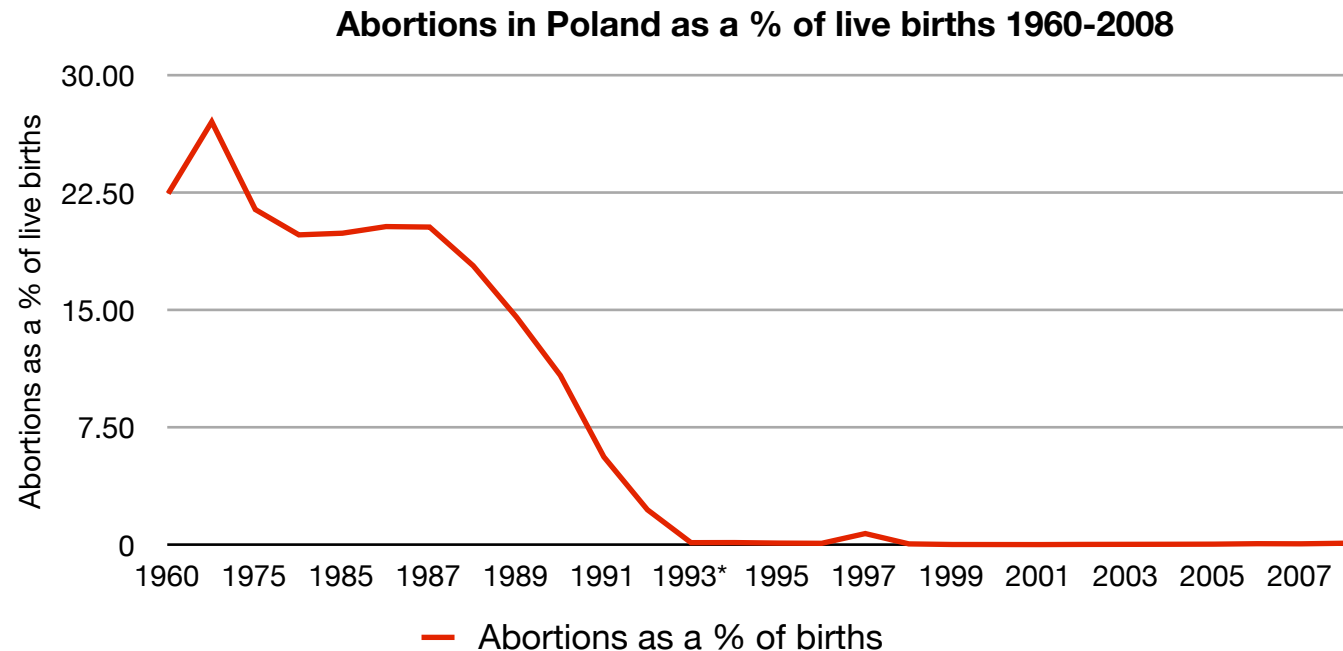
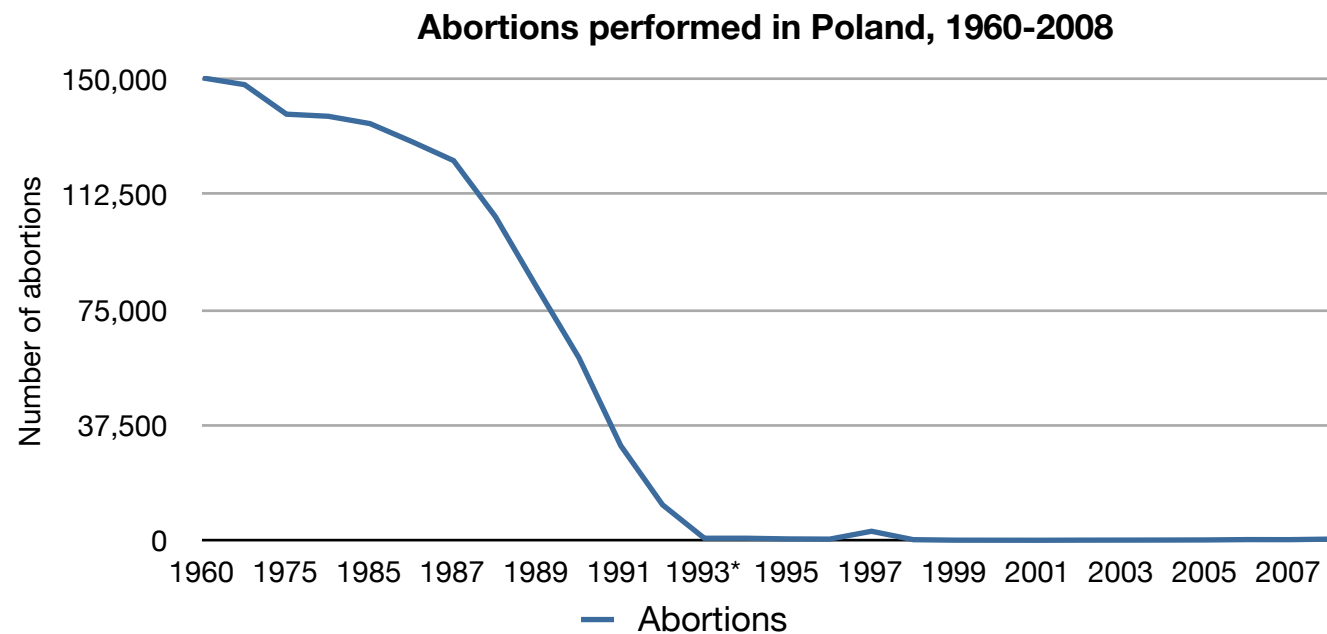


Year	Births	Abortions	Abortions as a % of births
1960	669,485	150,418	22.47
1970	547,819	148,219	27.06
1975	646,381	138,634	21.45
1980	695,759	137,950	19.83
1985	680,091	135,564	19.93
1986	637,213	129,716	20.36
1987	607,790	123,534	20.33
1988	589,938	105,333	17.85
1989	564,431	82,137	14.55
1990	547,720	59,417	10.85
1991	547,719	30,878	5.64
1992	515,214	11,640	2.26
1993*	494,310	777	0.16
1994	481,285	782	0.16
1995	433,109	559	0.13
1996	428,203	495	0.12
1997	412,635	3,047	0.74
1998	397,000	310	0.08
1999	382,002	151	0.04
2000	378,348	138	0.04
2001	368,205	124	0.03
2002	353,756	159	0.04
2003	351,072	174	0.05
2004	356,131	193	0.05
2005	364,383	225	0.06
2006	374,244	340	0.09
2007	387,873	322	0.08
2008	414,499	499	0.12



The Pro-Life Miracle of Poland - Commentary

The story of Poland's retreat from wholesale abortion received little publicity, even in pro-life circles in the West. It is a fascinating story. Poland is the first country in modern times to retreat from massive abortion. It has a message for all pro-lifers everywhere.

Abortion was imposed on Poland by Hitler during World War 2 and by the Communist regime after it. In 1960, it had 150,500 abortions, much the same rate as England & Wales. When Poland's Cardinal Wotyla became Pope and Lech Walensa started the Solidarity Movement, abortion, was well established and routinely practiced. In the 1980s Communism collapsed in Poland. Spiritual values came to the fore and were given public support and articulation. When Lech Walensa became President, a new Constitution was framed and, in 1993, a law was enacted restricting abortion, except in so-called crisis situations. Solidarity wanted a total ban but could not muster sufficient parliamentary support.

The restrictive abortion law infuriated Marxists and feminists who dominated the next Government. They narrowly forced a law through Parliament in 1996 revoking the 1993 restrictions and restoring the abortion on demand regime of the Communist era. Their victory was short-lived. The Constitutional Court struck down the 1996 law on Natural Law principles because the unborn child's right to life was protected under the Polish Constitution. So the 1993 law restricting abortion still stands.

The amazing thing was that Polish abortions declined sharply long before the 1993 legislation made it compulsory. They dropped steadily from 123,500 in 1987, 59,500 in 1990, 11,500 in 1992, 1,200 in 1993, 559 in 1995 and 491 in 1996. Some forecast that it would lead to a surge in births, more illegal abortions posing as miscarriages, more maternal deaths, more infanticide and child murder. Polish social statistics showed no significant change in any of these; there was indeed a marked decline in hospitalisation after miscarriages and maternal deaths. Admissions for complications of pregnancy dropped from 178 to 144 per 10,000 women.

How does one explain the miracle? Dr.Pawel Woiciki, President of the Polish Federation of Pro-Life Movements, says the decline began with education on the reality of unborn life and abortions declined long before the 1993 law was enacted. Of course pro-life politicians also openly championed the pro-life cause, supported by the Church in Poland and by a Polish Pope in Rome.

Reasons Given For Polish Abortions

Year	Total number of abortions	Threat to Mother's life or health	Foetal defects	Pregnancy from rape or incest	On demand
1993	777	736	32	9	0
1994	782	689	74	19	0
1995	559	519	33	7	0
1996	495	457	30	8	0
1997	3,047	409	107	7	2,524
1998	310	211	40	53	0
1999	151	94	56	1	0
2000	138	81	55	2	0
2001	124	63	56	5	0
2002	159	71	82	6	0
2003	174	59	112	3	0
2004	193	62	128	3	0
2005	225	54	168	3	0
2006	340	82	246	12	0
2007	322	37	282	3	0
2008	499	32	467	0	0

Sources: Polish Government Yearbook on executing the Act on *Family Planning, Protection of the Human Foetus and Conditions for Legal Abortion*.

Poland Within Sight of Victory

Poland has come a long way in reversing the abortion laws democratically. It reduced its abortion rate from over 150,000 per annum to just a few hundred. Many believe that the grounds adopted for the remaining abortions are unjust and discriminatory to the unborn and not necessary to save women's lives. Many Polish doctors, lawyers, journalists and the Catholic Church would like to see these grounds removed. Poland's law has twice been challenged before the European Court of Human Rights, cases mainly fuelled and aided by outside bodies wishing to widen Poland's laws on abortion.

A Bill to abolish the remaining grounds for abortion started as a citizens' initiative signed by a large prescribed number of citizens within a narrow time limit. The Bill had its first reading in the Polish Parliament on 1st July 2011 and passed 254/151. It still has a long way to go.

There are other interesting things happening in other formerly communist countries where people have lived with abortion longer than others. Hungary has passed a new Constitution protecting life from conception and Russia has legislated for restrictions on abortion. They plan to publish the downsides of abortion for women's health and they have also forced abortion providers to issue health warnings to women. The Russian government also plans to remove abortions from the free medical scheme and introduce mandatory waiting periods before abortion.