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THE BIRTH OF THE POLAK-KATOLIK

Abstract

The concept of the *Polak-Katolik* emerged in the form we know it today only at the very end of the 19th century. While there were many earlier ways to express the complicated relationship between Polish national belonging and Roman Catholicism, the distinctive pairing of two hyphenated nouns signified a new stage in the history of this entanglement.

Key words: Polish history; Catholicism; nationalism

GENEZA POJĘCIA POLAK KATOLIK

Streszczenie

Pojęcie *Polak katolik* w postaci, którą znamy dzisiaj, wyłoniło się dopiero pod sam koniec XIX wieku. Choć skomplikowany związek pomiędzy przynależnością do narodu polskiego a rzymskim katolicyzmem wyrażany był wcześniej na wiele sposobów, to jednak zestawienie i połączenie obu rzeczowników w jednej parze wyznaczyło nowy etap w dziejach tego spłotu.

Słowa kluczowe: historia Polski; katolicyzm; nacjonalizm

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The title of this essay refers not to the historical, sociological, anthropological, or demographic questions surrounding how Poles became Catholics. The links between these two categories have ebbed and flowed over the years, so we should not conceive of a linear story according to which a Catholic Polishness was formed and then maintained (Porter, 2002; Porter-Szűcs, 2011). Instead, we should recognize that the relationship between religious faith (or devotional practice) and ethno-national identification is in constant flux. Moreover, the *meaning* of Catholicism within Polish nationalism (or vice-versa) is always contested, so generalizations are risky. Separate from that complicated problem, however, is a somewhat simpler but nonetheless important question: when did the *rhetorical* practice of linking Polishness and Catholicism emerge, and what did that linkage signify? Although Polish Catholics and Catholic Poles have been around for a very long time, the *Polak-Katolik* was only born at the very end of the 19th century. An inquiry into the origins of this phrase will help us think more systematically about the place of religion in various ideologies of identity in Poland, and about the multiple ways in which Catholicism and Polishness can overlap.

The phrase “*Polak-Katolik*” does not easily translate into English. The hyphen links two masculine singular nouns, thereby differing from alternatives like “*polski katolik*” (Polish Catholic), “*katolicki Polak*” (Catholic Pole), or “*polskokatolicki*” (Polish-Catholic, as an adverb-adjective hybrid).¹ The noun-noun construction is relatively uncommon in Polish; for example, it would be unusual to write about a hyphenated “*Protestant-Niemiec*” (Protestant-German) or “*Musulmanin-Syryjczyk*” (Muslim-Syrian). In contrast, *Polak-Katolik* is a common expression, particularly in debates about the meaning and content of Polish national identity. It can be used today both to identify oneself with pride (on the right), and to mock people for “backward” or provincial” views (on the left). Either way, it implies an inseparable bond between these two communities of belonging, most commonly posited as an ideal (be it utopian or dystopian) rather than as a description.

In the 19th century we can find many uses of the paired nouns “*Polak*” and “*katolik*,” but without the hyphen. In these earlier texts the phrase was employed to clarify that an author was writing about a particular kind of Pole who just happened to be Catholic, and the ideological valiance that “*Polak-katolik*” would gain in the 20th century was absent. For example, a contributor to a Catholic magazine from Poznań, *Obrona Prawdy*, wrote in 1845 (regarding a particular point of doctrine) that “this problem cannot be answered by a *Polak protestant*...it can only be solved by a *Polak katolik* who, alongside a living faith in the basic dogma of Christ’s Church, believes that outside that Church there is no salvation....”² Similarly, Eustachy Iwanowski wrote in his 1876 memoirs about Siberian exile that among the Poles in his particular district, one was a “*Polak katolik*.” Here the descriptor was used to distinguish one specific individual from other Polish residents of that region (Helenijusz, 1876, p. 251). Another 19th century memoirist recounted the story of a Polish soldier exiled to Ekaterinburg who managed to attain great respect within a community of Orthodox Old

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¹ The capitalization rules in Polish differ from English, often leading to confusion. Nouns referring to national groups are capitalized, but nouns referring to religions are usually not. *Polak-Katolik* is sometimes (but not always) an exception in this regard. Adjectives and adverbs are not capitalized when referring to either nationalities or religions. In older texts the capitalization is irregular, and I will maintain the original orthography throughout this article. The term “*polskokatolicki*” has a very specific usage, as the name for the Polish Catholic Church, a group of Catholic immigrants to the United States who broke from the Roman Catholic Church at the end of the 19th century, mostly because of arguments about administration and authority with the (Irish-dominated) US Catholic hierarchy. In 1919, some people returning to Poland brought this denomination back with them. The Church has about 26,000 members today, and is affiliated with the so-called “Old Catholics” of the Union of Utrecht. See Elerowski (1997), Küry and Wysoczański (1996).

² *Obrona Prawda* (January 1845) 1, 26.

Believers, despite being a "*Polak katolik*" (R. Piotrowski, 1861, p. 335). In 1869 an author described Russian misrule in Lithuania, complaining that the only way to pursue a career in the state service was to *either* convert to Orthodoxy *or* "become a traitor or persecutor of one's own nation." Given that situation, he wrote, "what can a *Polak katolik* expect?" (Czaplicki, 1869, p. 204). In all these cases, the two nouns were paired in order to distinguish a Catholic Pole from other sorts of Poles, or to emphasize the particularly difficult fate confronted by those who exemplified both of these identities.

A noteworthy use of the unhyphenated phrase *Polak katolik* comes from a German government poster distributed during WWI. This richly illustrated handbill featured a group of stereotypical Poles praying to the Virgin Mary, and included several quotations aimed at inspiring Polish loyalty to the German state. Kaiser Wilhelm was quoted as saying, "Let every *Polak katolik* know that his religion will always be honored in my realm, and that no one will hinder him in his religious practice." Pope Leo XII appeared on the Virgin's left, affirming that Germany's Catholic subjects "will always be faithful subjects of the German Emperor and the Prussian King." Finally, towards the bottom of the poster was an injunction from Archbishop Edward Likowski of Poznań/Gniezno for Poles to join the "holy struggle against the schismatic *Moskale*."³ In other words, this document stressed the linkage between Catholicism and Polishness in order to remind Poles that *as Catholics* they should be loyal to their legitimate ruler and fight the enemies of the Church and the Empire. Leo XIII's words were taken out of context here, but the basic message had been consistently preached throughout the 19th century by the Catholic hierarchy, both in Rome and in northeastern Europe, so evoking an equation between Polishness and Catholicism could serve the cause of loyalism just as well as it could be used to spark national insurgencies.

Such appeals were potent because the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church (with a few exceptions) did indeed oppose the Polish national movement in the 19th century, just as it opposed the Italian national movement. This goes all the way back to Gregory XVI's encyclical *Cum Primum* from 1832, which stated, "We are taught most clearly that the obedience which men are obliged to render to the authorities established by God is an absolute precept which no one can violate" (Gregory XVI, 1832). It was awkward for 19th century national activists to emphasize religiosity in their appeals, because in all three partitions Catholic grievances and national grievances did not correspond. In Germany, the Kulturkampf linked Polish and German Catholics in a common cause, and in Galicia, Catholicism tied the Poles to the Habsburgs. The convergence between national separatism and religious identity was a bit clearer in the Russian Empire, where the Catholics were either Polish, Lithuanian, or (Eastern-Rite) Ukrainian. But the Church hierarchy in the Russian partition adhered to the Ultramontane hostility towards revolutionary nationalism, and insofar as they expressed a Polish identity, it was emphatically depoliticized (Porter, 2003b, pp. 213–238). In most cases, resistance to imperial rule as a Catholic lined up only imperfectly and sporadically with resistance to imperial rule as a Pole.

That left the Polish-Catholic equation (insofar as it was expressed at all prior to the 20th century) to develop somewhat independently from the politicized rhetoric of the Polish national movement. There were plenty of references to Polish Catholics and Catholic Poles; in fact, the phrase "Polish therefore Catholic" (*Polak więc katolik*) was often de-

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³ The image of this poster is taken from the catalogue of the Antykwariat Rara Avis (*Aukcja Antykwaryczna: Książki – Fotografie – Plakaty*, 2011), item # 450. Leo XIII had died in 1903, but he was both more beloved (and more pro-German) than Pius X. The phrase "*Moskal*" was a derogatory label for Russians, and "schismatics" was a derogatory label for Eastern Orthodox.

scribed as an “axiom” or a “stubborn assertion.”⁴ But these were merely affirmations of a demographic assumption, typically evoked only so as to be debunked. For example, the journalist Maurycy Mann wrote in 1849, “I do not at all accept the axiom, assumed around nearly the whole world: Polish therefore Catholic. I perceive no differences in terms of religious denomination when it comes to patriotism, and in my opinion a *Polak niekatolik* can be, as they say, a truly excellent Pole, just as much as a *Polak katolik* can be” (Mann, 1849, p. 24).

This passage hints at debates that arose occasionally among Poles in the 19th century (most fatefully with the positivists, starting in the 1870s), but only in the 20th century would these issues truly rise to prominence in the broader public realm.⁵ It was then that that hyphen was added, implying that the *Polak-Katolik* had to be named precisely because of the conviction that he *ought* to be hegemonic, but was not. The hyphenated *Polak-Katolik* implied that a Catholic was the only proper Pole, that the opposite of the *Polak-Katolik* was the foreigner, not another kind of Pole.

The earliest usage of the hyphenated phrase *Polak-Katolik* that I have found comes from this 1893 speech by Stanisław Tarnowski.

What is the condition of Catholic sentiment and conviction in our nation? What is the level of its strength and fortitude? Every thoughtful *Polak-katolik* who is concerned about the value of his nation, who cares about its future, considers and explores these questions, seeks answers to them. Only He who sees into the mysteries of the heart—God—knows how we are in this regard (Tarnowski, 1895, p. 25).

The phrase spread in popularity very gradually over the coming years, receiving a boost in 1905 when it was adopted as the title of a short-lived magazine from Lublin, as well as the printing house that produced it. The *Polak-Katolik* firm was quite active, releasing a steady supply of devotional books, catechisms, and saints’ lives.⁶ A few years later, the Archdiocese of Warsaw sponsored the creation of the *Polak-Katolik Press* [*Tłocznia Polaka-Katolika*], which released a similar array of religious books, along with the daily newspaper *Polska* and one of the most important Catholic magazines of the early 20th century, *Przegląd Katolicki*.⁷

After the First World War the political and polemical edge of the phrase *Polak-katolik* sharpened. During the debates surrounding the creation of the first Polish constitution in 1921, the Christian Democratic Party introduced an amendment stating that only a *Polak-katolik* could be eligible for the presidency.⁸ That proposal did not pass, though the issue (and the phrase) was part of the heated debates surrounding the election and subsequent assassination of President Gabriel Narutowicz.⁹ During all the election campaigns of the 1920s there were frequent appeals to the *Polak-katolik* voter, and advocates of a more inclusive vision of Polish multiculturalism often argued against the implications of the phrase.¹⁰ As the interwar years progressed the phrase became increasingly common. In the novel *Kłamca* [The Liar] by Jerzy Kossowski, a character identifies himself as Catholic,

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⁴ For example see “Charitas o emigracji polskiej” (1900, p. 299).

⁵ On some of the earliest arguments about the role of religion in Polish society, see Jaszczuk (1986).

⁶ For example, *Pierwsze początki katechizmu dla małych dzieci* (1906), *Woroniecki* (1906), *Żywot błogosławionej Bronisławy* (1907), *Żywot św. Stanisława* (1907), *Żywot św. Wojciecha* (1907).

⁷ Among their books were *Bełza* (1917), *Holowiński* (1915).

⁸ An interesting discussion of this proposal can be found in the *Protokół narad Komitetu Biskupów z dnia 4 i 5 marca 1921 roku*, *Archiwum Archidiecezji Warszawskiej*, Sygn. 2642 / A II 1.1.

⁹ These debates are covered in depth by Brykczynski (2016).

¹⁰ See for example, *Czarnowski* (1930), *Hulka-Laskowski* (1929).

and is asked in return, “Więc *Polak* [So, a Pole]?” He responds, “No tak, *Polak-katolik* [Of course, yes, a Pole-Catholic]” (Kossowski, 1928, p. 110).

The hyphen in this expression did a lot of work, and it is no coincidence that it began to link the nouns *Polak* and *katolik* around a century ago. The aforementioned speech by Tarnowski helps us see precisely what this new expression signified. The basic message of that 1893 speech was that a Pole who truly cared about his nation should also care about the fate of the Church, which Tarnowski thought was threatened by the failure of Poles to take their religious duties seriously enough. In Galicia, he believed, Catholicism was weak precisely because the Poles were *not* good Catholics. In other words, the *Polak-katolik* was not a descriptive term, but a normative one: it was not something that existed, but something Tarnowski wanted to cultivate. This implication remains true today: the phrase *Polak-katolik* does not signify a sociological or anthropological reality, but a project. Embedded in the term is a perceived problem, and its very use marks an uncertainty, a point of discomfort, an undesirable ambiguity. There would be no need for the expression if the fusion between Polishness and Catholicism was truly obvious and universal. In other words, the precise form of the expression *Polak-katolik* emerged during a moment when Polish Catholics perceived a necessary link between their faith and their nation, *and* felt that this connection was frayed.

To clarify what was happening with this term, it helps to pull back even further, all the way to the 16th century. Poles are justly proud of a text from the Warsaw Confederation of 1573. During an interregnum that year there was a serious danger of political instability or even violence, particularly given the backdrop of the Protestant Reformation. With this in mind, the delegates to the electoral sejm (an assembly of the nobility) began their discussions of succession by issuing the following pledge:

*We promise each other pro nobis et successoribus nostris in perpetuum sub vinculo iuramenti, fide, honore et conscientiis nostris, that although we are dissidentes de religione, we will preserve peace among ourselves and not shed blood because of differences in faith or variety of church.*¹¹

A version of this oath was repeated by future electoral sejms, but not without some important modifications. In 1632 the text was altered to read “that we who are divided by faith will keep peace among ourselves, and not shed blood on account of difference in our *Christian* faith or church.” Sixteen years later it was changed yet again, this time stating that “in matters concerning Christian religion, peace should be among the dissidents in the Christian religion, which we pledge to maintain...provided that the rights of the Roman Catholic Church were not violated in this peace and security of the dissidents in Christian religion.” Finally, in 1733 the pledge almost completely inverted the original intent:

Because the foundation and longevity of all states is grounded in the true God and Holy religion, so through our confederation of this year we prohibit anyone from restricting the rights and privileges of the true Roman Catholic and Greco-Uniate churches. And indeed, since in this faithful country we detest strange cults, we pledge and oblige ourselves to stand by the Holy Roman Catholic Church and defend its freedoms (Teter, 2006, pp. 46–48).

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¹¹ The text of the Warsaw Confederation can be found at <http://www.literatura.hg.pl/varsconf.htm> (accessed May 27, 2016). The blend of Latin and Polish marked the entire document, and was typical of Polish rhetoric from that time. On the background to the Warsaw Confederation, see Salmonowicz (1974, pp. 7–30).

All of these successive revisions set the stage for the formulation of article one of the Polish Constitution of May 3, 1791, which affirmed that “the ruling national religion is and will be the Holy Roman Catholic faith, with all its laws.”¹²

So we can observe a gradual but steady shift between the 16th and 18th centuries, from a strong proclamation that a Pole can be of different faiths to the establishment of Catholicism as an official state religion and a condemnation of “strange cults.” It is impossible to extrapolate from legal texts like these to matters of personal identity, but we can say that *rhetorically* it was possible to include non-Catholics in the community of enfranchised nobles of the Polish-Lithuanian Republic during the early decades of the Reformation, but much more difficult to do so on the eve of that state’s destruction. This is not quite the same thing as proclaiming a multicultural and inclusive *Polish* identity, but rather an inclusive membership in the elite of the First Republic. Nonetheless, it seems clear that there was a relationship between a sort of national-political identity and religion. In the 15th century this was expressed in the form of a negation: a recognition that others in Europe merged religion and citizenship, but that the signatories of the Warsaw Confederation would be more inclusive. In the 18th century the linkage was articulated as a positive affirmation that in Poland too these two categories were merged.

This progression of texts makes it clear that the linkage of Polishness and Catholicism long predated the emergence of the phrase *Polak-Katolik*. Moreover, after the destruction of the First Republic in 1795, the movement to restore the country’s independence frequently utilized religious iconography. Even that ultimate expression of Polish inclusiveness, the famous 1830 battle flag reading “for our freedom and yours,” was prefaced by the invocation “in the name of God” and adorned with a cross. Nonetheless, mid-19th century texts tended to reflect not a continuity with pre-partition ideas about the religious identity of the national “we,” but an evocation of a broader community that harkened back to the 16th century attitudes expressed by the Confederation of Warsaw. Later, the emergence of the phrase *Polak-Katolik* in the 20th century marked the pendulum’s swing back towards a more religiously homogenous vision of the nation, one which set up new barriers to outsiders and demanded conformity among insiders (Porter, 2000). The hyphenated expression denoted a moment of transition and rhetorical contestation, when multiple ideas about who was a Pole vied for supremacy in a dynamically expanding modern public sphere. In that environment, the hyphen asserted a bond that others were repudiating; it was a polemical boundary marker between those who wanted the modern Polish nation to be pluralistic, and those who did not.

To understand that argument, it is important to distinguish between the various ways in which Pole and Catholic might be equated. I see at least five distinct implied meanings to the assertion that “Poland is Catholic.”

1. The most obvious way in which these two ideas can be linked is through the law, by officially proclaiming that Catholicism is the official religion of the Polish state. This was the claim of article one in the 1791 constitution, and even today some Polish politicians (and even more members of the clergy) would like to see this link reestablished. Indeed, with state support of religious education and with crosses or pictures of Pope John Paul II hanging in most government offices, many would argue that the state does, in fact, have an official religion (particularly since the elections of 2015). As we have seen, one of the earliest deployments of the *Polak-Katolik* idea was in a proposal to make only Catholics eligible for election to the Polish presidency.

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¹² On the background to this article, see Butterwick (2012, pp. 206–251). The text of the 1791 constitution is available at <http://www.polishconstitution.org/Konstytucja-PL.html> (accessed May 27, 2016).

2. On another register, the relationship between Polishness and Catholicism could be a mere demographic observation. In statistical terms, the dominance of Catholicism is hard to overstate: 99% of all children in Poland are baptized, 92.8% of all marriages are accompanied by a church wedding, and between 90% and 98% of the population will answer “Roman Catholic” when asked about their religion (depending on how the question is posed).¹³ Historically the issue has been more complex. Before the Second World War about 2/3 of the population of Poland was Catholic, giving some justification to article 114 of the constitution of 1921, which stated, “The Roman-Catholic denomination, being the religion of the overwhelming majority of the nation, occupies in the State a leading position among the denominations, which all have equal rights.”¹⁴ While a reader today might interpret that clause as a thinly veiled way to make Catholicism the implied official religion, it was understood by Church leaders at the time as an unacceptably weak endorsement that reduced Poland’s Catholicity to mere demography. Bishop Józef Pelczar captured a common reaction in an open letter to the parliamentary delegates from his diocese, when he complained that “under the name of a “denomination, [the Church] was positioned equal to Judaism and the a-Catholic sects. Let’s hope a future sejm fixes that mistake” (Pelczar, 1921, p. 3). Anticlericalism remained a prominent strain in Polish politics in the interwar years, and there was much debate at the time about integrating (or not) and labeling the third of the population that was *not* Catholic. But for now let us simply recognize that even in the 1920s and 1930s Catholicism was indisputably the “religion of the overwhelming majority” of the population of Poland, regardless of the ideological, sociological, anthropological, or political consequences one might derive from that demographic reality.

3. Related to the population statistics is a historical claim that would seem to be an equally unproblematic empirical statement: the Catholic has played an important role in Polish history. This can be stated in the mystical framing of John Paul II, who said in 1979 that “without Christ it is impossible to understand the history of Poland” (John Paul II, 1979, p. 28). Or it can be phrased in a more secular fashion, as when Jan Józef Lipski (who can hardly be considered an apologist for Catholicism) wrote, “The formation of our culture was produced by a synthesis with Christianity, adopted from the West in the tenth century, and the percolation of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and Romanticism” (Lipski, 1992, p. 13). Whether in the realm of high politics or popular culture, whether considering matters of international diplomacy or *alltagsgeschichte*, no historian of Poland can afford to ignore Catholicism. Setting aside all the ideological baggage and all the layers of subtext, it is indisputable that the Catholic Church has been important throughout Poland’s past.

4. The fourth way to approach the connection between Catholicism and Polishness is to look at the ways in which religion serves as a marker of identity in daily life. This anthropological frame is exemplified by the work of scholars like Agnieszka Pasięka, who has shown how assumptions equating Poles with Catholics are embedded in the quotidian practices of a small multi-denominational community in the south-eastern part of the country (Pasięka, 2015). Significantly, in that context the *Polak-katolik* is not explicitly evoked, but tacitly assumed. In other parts of Poland, or in other historical eras, this might not be the case. For example, in Silesia, Catholicism could never serve as a sufficient marker of

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¹³ Borowik and Doktor (2001, p. 23). For more on the demography of religion in contemporary Poland, see Borowik (1997), Ciupak (1973), Kosela (2003), M. Piotrowski (1997), Zdaniewicz and Zembrzusi (2000), and Zdaniewicz (2001).

¹⁴ The text of the constitution can be found at <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19210440267> (accessed May 27, 2016).

Polishness because the local German-speakers were also Catholic. The same would have been true in the northeast, where Catholic Polish-speakers mixed with Catholic Lithuanian-speakers. Similarly, in contexts where *everyone* was both Polish and Catholic (ironically, in precisely the spots where the *Polak-katolik* equation really was universal), religion was less likely to serve as a means of differentiating and identifying people. This might seem counterintuitive, but it is difficult to use something that is experienced as universal for delineating and sustaining a community, precisely because of the absence of any visible “other” against whom to distinguish “us”. In the modern era this has been complicated by the presence of virtual “others” presented through mass media and political ideologies, though even today the importance of such “imagined communities” in the realm of everyday life cannot be simply assumed. The work of Kate Brown reminds us that even in the 20th century there were spaces in Eastern Europe where the ideologies of identity were slow to penetrate, and the means of community differentiation were fluid and not always in accordance with the ethno-religious categories that outsiders wanted to impose (Brown, 2005). More recently, Tara Zahra, Nathan Wood, and others have explored the idea of “national indifference,” drawing our attention to the ways in which ideologies of identity can fade entirely into the background when we move beyond the sphere of politics and look instead at popular culture and everyday social practice (Wood, 2010; Zahra, 2009). Every Polish historian is familiar with stories from the pre-partition era that divided the First Republic into a “*naród szlachecki*” and a “*naród plebejski*” (noble nation and plebian nation); in that mapping of the social world either both communities were Catholic or religion was irrelevant.¹⁵ In all these contexts we may nonetheless note an ethnographic overlap between Polishness and Catholicism (according to *our* categories), but without cultural activation such an intersection might have little significance.

5. The final means of merging Catholicism and Polishness is in the realm of ideology, and this at last brings us to the slogan of the *Polak-katolik*, with all of its nationalistic baggage. This usage, as I suggested earlier, is not descriptive but prescriptive: it entails a claim that Poland and the Poles *should* be Catholic, even if they are not entirely faithful to the Church at any particular moment. This is a sense captured by a joint pastoral letter of the Polish episcopate from 1955 proclaiming that *all* Poles shared Catholic principles and customs because these

came to us as if in the blood, becoming the common property of the nation and an essential value that is not subject to any discussion. In this case we are no longer talking about Poles in this or that percentage, but of the entire Nation, understood morally, for even people who do not fully accept the faith of the Church rarely reject this moral unity with us. Indeed, they usually accept it with genuine pride and sympathy....The Church and Poland have been so tightly bound through the centuries, their moral and spiritual roots have grown so deeply with each other, that they can hardly be separated.¹⁶

This doubtlessly would sound aggressive and exclusionary to those outside the Church, but ironically it reflected a sense of weakness. We do not find such assertions from the clergy when their authority was simply taken for granted; instead, the *explicit* insistence that Poles must be Catholic rises to the surface at times of institutional or cultural insecurity within the Church. When it is truly “axiomatic” that “*Polak, więc katolik*,” there is no need to put forth the ideological figure of the *Polak-katolik*. That powerful hyphen, with its

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¹⁵ This characterization of the social landscape of the First Republic is evoked so frequently that its origins are obscure. See, for example, Lępkowski (1967, p. 10).

¹⁶ “List biskupów polskich o działalności Kościoła” (Jasna Góra, 15 IX 1955), in *Listy pasterskie* (1975, p. 152).

implication of an essential fusion as opposed to a mere demographic pattern, appeared when the unspoken verities of 19th century popular religiosity and clerical authority were weakened by the disruptions of urbanization and industrialization. That was the period when millions of Poles left their home parishes for employment in Warsaw or Łódź, only to find a near total absence of pastoral care in their new neighborhoods. In 1860 there were 1,527 Catholics per priest in the Kingdom of Poland but a half-century later this figure had increased to 2,857. The statistics were similar in Poznań (increasing from 1,576 to 2,505) and even worse in Galicia (2,837 to 4,362).¹⁷ The decline in the size of the clergy relative to the booming population was a problem for countryside and city alike, but the issues were made acute in the new urban agglomerations because of the Church's failure to adjust to the era's huge population shifts. By the start of WWI, one working-class parish in the Warsaw district of Praga had 82,000 parishioners, and within the boundaries of the Holy Cross parish in Łódź there were 142,000 souls (Kłoczowski, 2000, p. 234; Olszewski, 1996, p. 481). These distortions were in part due to the reluctance of the Russian authorities to approve new church construction, but oppression does not fully explain this phenomenon, because things were just as bad in autonomous Galicia. In fact, the problem existed throughout Europe: at the start of the 20th century the average Parisian parish had 36,000 members, the average Berlin parish 31,000, and the average Viennese parish 22,500. Warsaw's figure of 34,000 parishioners per parish fits into this pattern (though Łódź's 50,000:1 ratio remained an outlier).¹⁸ Moreover, the situation improved only slightly after Poland regained independence, and in some regions of the country it continued to get worse (Stanowski, 1965, pp. 1635, 1637). The ensuing erosion of the more intimate forms of pastoral work once typical of Polish villages only exacerbated the sense among many Catholics that "modernity" (whatever might be subsumed under that amorphous label) constituted a grave spiritual danger. It was at this same time, not coincidentally, when old stereotypes and prejudices against the Jews were transformed into modern antisemitic conspiracy theories, and when the Catholic hierarchy's condemnation of the Polish national movement was transformed into a tacit alliance with the *Endecja*.¹⁹

If this interpretation is correct, one would expect the term "*Polak-katolik*" to appear with more frequency in times of crisis and danger for the Church, and become somewhat more less common during times of Catholic hegemony. It is therefore no surprise that expressions of Catholic exclusivity were less insistent during the 1970s and 1980s, when (despite ongoing harassment from the communist state) the Church enjoyed unprecedented cultural respect and institutional power. Conversely, accompanying the steady erosion of the Catholicism's social position in the Third Republic we have seen ever more vocal claims that only the *Polak-katolik* is a genuine Pole. This helps us reconcile the enduring strength (in fact, the renewed strength) of political Catholicism, even in the face of statistics like this:²⁰

The paradox of the hyphenated *Polak-katolik*, then, is that he appears most insistently when Catholicism in Poland is weak, not when it is strong. Genuine hegemony renders superfluous the emphases of orthography.

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¹⁷ On the Kingdom, see Kumor (1980, pp. 690–691). These figures encompass the dioceses of Warsaw, Włocławek, Płock, Lublin, Sandomierz, Sejny, Janów, and Kielce. See also Olszewski (1992, p. 481).

¹⁸ For comparative statistics on urban parish sizes, see Olszewski (1992, pp. 65–66).

¹⁹ I have written about this shift in several articles (Porter, 2002, pp. 261–286, 2003a, pp. 415–429, 2005, pp. 103–123).

²⁰ These figures represent *dominicantes*—i.e., those who attend mass on an ordinary Sunday. Instytut Statystyki Kościoła Katolickiego, <http://www.iskk.pl/kosciolnaswiecie.html> (accessed May 27, 2016).

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