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Anti-abortion extremism

There are few other ethical issues which bring about such contention as the abortion question. In European countries, the main controversies arose in the seventies, when abortions laws were liberalised, but the confrontations engendered between opposing views were not particularly vehement. It was a different story in the USA, liberalisation of abortion law met especially aggressive opposition from the already well-established pro-life movement. The most visible expression of protest was seen in the emergence of anti-abortion violence, which is a serious social problem to this day. In Poland, abortion became the subject of open debate at the beginning of the nineties, when, following pressure from Catholic groups, the Family planning, protection of the foetus and conditions for termination of pregnancy bill (*Ustawa o planowaniu rodziny, ochronie płodu ludzkiego i warunkach dopuszczalności przerywania ciąży*) was enacted. Even though the law – colloquially known as the “Anti-abortion act” – was very restrictive for women, especially compared to the 1956 act, many radical anti-abortionists believed it to be too liberal. However, their real objections followed from the failure of the police to enforce it and the belief that they were neither able nor willing to deal with the rising number of “back-street” abortions. An effect of this dissatisfaction was the appearance of anti-abortion extremists in the Polish pro-life movement, whose ideas were, and still are, very similar to those in the USA, where there is no hesitation in the resort to the most radical of weapons, viz. terrorism. Are Polish extremists willing to use the same methods? The attempt to answer this question is the purpose of this article.

* * *

The first anti-abortion groups started appearing in America in the sixties, mainly as a result of attempts in some states to liberalise the existing state law, and were chiefly localised. The first national organisation – the *Committee of Family Life* – set up by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, appeared in 1967. In 1973 the Supreme Court set a precedent in the crucial trial of *Roe versus Wade*, which established the sole right of the woman with her doctor to terminate in the first trimester, but stated that in the second trimester, the judiciary had the power to intervene, although the woman’s health was of primary concern. However, in the third trimester, when the foetus is capable of living independently of the mother, it became the main focus and received the full protection of the law, backed up by State government intervention, if necessary.

This pronouncement by the Supreme Court caused waves of criticism from different camps¹. The strongest came from the anti-abortionists, who questioned the right of the court

¹ Pro-abortionists criticised it for compromising, believing that women’s autonomy should not be denied in the last trimester of pregnancy, while constitutionalists and some politicians believed the Supreme Court had gone too far and exceeded its powers and jurisdiction.

to make the decision. In their opinion, it was against the inalienable right to life granted to everybody from conception. Indignant at the violation of this “basic right”, they quickly began lobbying for amendments to the constitution and organising education campaigns.

The limited effectiveness of this activity and the low level of public support² brought about, in the late seventies, a change in their methods and attitude. At this time, the first anti-abortion groups were set up to provide “sidewalk counselling” (trying to persuade women on their way into clinics not to have an abortion), and picketing and protesting outside of doctors’ houses.

From 1977, the anti-abortionists became more radical employing more aggressive methods, including: gluing locks to clinic doors; using false patients to deliver smell bombs; bomb threats; intimidation of staff; “walking home” patients after abortions and informing family and neighbours of the abortion. Other methods were also used, such as: setting fire to clinics; physically harming staff as they entered or left their place of work; picketing the trials of other anti-abortionists; and the killing of pets belonging to clinic staff.

According to the National Abortion Federation³ (the biggest organisation supporting clinic staff and working to maintain the availability of abortion), between 1977 and 1983 there were 149 acts of violence against targets directly or indirectly connected to abortion: 8 bomb attacks, 13 cases of arson, 5 cases of attempted arson or bombings, 68 invasions, 35 acts of vandalism, 11 assaults, 4 death threats, 2 kidnappings, and 3 burglaries.⁴ In the years 1984 to 1986, the number increased nearly three times, giving a total of 413 violent attacks (including: 24 bomb attacks, 21 arsons, 21 attempted arsons or bombings, 134 invasions, 127 vandal attacks, 25 assaults, 52 death threats, and 9 burglaries).⁵ In 1987, the number of violent attacks notably decreased (72), and the situation stayed relatively stable until 1992 (1988 – 52, 1989 – 76, 1990 – 67, 1991 – 83). Arson was considered the most expensive and dangerous: the average cost of which was estimated to be between \$141,000 and \$273,700.⁶ The most expensive attack was carried out in February 1985 in Texas, when a fire was started using petrol and which completely destroyed a shopping mall. Losses were calculated

² Only 15% of the population were for a complete ban on abortion. 25% were for abortion “on demand”. The rest were in favour of it with some restrictions. See Dallas A. Blanchard, *The Anti-Abortion Movement and the Rise of the Religious Right: From Polite to Fiery Protest*, New York, Twayne Publishers/Maxwell Macmillan, 1994, p. 53.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 57.

⁴ These (98%) were mainly aimed at clinics in which abortions were carried out, while the remainder (2%) were targeted at other organisations indirectly linked to abortion. See David A. Grimem et al., *An Epidemic of Anti-Abortion Violence in the United States*, “American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology”, November 1991, vol. 165, no. 5.

⁵ Probably the increase in violence came with the activists’ disappointment in Ronald Reagan’s first term of office, in which he declared his support for a ban on abortion, (also he expressed his support for the “March for Life”; he invited anti-abortion leaders, such as Joseph Scheidler, to the Whitehouse; he banned the use of foetal tissue in research and in the treatment of Parkinson’s; and he prohibited the importation of RU-486, the so-called abortion pill) but he never effectively fought for it. Between 1981 and 1983, all measures taken by conservatives to proscribe abortion ended in failure. In 1982, Senator Jesse Helms proposed an act forbidding the use of federal funds for abortion treatment and he tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade congress to declare that life begins from conception. In 1983, the Senate rejected Orrin Hatch’s proposal to amend the constitution to allow all states to prohibit abortion. See Rickie Solinger (ed.), *Abortion Wars. A Half Century of Struggle 1950–2000*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998, pp. 70–80.

⁶ See David A. Grimem et al., *op. cit.*, p. 1266.

at \$1.5 m., and two fire fighters at the scene were injured. Bomb attacks were also costly, causing losses of around \$68,200 to \$70,000.⁷ Many different types were used, but chemical, propane, pipe or letter bombs mainly (on rare occasions firebombs. One well-known use of a propane bomb was in July, 1984, in Washington, on the office of the National Abortion Federation, which suffered severe damage. In November of the same year, a similar attack took place, but this time the target was the American Civil Liberties Union,⁸ and was carried out despite the presence of people, which it seems was unusual.

The period of relative stability (1987–1992) saw the establishment of many radical anti-abortion groups: Lambs of Christ (1988), Missionaries to the Pre-born (1990), Pro-Life Action League (1980), Rescue America (1986), and Operation Rescue (1986). These predominantly organised protests and road blockades, the highest number occurring between 1988 and 1989. According to the N.A.F, in 1988 there were 182 blockades alone, rising to 201 the following year. The numbers then suddenly dropped. In 1990 there were only 34; 1991 – 41, 1992 – 83, 1993 – 66, 1994 – 25.⁹ It seems, this decrease was not coincidental and related to the legal actions being taken by pro-abortionist, which were resulting in high fines and prison sentences. The cases brought were based on two acts: Racketeer Influence Corrupt Organisations (RICO) and Ku Klux Klan Act (KKK). The former had earlier been enacted by Congress to secure legal businesses from criminal groups, and later, with the sanction of the Supreme Court on 10 October, 1983 was used in a case of anti-abortion violence against a clinic in Philadelphia. The latter forbade offences against classes of persons, such as African-Americans, and pro-abortionist using this act sought to define attempts to shut down clinics as being against women as a class, their right to an abortion being denied by blockades and protests.¹⁰ The first suits to use these two acts were brought by the Ladies Center Clinic, Pensacola, Florida, and the National Organisation for Women, and the first fines levied against the organisers of blockades were high. In 1990, Operation Rescue, unable to pay \$475,000, had to close its offices in Binghamton and New York, and they were forced by high fines in 1992 to close another office in Florida.

These were not the only problems for the pro-life activists. In the spring of 1989, Maryland state put in the place the first law forbidding the blocking of access to clinics, the breaking of which would incur a fine of \$1000 and up to 90 days in jail. In May 1992, the Cincinnati city council (Ohio) moved to enact mandatory jail sentences of 3-12 days for those “trespassing on the grounds of medical facilities”.¹¹ In the states of Iowa Wisconsin, legislation went through to prohibit picketing at some specific residences. Moreover, in Denver, Colorado, and San Jose, California, laws were put in place against clinic blockades, and in both Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Wichita, Kansas, fences were erected in efforts to prevent the blockading of clinics. May 1994 saw the situation for activists becoming even more difficult with the passing of the *Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrance Act*, which forbade the

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ This attack was classified as being anti-abortionist because the group claiming responsibility, while remaining unnamed and unidentified, had claimed responsibility for previous attacks on the NAF and clinics.

⁹ See NAF: http://www.prochoice.org/about_abortion/violence/violence_statistics.html, (23 March 2006).

¹⁰ However, in 1992 the Supreme Court overturned its previous ruling and disallowed the use of RICO and KKK in such cases.

¹¹ Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Public Affairs Action Letter 8 no. 21, 1992, cited in Dallas A. Blanchard, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

threatening of, and interfering with, those providing or receiving medical attention related to the reproductive system.¹² It is said that this was the cause of the real decrease in blockades over the following years. In 1995 there were only 5 (1996 – 7, 1997 – 25, 1998 – 2, 1999 – 3, 2000 – 4, 2001 – 2, 2002 – 4) and by 2003 there were none.¹³ However, the lack of possibilities to curb abortions through non-violent civil-disobedience, which was caused by effective counteroffensive from the pro-choice side, did not lead to the disappearance of the anti-abortionist movement or the lessening of violent attacks. Indeed, it had the opposite effect, and at the beginning of the nineties, the number greatly increased. In 1992, there were 253 incidents and in 1993 this figure almost doubled to 452; 1994 – 170, 1995 – 159, 1996 – 112, 1997 – 223, 1998 – 144, 1999 – 144, 2000 – 215, 2001 -795, 2002 -265. It was only in 2003 that the number dropped to 37. What is more, there was a far greater radical nature to the attacks leading to the most extreme method: murder.

The first murder took place on 11, March, 1993. Michael Frederick Griffin, from Pensacola, Florida, linked to Operation Rescue killed Dr. David Gunn as he entered a Pensacola Clinic to start work. He made no attempt to escape, but gave himself up to the police, saying, “I’ve just killed Dr. Gunn”. In 1994, Paul Hill, for whom Griffin was a hero, murdered John Bayard Britton and clinic security guard James Barrett. (Hill had also tried to shoot Britton’s wife, but missed.) In December 1994, Hill received the death sentence. Five months later, twenty-three-year-old John Salvi III, a deeply religious anti-abortionist, killed two people: a social worker in an abortion clinic run by the Planned Parenthood League, and a receptionist at the Preterm Health Services office. He also injured three other clinic workers and two bystanders. After the incident, he ran away but was arrested the next day while shooting at the window of the Hillcrest Clinic in Norfolk, Virginia. There were two further losses of life in 1998. The first in January in a bomb attack carried out by Eric Robert Rudolph (a self-declared “patriot and enemy of abortion and homosexuality”), in which policeman and part-time security guard Robert Sanderson died. Rudolph fled from the scene and was only caught five years later in May 2003. The second happened in the October, when Barnett Slepian, an abortion doctor, was murdered in front of his wife and daughter. The murderer, Charles Kopp, a fanatical Catholic, had been arrested previously for anti-abortion activities and was linked to the Lambs of Christ.¹⁴ Kopp escaped first to Mexico and then Ireland, and was finally arrested on 29 March, 2001, in France.

The anti-abortion violence in the eighties and nineties caused different kinds of reaction in pro-life groups. The more moderate, of course, condemned unequivocally any kind of violence (especially those leading to death, injury or material loss) as it went against the teachings of the bible. However, the reaction of the more radical organisations (the Lambs of Christ, Operation Rescue, Pro-Life Action League and the Missionaries to the Pre-born) was less principled. A good example of the hypocritical attitude to it was a book written by Joseph Scheidler, the founder of the Pro-Life Action League, titled *Closed: 99 Ways to Stop*

¹² Gary R. Perlstein, „Kampania terroru grup antyaborcyjnych”, in *Encyklopedia terroryzmu*, Warszawa, Muza/Bellona, 2004, pp. 539-540. (Gary R. Perlstein, “Anti-abortion Activists’ Terror Campaign”, in *International Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, London, Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997).

¹³ See NAF: http://www.prochoice.org/about_abortion/violence/violence_statistics.html, (23 March 2006).

¹⁴ See James Risen & Judy L. Thomas, *Wrath of Angels. The American Abortion War*, New York, Basic Books, 1998, pp. 339–373.

Abortion. He denigrates sabotage action (though mainly because it is ineffective)¹⁵, nevertheless the book as a whole is intended to foment further violence (the evil of the abortionists is contrasted to the nobility of those who fight them), justifying the methods used as causing less significant material harm than is caused by the death of the unborn. Symbolic but clear support for sabotage actions was given by the members of, and sympathizers with, the National Right to Life Committee, during a rally in Disney's Lake Buena Vista Park, Florida, in 1981, at which indirect references to acts of vandalism and arson were greeted with enthusiastic support and applause, and prayers were said asking God to "send the enemy to the pit of destruction".¹⁶

The wave of anti-abortion murders in the nineties, resulted in most previously mentioned radical organisations taking a much clearer position and condemning unconditionally attacks which put human life or health at risk. But there were exceptions. Soon after the David Gunn murder, David Trosch, a Catholic priest and pastor from the parish of Magnolia Springs, Alabama, tried, without success, to publish a crude drawing in two local newspapers (in Mobile and Pensacola) entitled "Justifiable Homicide". It depicted a man shooting a doctor in the back as he performed an abortion. In interviews with the media, Trosch justified abortionist murder using tenets from Christian theology, namely the ideas of self-defence and "high necessity", offering the opinion, "to kill 100 doctors to save 1m unborn children" is no different than "slaying a criminal who is going to kill someone", or "killing in the war in the name of higher good", and because there are no differences between them, this kind of murder should be accepted.¹⁷

The argument that killing an abortionist was the same as self-defence was often put forward by the defenders of violence. Murderer Paul Hill, stated that the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" not only forbade killing, but it placed upon us the responsibility of taking action to prevent murder. In his opinion, the legalization of abortion was equal to depriving people of the right to safeguard their families and neighbours, and thus not only the above commandment was broken, but the sin of negligence was committed.¹⁸

Another advocate of violence, Michael Bray (an anti-abortion activist accused of destroying seven clinics in Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia, he was also a defender of Paul Hill, and the author of *Time to Kill*), maintained that "there was a difference between killing an active abortion doctor and one that was retired".¹⁹ According to Bray, the first would be an act of defence, while the second would be one of revenge. Therefore the aim of attacks is to defend children rather than to punish abortionists, making them morally and religiously acceptable. Bray found support for this moral position in the work of German theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who at the time of the triumph of the Nazi party, left his job at a theological seminary to return to Germany to join the conspiracy against Hitler. Bray viewed modern "demoralised" America in much the same way

¹⁵ See Joseph M. Scheidler, *Closed: 99 Ways to Stop Abortion*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1985, pp. 277–279.

¹⁶ Deborah English, *The War Against Choice*, "Mother Jones", February 1981, p. 16, cited in Dallas A. Blanchard, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

¹⁷ See <http://www.trosch.org/tro/mpr-7h15.htm>. (6 February, 2008).

¹⁸ See Paul Hill, "I shot an abortionist", http://www.armyofgod.com/PHill_ShortShot.html (16 January, 2008).

¹⁹ Cited in Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000, p. 24.

as Nazi Germany, as being on the edge of moral abyss, and in need of people like Bonhoeffer to oppose the spreading evil (“with fire and sword”), a battle that was about more than just saving innocent babies but was about building a real theocracy, the existence of which would precede and in some way enable²⁰ the Second Coming of Christ. For Bray, a ‘touch’ of violence, especially in the defence of innocent beings, is actually not much of a price to pay for the opportunity to materialize God’s Law and establish His kingdom on earth. Of course, this is not going to be an easy process. The comforts of the modern world has put people to sleep, though Bray is certain that if something catastrophic happened, an economic collapse or social chaos perhaps, people would wake from their lethargy and take up arms, but he can not count on it so far. The only hope is in those who do not submit to the illusion of materialism and who are able to fight the forces of darkness, embodied in the evil pro-abortionists.

Justification for killing abortion doctors as a necessary step in the uncompromising battle can be found not only in the “official” writings of Bray. The same idea runs through what is possibly the best known publication on the net of anti-abortion extremism, “The Army of God Manual”.²¹ The Army of God is a virtual community of those who have “lost their patience” and who are trying to fight abortion more effectively, in their terms. The manual was written in the eighties, more or less at the same time as the above mentioned *Closed: 99 Ways to Stop Abortion* (see footnote 15). Only an abridged version is available on the net, a result of the lack of real freedom of speech, according to Donald Spitz, who maintains the site. However, in the “censored” third edition, it is easy to find their views on violence expressed: “No longer! All of the options have expired. Our Most Dread Sovereign Lord God requires that whosoever sheds man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed. Not out of hatred for you, but out of love for the persons you exterminate, we are forced to take arms against you. Our life for yours – a simple equation.”²² For members of the virtual community, violence is not choice. The evil eliminates alternatives, so the only way is to fight to the death. “Protection often means the use of force, even deadly force, against the criminal. No trial, no jury, no appeal, and no stay of execution. We hoped never actually to get to that moment in American History but this is, indeed, a life and death struggle, there is no alternative left open to us.”²³

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It is safe to assume that in Poland the question of abortion raises equally emotional responses as it does in the USA; as every attempt to either liberalize or tighten the law put in place in 1993 has created fervent dispute on both sides of the barricades.

²⁰ Michael Bray, as a post-millennialist, believes that Christ will return to earth after a thousand years of religious government, and that Christians eager for this have the responsibility of working to create the political and social conditions to make it possible.

²¹ *The Army of God Manual* is an e-document found only on the net and is not attributed to any author, but it is believed by many to be the work of Bray.

²² From *The Army of God Manual*.

²³ *Ibidem*.

From the ideological stand point of the pro-choice movement, any violation of rights concerning abortion and pregnancy are to be opposed. From this axiological perspective, the right to proceed with or terminate a pregnancy should be the key value, and the main aim of the movement would be to eliminate any restrictions, especially legal ones, on this right. It is worth noting that while the rigidity of Polish law makes this aim more or less un-realizable, the position of the pro-choice lobby is paradoxically stronger than that of their opponents; as in Poland there undoubtedly exists a strong abortion underground, through which abortions can be obtained generally risk-free in practice. (The abortion underground is the biggest ally of people who fight for the idea of freedom of choice in the matter of abortion. It gives a real freedom of choice and its existence supports a strong argument against today's ineffective law, and also an argument for a new law which should "civilise" today's "uncivilised" practice of terminating a pregnancy. This gives, however, a freedom of choice that is notional, as no open choice can be made without breaking the law, and it is simply a matter of whether a person can afford the cost of the abortion, which of course is high given the illegality involved. Thus it is a fight for the "openness", or the quality, of the freedom of choice rather than the idea of it. A fight easily taken up by the pro-choice movement, as the availability of abortion is unaffected, though, of course, for individual women seeking to terminate it may be more problematic).²⁴ While anti-abortion law is seen as unacceptable by the pro-choice movement it is one that is easily by-passed for those seeking an abortion. The movement see the law as a scandalous disregard of freedom of choice; however, in practice such freedom exists and operates behind closed doors. Thus it is not a fight for freedom of choice but for the quality of the freedom to choose – to do so openly in accordance with, and under the protection of, the law.

The abortion situation looks very different from a pro-life perspective. It is difficult to imagine that pro-life movement activists will stop reacting to the sense of damnation, and to what the most radical say are the "signs of the death of civilisation", "murder" and the existence of the abortion underground which destroys "innocent human life" as the holocaust did. It is the point of view of these "life savers" that even under the quite positive law of Poland, this acceptable "evil" is a "life and death" challenge for their Christian consciences (the great majority of pro-life ideologists in our country are Christians), and they cannot be indifferent to this challenge. This is not a situation for which the solution can be put off until later.

The situation in Poland, whereby abortion is illegal but easily obtainable, is psychologically disturbing for the pro-life believers. Great dissatisfaction and emotional tension have not been expressed in action yet, but the radical ideas which are held in America and Canada can be found in Poland. An example can be seen in an article published in *Szczerbiec*, a well-known right-wing journal.²⁵ The author, Miroslaw Salwowski, sympathised with Paul Hill, the American who murdered an abortion doctor and a security guard and

²⁴ See *Piekło kobiet. Historie współczesne*, Warszawa, Federacja na rzecz Kobiet i Planowania Rodziny 2001, *Piekło kobiet trwa*, Warszawa, Federacja na rzecz Kobiet i Planowania Rodziny 2004.

²⁵ *Szczerbiec* is a publication funded by Narodowe Odrodzenia Polski (NOP) – *The National Rebirth of Poland* – radically nationalist, anti-Semitic, anti-liberal, and of course anti-abortion and anti-homosexual. For more information on NOP see Edward Olszewski (ed.), *Doktryny i ruchy współczesnego ekstremizmu politycznego*, Lublin, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2004, pp. 412–413.

for which he received the death sentence: “Cannot the killing of a multiple murderer be reconciled with brotherly love? Is that deed disgraceful and deserving of disapproval? In my opinion, Paul Hill’s action was fully justified. The Catholic Church, of which I have the honour to be a member, has never disapproved of the death penalty, nor has it forbidden the right to defend a life even if it involves taking that of the assailant. The Holy Church also allows for a just war. War is sometimes a moral obligation to protect the weak, the defenceless and the innocent. So when all means of defence are exhausted, it is justifiable to kill the aggressor. ‘Doctor’ Britton was going to the clinic where he was going to kill 30 innocent babies. Hill’s killing him was a defence of the ‘conceived’. And it was effective. The person who sees a direct threat to his brothers and takes up the defence cannot be condemned. No reasonable person would deplore the actions of a policeman who shot a mad person attempting to bomb a kindergarten. Such a person would be awarded not sent to the electric chair. In times when the world is fighting a war with the unborn, every honest person has the responsibility of being a soldier in their defence. Those abortion activists who disapprove of Hill’s action should know that they are also against counter-revolution in Vendee, the Mexican Cristeros, the conquests of General Franco, communist opposition and the uprising of Lebanese Maronites, and so they are against all those who defended Christian civilization and the moral code of the ten commandments. Paul Hill’s deed was a desperate act to save the Christianitas, the moral order and civilization itself, from aggression, relativism and moral permissiveness.”²⁶

Similar examples can be found in less radical right-wing magazines, such as *Nowa Myśl Polska*. In two articles, “Armia Boga” (“The Army of God”) and “Czy strzelać do bestii?” (“Should we shoot the Beast?”), Andrzej Solak reports the activities of American anti-abortion extremists sympathetically (maybe less openly than Salwowski but still sympathetically), quoting Paul Hill (the killer of John Bayard Britton, a Florida doctor who performed abortions, and the doctor’s bodyguard) in the first of them: “Paul Hill, the leader of Defensive Action, claims ‘Abortion is murder and murderers should be executed’. The publications of The Army of God, Defensive Action, and other radical anti-abortion groups are very ardent and express a strong spirit of a crusade. Constant reference is made to the Old Testament and to Christ’s words on the sword he bought into the world. There sense of justice is unbending and uncompromising. Dr. David Gunn (...) punished! Dr. John B. Britton, the ‘baby-killer’ from Pensacola and his security guard... punished! Two workers at an abortion clinic in Brooklyn (...) punished! A security guard at a clinic in Birmingham (...) punished! Dr. Barnett A. Slepian (...) punished! As Paul Hill said the execution of ‘baby-killers’ is a ‘moral imperative.’ (...) Doubts? What doubts? That it’s no longer the time of the crusades? That it’s not the democratic right and freedom willed by the majority of society? That it’s not against the law? Have a look at the website of The Army of God and to the gallery of photos. (...) Look at the victims of Dr. Slepian and other ‘baby-killers’. Do not turn your eyes away from little Mary, without a head; or little Paul turned into shapeless pulp; or little John, just a pile of bloody remains; or little Hannah with her hand up. All they ask is to be remembered and for justice. (...) Between 1987 and 1993, a total of 33,000 anti-abortion activists were arrested in America. But others are still fighting. The decapitated little Mary, and the raised hand of little Hannah demand not to be forgotten, and the

²⁶ Mirosław Salwowski, *Ostatni Krzyżowiec*, „Szczerbiec”, 1996, no. 2–3, p. 24.

crime of murder committed against those smallest and most defenceless of beings must be punished.”²⁷

So, in Poland the radical ideas of the pro-life movement can be found expressed (even in less radical periodicals as in the last quotation for example), in right-wing publications, but have yet to be followed up with any direct action that could be compared to even the mildest of protests which have taken place in the USA. This should come as no surprise given that Polish law is relatively positive in their terms compared to other countries. Nevertheless this may change, as law reform is the chief target of the Polish pro-choice movement. Could the Polish anti-abortionists react to this challenge in a similar way as their American counterparts? Is anti-abortion extremism possible in Poland? The presence of extreme pro-life ideas in Polish right-wing publications and those of extremist groups²⁸ involved in the anti-abortion movement²⁹ (the wide acceptance of those ideas by them do not indicate any clear intention to escalate anti-abortion activities though it may reveal a potential or willingness to do so), the social, cultural and religious environment of pro-life ideas can be a source of support for radicals (even unintentionally of course); and so we could answer yes.

²⁷ Andrzej Solak, *Armia Boga*, „Nowa Myśl Polska”, 26 May, 2002, p. 8.

²⁸ Information about the extremist activities of NOP can be found in Edward Olszewski (ed.), *Doktryny i ruchy współczesnego ekstremizmu politycznego*, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

²⁹ The public were informed by the national Polish media, including TV channels, about the anti-abortion campaign of NOP (called “Abortion – The Real Holocaust”). For example, a programme about the NOP campaign “Abortion – The Real Holocaust” which took the form of protest outside gynaecology clinics was broadcast by TVN on the current affairs programme “Fakty” aired 09.08.2006.