ascent to papacy of Pope Bergoglio arrives in a context of important decrease of the support to the Church. We remember these pope Ratzinger angelus where St Peter's square was less and less full...

This square, pope Bergoglio filled it again.

His efficient and carefully studied sentences rebound and are amplified in the world by the televisions, especially by the italian ones, in which, in particular in the 20 years of Berlusconi, many catholics have been installed at executive posts. Bergoglio says he wants to eliminate the plague of pedophilly in the Church. He pronounces nice words of condemnation on the com-

promise and collusion of the Church with the mafia... But will words suffice?

He says that poverty must be a rule of life and shows laudable moderation. But for the State, a democratic State, the engagement is -let us recall it- to suppress poverty, so that everyone is free from need! Here too, the « divine laws » and the « human laws » run along different paths.

Bergoglio receives much consent in Italy and manages also to catch intellectuals who, while declaring themselves anticlerical, non-believers, incredulous, and so on..., see (or may be want to see) in Francis a revolutionary. They content themselves when he says « who am I to judge a gay ? »! without worrying that the catechism still defines homosexuality as an « objective moral disorder », condemning the homosexuals to bear in the « sacrifice of the Lord's cross the difficulties that they may encounter due to their condition ».

And the same thing holds with respect to women generic centrality of which the pope is talking... here too one does not argue?? too much if the catechism continues to relegate women in a rôle of assistant, and if Francis himself sees them, even inside the Church, « aside » with men, thus without questioning the male-priest superiority.

One prefers too to glide over the benedictions that Francis addresses to the pro-life, and on his campaign « the embryo, one of us » and on the announcement of the celebrations of the Evangelium vitae, the encyclic, totally centered on the sacrificial maternity rôle, promulgated by pope John-Paul II who, to better timber it, even modified the pontifical infallibility dogma.

In short, while it seems that Bergoglio is reducing the Curia power and putting order in IOR-accounts -a laudable action- he does not deviate on the doctrine as he, for that matter, honestly declared in the famous interview to Civiltà Cattolica about those who deviate from the precepts : « I said what the catechism says [...] the spiritual interference in others life is not possible [...] We must always take the person into account. [...] This must be accompanied by misericord. When this happens, the Holy Spirit inspires the priest to have him the just thing »; « I am thinking also of the situation of a woman who has had a failed marriage behind her back in which she also had abortion. The miscarriage is

heavy to bear (??) and she sincerely repented. She wishes to go forward in a christian life. What does the confessor do? [...] The one who preaches must recognize the heart of his community in search of the place where the desire of God is alive and burning ».

So, where is the revolution? Everything remains in the triad: fall, repentance, forgiveness. Much misericord if you repent yourself but the doctrine remains the doctrine and the catechism its text-book.

Bergoglio uses the tools of language, but to convert, to bring back the lost sheep into the fold. Bergoglio avoids explicitly to enter into the basics of dogmas and precepts, he uses easy-going (debonair) and sympathetic, tone so that the « diverse » come to him.

And in a moment of diffuse (?) crisis, when politics is less and less in its rôle of giving concrete solutions to the concrete human needs, Pope Bergoglio succeeds in taking momentum(?) in the structural deficit of secular-

ity of the political class, which in her want -with rare exceptions- of staying in power entrusts the pope with the rôle of stage-manager, a rôle to which in fond pope Francis responds well, proposing again prayer and misericord... Blessed are the poors, heavens will be their kingdom.

Even when he talks about employment, immigration, peace, he does not go away from this.

So, as you can see it in Italy (but not only in our country) we must constantly re-

main on the breach (hard at it), in order that work be a right not a charity act, in order that the State school continue to be the furnace of critical thought which is rightly incommodating the powerful ones..

We must always be hard at it, so that the obstacles to the promotion of each one's dignity (« with no distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions ») be lifted by State intervention, as our Constitution wants it and it is on the Constitution that as secularists we look after in order that it remains the safeguard and instrument of the democracy against the crushing power of political, economical and social oligarchies which to modify it to ensure their domination. Today in Italy to do the the revolution means to fully apply the Constitution!



Report on secularism of the Argentine delegate, London 2014-09-15



A bit of history

The Argentine history, since its emancipation at the beginning of the 19th century, was marked by the tension between

secularism and clericalism. It appears clearly that, during the democratic periods, the nation was moving towards secularization, and during civilian and military dictatorships, towards catholic fundamentalism.

Most of the privileges of the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church (RCAC) in Argentina have been granted by illegitimate governments put in place by coups d'état (1), the ending of these privileges –after three uninterrupted decades of democracy- continues to be a debt to the Republic. (2) This debt comes to millions of dollars: priests' salaries, viaticums, tax exemptions, millions through grants to catholic schools. Furthermore we notice the enthronement of religious symbols in public space and the frequent presence of priests in public demonstrations, by rulers' side, imposing their speech. All that on behalf of an official story written in the 30's-40's that some authors consider as "myth of the catholic nation".

Indisputably, between 1880 and 1920, the country had taken the path of secularism, in a context of high immigration bringing along socialist, republican but also anarchist ideals. Many of these ideals were part of the working struggles in which various powerfully organized feminist movements participated. Moreover national and international male and female freethinkers congresses took place at the beginning of the 19th century.

In reaction to the incoming change, an aristocratic fas-

cist movement with military and clerical roots was formed in 1930 and put an end to the secular project inspired by freethinkers. In order to consolidate the reactionary project, in 1934, the 32nd International Eucharistic Congress (IEC) took place in Buenos Aires to "purify Argentina of secularism". Their motto: "the social reign of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Eucharist". This is the beginning of the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church interference strategy in the social field. This event was chaired by Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, who in 1939 became Pope Pius XII, very clever man, who knew how to negotiate with dictators and install concordats, submitting various countries to Vatican City State. His hatred of Jews and his disregard of socialism led him to become an ally of Hitler and Mussolini. (3)

The International Eucharistic Congress was a significant event promoted by State, key event to start clericalise Argentina, in particular the Army and public education. The symbolic colonization was sufficient to make Catholicism a national ideology, carefully planned not only on a national level but also spreading its metastasis in the entire Latin America. (4)

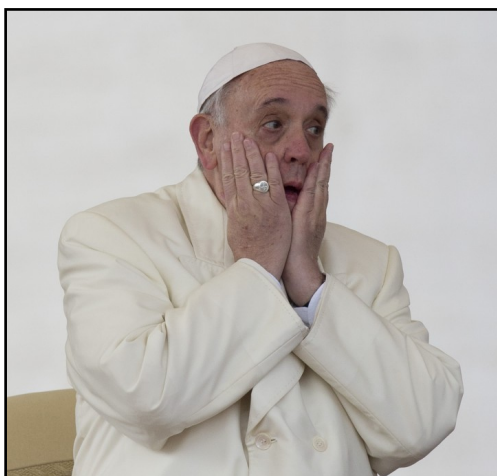
Today

After brief democratic periods and several dictatorships, the longest democratic period of our history was progressively getting settled, from 1983 till date. During the early years of the democratic process, the country seemed to move towards the secularism of State, as is evident from the divorce law and the reform of the national Constitution. But the neoliberals of the 90's put an end to this process led by the national Government. This is only in the last decade that it returns to the secular way.

In November 2002, the promotion of progressive public health policies was the detonator of a conflict that put the recent Government of President Nestor Kirchner in a position of strong and explicit confrontation with RCAC, when the current Pope was the highest representative of the Catholic Church in Argentina. (5) Till the day of his election, from atop his pulpit, Bergoglio never stopped criticizing President Kirchner's political choices and did the same against the Government of his successor Cristina Fernandez, current President. RCAC, taking on the role of political opposition force, generated an appropriate climate to

legislate independently from Catholic morals. After 80 years of struggle between secularists and clericals, the balance turned slightly to lean in favor of the secularists, as can be seen from the enactment of laws in favor of granting new rights to which RCAC objected, as the law of gender identity, egalitarian marriage (both pioneers in the region), the death with dignity act, or official programs on health and sexual and reproductive education.

In 2013, the historical recognition of im-



portant rights for the LGBTIQ community is consolidated and respect for diversity is still progressing. The discussions for the decriminalization of abortion are increasing and a strong public organized activism is asking for a law recognizing the women right to decide for them. The attempts to decriminalize marijuana are also well known. All this falls within an approach of an evolution

the beliefs of the population; some data may illustrate this evolution. The percentage of Catholics fell by 15%, going from 90.48% in 1960 to 76.5% in 2008, and there are no more than 20% of churchgoers. As a counterpart, the number of atheists grew from 5% to 7% from 2005 to 2012 and in 2012 the number of people with no religion reached 30%. (6)

According to a report recently published by the institute for Marriage and Family of the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina (UCA), religious weddings have fallen more than 60 % in the last 20 years. In 1990, the percentage of Catholic weddings was 83%, in 2011 it fell down to 43%, between 2004 and 2011 54% of births did not occur in formal marriages.

From 2008 to present day, four National Congresses of Atheism took place, along with the 2nd International Congress of AILP in 2012 and a number of secular events, with formal support of different Argentine State agencies, and the free assignment of public spaces. It should be noted that the movement for collective apostasy gained much strength and notoriety as an act of public and political movement.

The regional context

The right gained in Argentina by the LGBTIQ community began to spread in South America and secular, atheist, feminist, anti-patriarchal, of diversity and free thinking organizations began to multiply.

The Governments of Latin America began to incorpo-

rate left components in their speeches and we all know that RCAC hates any movement with some affinity to Marxist ideas. Uruguay – country that since the beginning was able to establish a state secularism and to hold it until now – voted a law on abortion, huge



regional event, as well as legal regulation of marijuana use. The student movement in Chile claims a truly secular public education. Bolivia managed to become a multinational state to obtain the recognition of rights of cultural minorities historically oppressed by the Catholic ideology.

The Vatican City State is deeply concerned by this new reality and a new reactionary phenomenon is emerging in Brazil and spreading across Latin America by competing with RCAC by capturing the faithful. This is a media, political, corporate, evangelical, neo Pentecostal worship that, in this country, has achieved a huge breakthrough in particular in the National Congress and in politics in general. The four main churches (Universal Church, Assemblies of God, [International Church of God's Grace](#) and Global Church if the Power of God) administer millions of capital and are engaged in influence peddling.

RCAC Survival

The choice of a Latin American Cardinal from Argentina as the leader of the theocratic state of Vatican City State was probably motivated by the need to stop the progress in Human Rights and the changes in political and economic models that questioned and threaten the RCAC privileges in Argentina and in the region. Latin America represents the last Catholic bastion and they

are determined to fight and not lose it. Moreover the emergence of a strong Pentecostal evangelic competition made the pope lead the 2013 World Youth Day in Brazil.

RCAC is a bureaucratic organization devoid of proletariat, formed by a clerical class composed of 1.095.169 individuals (80% are men and 20% women) and 312.426 institutions around the world. (7) In order to survive, RCAC needs a huge permanent income, given that it is unable to produce it by itself, except for IOR questionable financial investments. (8) Globalized neoliberal capitalism is the best choice represents the best option to generate mechanisms for funding. Since the **Catholic Social Teaching** supports weak, easy to clericalise, states which can spread Catholic values and slow the advance of other beliefs, which can protect private property and delegate social assistance and education to private sector (especially religious ones), and that way, obtain a powerful tool of negotiation, or rather political extortion to request subsidies and tax exemptions.

This economic model that keeps so called emerging countries plunged into underdevelopment allows RCAC financial speculation without any control, tax free land acquisition, becoming in many countries with a predominance of Catholic citizens, the second institution after the State, with more properties.

Pope- mania in Argentina

We could say that the choice of Bergoglio as Pope was a real “curse” for the Argentine people. (9)

Some examples will illustrate the process of re-evangelization that we are experiencing.

During the first two months after the assumption of Bergoglio, as Pope n°266, the programmed respects from different state agencies, invading the public space with its image, its name with some explicit reference to his figure and up to the Vatican City State flag was raised in Buenos Aires. Some public servants went beyond this, trying, sometimes with great success, through draft laws or decrees to impose his name to schools, squares, streets, roads, public buildings etc.

The political forces most represented in the last elections began to send some of their leaders to talk to the Vatican City State. A great number of public servants benefit from travel stipends paid by the Argentine State, like the President entourage. Statements to the press, speeches by pro-government politicians and opponents were imbued with **Catholic Social Teaching**, quickly followed by magistrates and trade union leaders.

For three years now, the Argentine Episcopal Conference is driving in Argentina a campaign to declare cities such as “pro-life” in order to slow down the non-punishable abortion protocols and public practices of sexual and reproductive health. They already succeeded in nearly forty towns, with greater success this past year in the legislative basis where was cited the Pope Francis.

During the patriotic public commemorations, a representative of RCAC is almost always present and takes the floor. On these occasions, public servants often, in their speeches, which should be for all citizens, permanently quote Francis and his “teachings”.

The enthronement of polytheism Catholic images, especially the Virgin of Lujan, has increased dramatically.



One of the most worrying aspects is the permanent attempt of RCAC to clericalise the Public University which is secular since 1918. The attacks are, for the moment,

limited to a permanent presence through conferences and public actions of the “Pastoral Universitaria”, attempts to say mass in the classrooms, blessings and installation of religious images in University buildings. This has been repeated consistently throughout the country.

On several occasions, the Pope asked to pray for several political and legal causes, taking a clear stance on conflicting social issues, using his media power as a

pressuring tool.

Currently there is a draft reform of the Civil Code, the Commercial Code and the Criminal Code. In each case, due to clerical political and media pressure, doctrinal formulations are introduced, at the initiative of the Church to keep their privileges and to limit the citizen rights.

The Episcopal Commission for Social Pastoral organized during the "Social week" a meeting of politicians and trade unionists together with senior officials of RCAC, in order to influence political affairs and especially trade unionism. This event was widely covered by local and national media since RCAC paid large amount of money to get central communication spaces.

Benefitting from the opportunity of the 2014 FIFA World Cup, Francis promoted his "Scholas" project under the slogan "Education World Cup" and he was able to organize events in the Palace of National Congress with the formal support of the Chamber of Deputies and to sign agreements with the Government of Buenos Aires, starting point of his indoctrinator speech to public school students, disguised in recreational activities.

Nation's bicentenary of independence in 2016

The Independence of Argentina was declared on July 9, 1816 by the Congress of Tucuman, in San Miguel de Tucuman, ending the subordination to the Spanish Crown and the Holy See and rejecting all kind of foreigner domination.

The official events commemorating the bicentennial will take place in the same historical site where those revolutionary events happened. The Vatican City State confirmed that on the same date and location will be held the National Eucharistic Congress (NEC) in Pope Francis's presence.

What is happening today, described before as Pope mania, is not really a spontaneous movement but a propagandistic strategy, similar to the one used before the arrival of The Cardinal Eugenio Piacelli to IEC in 1934, where was prepared the ground for re-Christianize society so that nationalism and patriotism stayed linked to Catholicism and that the one who wasn't professing the cult felt and was seen as a stranger in his own country. The conversion

of Bergoglio to Francis is still provoking a wave of sympathy for the papal figure that has overwhelmed the churchgoers or non goers and even those who do not belong to the cult. This furor mixing religion and national exaltation even spread to trade unions, political parties and public affairs with a remarkable infiltration of the Catholic Social Teaching.



The motto of the 2016 NEC is "Jesus Christ, Lord of history, we need You" and the logo shows

a representation of the House of Tucumán, where was signed the Act of Independence 200 years ago. The official anthem of this meeting is the invocation of Catholic Nationalism: "Jesus, we celebrate our homeland. Thank You for Freedom! We want to be a nation. In justice and in truth" and the official prier says "**For this bicentenary of the independence of our country, we thank you for your constant presence in our history**". (10)

In the light of the past and present action of the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church in Argentina, we can come to the conclusion that it wants to create an apocryphal story and to build a popular imagination where Roman Catholicism would be essential to consider the national identity and an inevitable political approach.

Anti-clericalism

As a counterpart to the clerical advance, since four years, associations groups of believers and non-believers of different identity origins, from all Argentina are gathering to form the **Argentine Coalition for a Secular State (ACSS)** to defend the total independence of State regarding all religions. At the same time, the ACSS works with other non-affiliated associations, related to secularism. It should also be noted that each constituent or member association of the Coalition is strongly active on its own and this deserves to be highlighted.

Apostasía Colectiva “No en mi Nombre”
Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos San Rafael
Asociación Civil Ateos Mar del Plata
Asociación Civil Comunicación para la Igualdad
Asociación por los derechos Civiles
Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir
Congreso Nacional de Ateísmo en Argentina
Corriente La Colectiva
Entre Ríos Laica
Federación Argentina de Lesbianas, Gays, Bisexuales y Trans
Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida
Instituto Laico de Estudios Contemporáneos
Mesa Nacional Por la Igualdad
Red Iberoamericana por las Libertadas Laicas

Current actions and completed actions
by the Argentine Coalition
for a Secular State

The Coalition publishes every year an open letter to the President of the Nation, asking her not to attend the Te Deum celebrated on the National Day.

The Coalition presented to the National Congress a modification project of the Constitution and of the Civil Code to achieve the secularism of State.

Through an exchange of publications in a national newspaper, the Coalition obtained that Deputy Julian Domínguez withdrew the image of the Virgin of Luján he had placed, from the Chamber of Deputies.

The Coalition presented to the Chamber of Deputies a draft bill: **Right to Freedom of Conscience and Institutional Equity Guarantee** signed by 10 MPs.

Under the motto: “The new Civil Code must put an end to Catholic Church’s privileges”, Alejandro Nasif Salum (FALGBT) and Fernando Lozada (Atheists MdP) participated to the public debates organized by the Senate.

In 2012, the Coalition, along with La Colectiva (a social and political current), summoned a round table meeting with believers and atheists: “All beliefs, no imposition: contributions to the construction of a secular state”, in the Cabeza room of the Chamber of Deputies.

In 2012, the Coalition participated in the 2nd International Congress of Freethought (Congress of the Free

Thinkers of America) in Mar del Plata.

The Coalition co-organized the 1st National March for a secular state in 2013 in Mar del Plata.

Two of its representatives (Fernando Lozada and Analía Mas) spoke during the Special Conference organized by the Commission of Constitutional Affairs of Buenos Aires City Legislature in the debate about the project of the removal of religious symbols from public buildings of CABA (under the aegis of MP MJ Libertino).

The ACSS constantly and formally condemns in the media the serious violations of state secularism by legislators, civil servants, and politicians, following the election of Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, the new Pope of the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church.

It participated in the Universal Periodic Review in Argentina, in front of the United Nation Human Rights Council, on the evolution of secularism in Argentina from 2008 to 2011 and published the report “**Sombra**”

as a civil society organization. The given information was taken into account in the examination of Human Rights of the concerned countries.



The Coalition also presented a request for public clarification before the AFIP in order to clarify the information reported to the press about an alleged special treatment in the acquisition of foreign

currency to those who travelled to Brazil on the occasion of the visit of former Cardinal Bergoglio.

The Coalition presented to both Houses of the National Congress a bill for a holiday calendar closer to a secular state. In particular, the project suggests the holiday on December 8, concerning a special Festival of Catholic worship, be cancelled and a new holiday be added to the calendar every December 10 as “the democracy and human rights day”.

The Coalition created to “Dr Carmen Maria Argibay” national campaign of secular municipalities I think the campaign national municipalities in order to remove religious symbols from public buildings.

Conclusion



The increasing progress of clericalism in Argentina and in its region requires the understanding of Freethought struggle as a system of alliances between activist organizations of different

identities. It is possible and appreciated that all those defending absolute freedom of conscience and democratic and republican principles get united. (11)

Mr. Fernando Esteban Lozada 23.681.164 DNI Spokesman for Latin America and Director of the International Association of Freethought (AILP) Member of the Argentina Coalition for a secular State (ACSS) . President of the National Congress of Atheism in Argentina. Former President and in charge of "international relationships" of the Civilian Association of Atheists of Mar del Plata Member of the Secular institute of Contemporary Studies of Argentina.

(1) "The clericalization of legislation in Argentina from the dictatorships (1930-1983)", Fernando Esteban Lozada, the 2nd Congress of the International Association of Freethought, Mar del Plata (Argentina), 2012.

(2) "Report of secularism in Argentina", Fernando Esteban Lozada. 3rd Congress of the International Association of Freethought, Concepcion (Chile), 2013.

(3) "HITLER'S POPE: THE SECRET HISTORY OF PIUS XII" - JOHN CORNWELL, PLANETA, 2001.

(4) "From Liberal State to Catholic Nation", Loris Zanatta - National University of Quilmes. 1996.

(5) "Francis résumé", Fernando Esteban Lozada. AILP documents 2013.

(6)

- Second Argentine national census (1895)

- Fifth Argentine national census (1960)

- National Ecclesiastical Guide (2001), published by the Argentine Catholic Information Agency (ACIA)



- Survey of the Argentine Catholic University-EDSA (2013)-

- FIRST SURVEY ON RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND BEHAVIOURS IN ARGENTINA (2008, CONICET) Director: Dr. Fortunato Mallimaci, Coordinator: Dr. Juan Cruz Esquivel, Assistant: Lic. Gabriela Irrazabal. Buenos Aires, August 26, 2008.

(7) <http://www.fides.org/es/news/34300-VATICANO> Las Estadísticas de la Iglesia católica 2012#.UWiNrErlp0g

8) "The curse of an Argentine-born Pope", Fernando Esteban Lozada. AILP documents 2013.

(9) ??????????

(10) <http://www.aica.org/12622-tucuman-presento-el-congreso-eucaristico-nacional.html>

(11) "Freethinking activism", Fernando Esteban Lozada, 3rd Congress of the International Association of Freethought, Concepcion (Chile), 2013.



Francisco Delgado. President of Europa Laica

Secular and free-thinkers friends, I give you the fraternal greetings of the Board of Directors, of our territorial groups and associations, as well as of the members of *Europa Laica*; also of secularist organizations with whom we collaborate continuously: MHUEL (movement towards a secular State in Aragon) and Laikotasun, (collective for the secularism of Guipúzcoa). And, of course, of the millions of Spanish citizens who, each in their own way, try to fight for more democracy, i.e. for a secular State.

Our most fraternal welcome to our secular and free-thinkers friends of Latin America and other parts of the world to this old continent (Europe) full of aches and political leaks that undermine democracies and nullify rights which seemed consolidated.

There is no need to underline the historical fact of the imposition of Catholicism in Spain for centuries, whose most important features still remain in the State institutions.

Spain, except for some brief periods in the 19th century and the very short period of the second Republic, never took the political and social path of freedoms and rights established by the Enlightenment.

Nor formal democracy initiated with the decline of Franco dictatorship and the 1978 Constitution, introduced us on that path, neither the State reform ... (the inherited monarchy, now in place, is a product of the Franco regime); nor the rights of citizenship; nor -even less- the secularism of the institutions, since they very remain affected by the philosophy of Elizabethan concordats of 1851 and of Franco's Concordat of 1953, through agreements with the Holy See in 1979, which are the cause or "political alibi" for the Spanish Catholic Church to hold enormous political, symbolic, legal,



economic and tax privileges on education and social services. The authorities also intended to give some crumbs of these privileges to other religions, by applying a wrong (although interested) meaning of "religious freedom".

In order to change this situation, on one hand, we count on the rapid secularization of Spanish society and the dis-

repute - increasingly evident - all religious corporations. On the other hand, we rely on political proposals and social unrest that organizations - such as *Europa Laica* - carry out for the construction of secular States, that is to say democracy and citizenship rights; and, finally and in these so exciting moments, but with so many uncertainties, we have great hope in the collapse of certain ancestral ways of doing politics, far away from the needs of the whole population.

But the issue is not going to be easy. First, because the Catholic Church and other religious organizations accumulate a huge economic, political and media power. Secondly, because the secularization of society carries along (unfortunately) a kind of apathy and disinterest for social issues related to secularism and Freethought, and thirdly, because we are witnessing a very turbulent scenario, both nationally and internationally, where the advance of certain fundamentalisms and localisms, which perhaps have their origin in the desperation of the people due to the lack of decent employment and enormous social gaps, as a consequence of a predatory capitalism, feeding a "charity market" mainly controlled by churches

In the rest of Europe things are not much better. In this beginning of the 21st century, the loss of citizenship rights (including labor and social rights) are being lost when some have failed to obtain them. The influence

of different churches (mostly Christian) on politics is obvious, from Russia, to Portugal, from Norway, to Italy... Even in France, a country considered as the "mother of European secularism".

In Spain, in 2009, *Europa Laica*, besides proposing countless political and social measures to establish secularism of the institutions and to suppress Catholic privileges, developed and presented to all the parliamentary groups a proposal for a "law on freedom of conscience", attempting to normalize the constitutional status of the non-denominational State. Without success, so far.

Also in 2013 we approved the initiative to promote a global or international day of "secularism and freedom of conscience", on December 9, which is not alternative or antagonistic but complementary to September 20, the international day of freethinkers and Freethought.

Reasons: On December 9, 1931 was adopted probably the most secular Constitution in the world: the Constitution of the Second Spanish Republic. This coincides with the date of approval, in 1905, of the law of separation of Church and State in France, (it is well understood that French comrades are careful, because of how it has been developed and used by political power), for Spanish secularists and also for those of many other countries, the law is a reference.

We have created and legalized, as a brand, the Observatory of secularism and secularity to monitor internationally the degree of secularism and civic rights...

In 2014, after many internal debates, we have adopted and have come to present what we aspire to be minimum principles for Europe: European Charter for secularism and freedom of conscience.

The objective of secularism must be one of the aims in the European construction in order to achieve a framework for the protection of freedom of conscience beyond national boundaries. This objective remains unfulfilled; there are very deep contrasts and dif-

ferences between the different nations. There are countries with a deeper secular tradition such as the French model, where secularism originated and others where there remains a strong denominational and clericalist presence in political life.

Moreover, following the reform of the Constitutional Treaty of Lisbon of 2007 and against this aspiration it is stated that European institutions should respect and not prejudice, in virtue of the internal laws of each member state, the internal relations of these with religions or other philosophical entities and non-confessional groups and also expresses that there should be an open dialogue with religions. This latter idea along with the current public opinion about the supposed "Christian roots" of European nations leaves citizens without common European rights related to freedom of conscience. The same situation happens with the European court of human rights whose judgments almost never conflict with political or legislative or judicial decisions of each member state.

Religious, neo-liberal and similar ideologies impose their exclusive ideas about their understanding of the world and of interpersonal relationships, their morality and dogma and their unequal social politics on all citizens, thereby generating enormous social and economic inequalities and a loss of rights for the majority of the population especially for those disadvantaged by social class, sexual orientation, membership of certain ethnic or national groups, physical ability etc.

It is, therefore, necessary to promote secularism as a movement for secularism throughout Europe. For this reason *Europa Laica* proposes to society civil and to its organizations, political parties, Governments and the

European institutions, the following European Charter for secularism and freedom of conscience.

1. Freedom of conscience.

It must be a priority for the institutions of the



member states to promote and guarantee full freedom of conscience, of thought and of speech for everyone regardless of their nationality. Furthermore member states should respect the strict separation between State and religious or personal beliefs.

2. No censorship for reasons of dogma.

Civic, judicial, political, cultural and social structures must be organized to respect individual and collective freedoms associated with general interest and to the benefit of all public goods without individual dogmatic interests, religious or not, affecting all citizens.

Freedom of speech (in all its forms: artistic, intellectual...) is to be guaranteed without any State or pressure groups, confessional or related to an ideological group or organization, being able to limit it in the name of prohibitions which only affect members of that group.

The implementation of advances obtained through scientific and technological research should enjoy complete freedom only taking into consideration the framework of civil laws voted in by democratically elected and legally responsible entities provided that these are not the product of interference from religious and other ideological groups. Opinions (or prohibitions) of a religious type must not be taken into consideration in European legislation when it implies any elements of discrimination or privilege against the principles of secularism.

The member states should also guarantee freedom of conscience so that no one is subjected to medical treatment against their will or to suffer unnecessary or degrading practices, always respecting the right of each individual to die with dignity by legalizing the right to euthanasia and assisted suicide.

3. The independence of States in relation to churches and religions.

European institutions should ensure their absolute independence in relation to religious confessions, to the clergy and to their confessional interests.

States should eliminate and avoid any type of agree-

ments or concordats with religious confessions to avoid placing limits on freedom of conscience or interference in common civil law for all citizens.

Civic, social, cultural and educational responsibilities derived from European politics shall be carried out by the corresponding public services and shall not be put in the hands of private entities including those dependent on religious confessions.

In matters of religious practice, the exercise of these legitimate rights (individual and collective) shall be guaranteed within the framework of the private sphere from where it emanates without it ever interfering with the public and political domain.

Different confessions shall not be financed by States. Furthermore the tax treatment of religious entities must be harmonized to eliminate all tax exemptions and benefits which they enjoy. In any case, until financial independence and removal of all financial privileges is complete, there will be a public and transparent control on governments' behalf of the financing awarded in its different forms to religious bodies.

Religious bodies must be regulated by private law and as such should not be treated as public entities, in this respect the law regulating the crime of blasphemy should disappear from judicial regulations throughout Europe.

Religious symbols or of other private ideologies must not be present in official acts of a public nature or in public buildings in any European state. The presence of political representatives or those holding public office in that capacity should cease for all liturgical and confessional religious acts or of other private ideology and also the intrusion of religious ceremonies in civil acts.

No European State or public institution shall recognize the Vatican or the Holy See as a State and therefore shall not maintain diplomatic relations, nor shall they maintain relations in the framework of the United Nations or its international organizations.

4. Women's rights.

Women's rights and equality to participate in political and social life are to be guaranteed, without ambiguity. No limitation due to specifications related to mem-

bership of a confessional or ethnic group or of a particular community or organization shall be taken into consideration by European laws or those of its member States. The freedom of conscience for women to exercise their right to motherhood or the termination of pregnancy, within the framework of their sexual and reproductive rights, must be upheld in all European countries so that these rights may be exercised freely and in the public health sector. All European countries

All European countries shall guarantee their citizens a public, democratic and secular education system, directed towards the development of personality, freedom of conscience, equality and full citizenship through curricular content based on universal, scientific, artistic and humanistic values and excluding the presence of religious indoctrination in the curricula or symbols displayed in schools.



shall prohibit all forms of violence against women and shall undertake to develop a worldwide campaign against such practices.

5. Children's and adolescents' rights.

Freedom of conscience among children and adolescents shall be specifically protected regardless of the ideological convictions of parents and care-takers.

European laws shall consider children and adolescents as free citizens and therefore shall ensure their freedom from any coercive doctrinal or dogmatic conditioning, including sexual mutilations based on religious or supposedly cultural pretexts and from the imposition by adults of any religion, rite or ideological conviction.

Child labor shall be prohibited and this prohibition shall extend to European companies and corporations that possess factories and workplaces outside Europe and measures shall be taken against child labor in other countries.

6. Public, secular Education in Europe.

7. Migrants Rights.

Persons displaced from other countries to any European country for social, economic or political motives shall enjoy the same rights, obligations and freedoms as the citizens of the host country. European law shall always prevail in terms of rights and freedoms over the national legislations of the countries of origin that

limit or infringe such rights.

8. Mutual respect and identity of rights and obligations.

European institutions must allow and encourage the practice of mutual respect in relation to the ethno-cultural differences within a framework of a complete identity of rights and obligations for all citizens.

They must exclude all tolerance for racist or segregationist forces, within political, private and social life. They must respect the fundamental principle that the legitimate right to difference cannot justify an unacceptable difference in rights.

9. Solidarity among peoples.

The International European Institutions and other bodies of the European Union shall urge national governments to carry out actions of solidarity among peoples especially in States with higher levels of poverty and social exclusion. This solidarity should seek to achieve solutions of social justice in a very broad framework,

without which there is no possibility of economic development, rights and personal freedoms.

10. The free diffusion and dissemination of secular values.

European institutions shall promote and ensure the secular nature of all norms and recommendations that they issue. They shall strictly respect institutional secularism and shall promote and facilitate its dissemination with a view to working towards the common good and social cohesion, urging all European states to ensure that their constitutions and other national laws be based on secular principles.

Where appropriate, they shall urge that such principles may be disseminated without any let or hindrance in any member state.

11. Secularism, a guarantee of civil peace and harmony for Europe.

The philosophical, ethical, moral, democratic and civil values on which secularism is founded make it acceptable for all minds imbued with a sense of freedom, mutual respect and justice. It has a universal vocation as it proposes positive, expedient solutions to many social and civic problems faced in most European countries and around the world. This also implies the principles of universal justice and the pursuit of crimes against humanity by national and European judiciary institutions even those committed beyond their borders.

Consequently it is essential and in the general interest

of individuals, social groups and national communities that secularism should be taken into consideration and encouraged within Europe and in its foreign policy and that it should serve as a basis to achieve a citizenship that exercises solidarity.

Finally, there is a framework of concrete claims for secularism and freedom of conscience in Europe.

From the ideas expressed in this Charter for Secularism and Freedom of Conscience, the following concrete demands follow as minimum demands for secularism in Europe:

FREEDOM

Full recognition of and maximum guarantees for freedom of conscience, thought and speech.

Abolition of crimes of blasphemy.

Strict separation of State and public institutions with regard to religious denominations or particularities. Inclusion of secular ethics in national and European legalization.

Recognition of religious institutions in private law at the same level as any other association.

Elimination of all the Concordats with the Catholic Church or any other Treaty or Agreement with any other religious confessions by any State or European institution.

Elimination of all public funding and tax privileges of religions.

Respect of secularism for public offices and spaces to avoid the presence of civil servants in religious events as well as the presence of religious symbols in the public sphere.

No political recognition of the Vatican as a State by the international community.

Guarantee of free speech for secular principles and ideas, and participation channels of secular



organizations with institutions in matters which concern them directly.

Creation of a European Observatory on Secularism.

EQUALITY

A guarantee for all European citizens of a public, universal, free, democratic and secular educational system.

Prohibition of any form of discrimination for any type of physical, intellectual, socio-economic reason and any form of discrimination related to gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, nationality or any other condition.

Respect for the patient autonomy and recognition of the right to euthanasia and assisted suicide.

Full equality of rights between men and women.

Recognition of and guarantees for the right to free termination of pregnancy.

Prohibition of any kind of violence against women.

Recognition and protection of children's and adolescents' rights and of their freedom of conscience and for them not to be indoctrinated in the family or school environment.

Prohibition of child labor.

Equal rights for migrants and prevalence of European law on rights and freedoms over their home country's national legislation.

Prohibition and prosecution of all forms of racism, discrimination, or segregation.

SOLIDARITY

- Public and direct provision of public services without any religious or private interference.
- Active public policies against poverty and social exclusion.

- Foreign policy based on peace, solidarity and cooperation among peoples.

This letter will be submitted to the UE, the European political institutions, the Council of Europe and the political representatives of those organizations in all States, and also to citizens and organized civil society.

We look forward to your support.

Intervention de Christian Eyschen

Conclusions for an international board of inquiry on Church's crimes



Dear friends, dear comrades,

On the occasion of our 4th Congress of the International Association of Free Thought this morning's session was co-presided over by **Antonio Vergara**, **David Silverman**, **Fernando Lozada**, and **David Gozlan**. Our friend **Keith Porteous Wood** made an introductory report. He leads a vigorous

fight in the international bodies for the Vatican to give explanations on the crimes perpetrated by members of the Catholic Church.

Then our friends **Nina Sankari** from Poland, **Maria Mantello** from Italy, **Francisco Delgado** from Spain and **Fernando Lozada** from Argentina clearly reported on the problems in their respective countries.

It is clear today that the Church's crimes have an international dimension. They can no longer hide behind the trees of confession or ecclesiastic discipline to hide the forest of their abominations.

They will have to give explanations. Before the scandal of what happened in Ireland questions keep rising especially on the role of some religious congregations as pointed out by the French Free Thought. The Notre

Dame du Bon Secours congregation is a French one with its head office in Paris. Bon Secours Generalt is the head office of the International Congregation of Bon Secours located 28 rue Notre Dame des Champs Paris V. They did create the Catholic Center in Tuam in the Republic of Ireland where the children's corpses were discovered in May 2014. An historian's researches have unveiled the death by malnutrition or ill-treatments of these about 796 children between 1925 and 1961.

The Vatican attempts to ban research on supernumerary embryos as they are outraged by the fact that it would be a murder. They are less scrupulous when they cover up with Noah's coat the very real death of these 796 children and newborn.



The International Association of Free Thought suggest to create :

a) an international board of inquiry to shed the light on the reality of the Catholic Church's crimes in any country on any continent.

b) to make ours the BECLP's bureau proposal from June 28th, 2014 to create an international independent commission in the Republic of Ireland.

They propose to all their member associations to settle a national board of inquiry in their countries which will include leading figures, leaders well-known for

being independent in order to investigate the way they will consider the more appropriate to shed the light on this question.

They ask them to produce a written report and to name a person to sit at the International board of inquiry which will have to study the reports, make them public and return the sentence the free thinkers from all over the world will solemnly address to the Vatican during an official international session.

Thank you.

Christian Eyschen, IAFIT's spokesman



Internet link

<http://www.internationalfreethought.org/>