“The Polish Catholic Church in Solidarity and Dissension: The Church's Role in Politics since 1947”

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To speak of contemporary Polish politics is to speak, whether directly or indirectly, of the Catholic Church. Whether it is concerning education in schools, access to abortions and birth control, or equal marriage rights, the Polish government's policies on these topics are largely controlled by the Catholic Church. The extent of its involvement in politics ranges from mundane to extreme. However, whether it's a priest telling his lay community whom to vote for in an upcoming election and which policies to support, or the Church threatening ex-communication of Catholic politicians who would otherwise vote against the Church's desired policies, each act the Church has taken in to manipulate a political outcome has snowballed into the country becoming vastly divided. Today, the Polish Catholic Church's hold on policies concerning morality is one of the most extreme in the Western world. To explain how the country came to be a theocracy, feigning democracy, it is essential to examine the Church's role in Poland's 1980s worker's union turned revolution, known as Solidarity. It was with Solidarity that the Church emerged as a stronghold of independence against the Communist government, in turn, it was able to bolster the people's movement and give its members the strength to persevere under the authoritarian government throughout the subsequent decade. While the Church has profited from the clout it received after the Communist government left Poland, facts about the extent of the Church's involvement in the revolution have been exaggerated or manipulated, leaving many fabricated "truths." This paper will examine multiple narratives on the Church's involvement in Solidarity for the purpose of discussing how the Church has achieved its current role in Polish politics, as well as the political and emotional atmosphere it has created.

Parler de la politique polonaise contemporaine, c'est parler, directement ou indirectement, de l'Église catholique. Qu'il s'agisse de l'éducation dans les écoles, de l'accès à l'avortement et au contrôle des naissances, ou de l'égalité des droits au mariage, les politiques du gouvernement polonais sur ces sujets sont largement contrôlées par l'Église catholique. L'étendue de son implication dans la politique va du banal à l'extrême. Cependant, qu'il s'agisse d'un prêtre disant à sa communauté laïque pour qui voter lors d'une prochaine élection et quelles politiques soutenir, ou l'Église menaçant l'ex-communication de politiciens catholiques qui autrement voteraient contre les politiques souhaitées par l'Église, chaque acte que l'Église a pris pour manipuler un résultat politique a fait boule de neige dans le pays qui est devenu extrêmement divisé. Aujourd'hui, l'emprise de l'Église catholique polonaise sur les politiques concernant la moralité est l'une des plus extrêmes du monde occidental. Pour expliquer comment le pays est devenu une théocratie, feignant la démocratie, il est essentiel d'examiner le rôle de l'Église dans la révolution syndicale des travailleurs des années 1980 en Pologne, connue sous le nom de Solidarité. C'est avec Solidarité que l'Église a émergé comme un bastion de l'indépendance contre le gouvernement communiste, à son tour, elle a pu renforcer le mouvement populaire et donner à ses membres la force de persévérer sous le gouvernement autoritaire tout au long de la décennie suivante. Alors que l'Église a profité de l'influence qu'elle a reçue après le départ du gouvernement communiste de Pologne, les faits sur l'étendue de l'implication de l'Église dans la révolution ont été exagérés ou manipulés, laissant de nombreuses « vérités » fabriquées. Cet article examinera plusieurs récits sur l'implication de l'Église dans Solidarité dans le but de discuter de la manière dont l'Église a atteint son rôle actuel dans la politique polonaise, ainsi que de l'atmosphère politique et émotionnelle qu'elle a créée.

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Introduction

While the Polish Catholic Church's intervention in Polish politics has ebbed throughout history the 1980s witnessed the emergence of the Church as a powerful institution within Poland's political sphere that has directly influenced contemporary politics. From 1947 to 1989, Poland was controlled by an authoritarian Communist government that much of the population wished to dispel. While Poland was under Communist rule, the Catholic Church was the only aspect of society that was allowed to exist outside of the government's control, making it the only source of pluralism in Communist Poland. Since the government took over, revolutionary groups formed and slowly gained momentum, but they were largely distinct from one another. It was not until 1980 that the groups were organized enough and amalgamated to form a strong resistance movement against the government in the form of a worker's union, later known as Solidarity. All the while, the Church remained a staunch and open supporter of people's democratic rights. The goals of Solidarity, essentially the promotion of human dignity, labor rights, and pluralism, made the Church, with its inherent anti-Communist stance, the strongest source of autonomy in Poland, the perfect platform to bolster Solidarity.

By the time the Communist government had left Poland in 1989, the Catholic Church had been credited by many as one of the strongholds of anti-Communist resistance. As this claim certainly holds truth, many members of the Catholic Church took control of this narrative and have made it seem as if Solidarity was successful solely because of the Church, thereby discounting the other dissenting groups who provided the ideological underpinnings to Solidarity as well as the actual action of defying the government. Additionally, some truths of Church members involvement in Solidarity were discarded, while other, more favorable actions, were highlighted to the point of praise. The Church has benefitted tremendously from this narrative,

which has given it enormous power in post-Communist Poland. Narratives that were used to unite the nation during the Communist era, such as "Polish means Catholic" and "the Church represents the *real* Polish society," have been monopolized by the Church after Communism, which has allowed the Church to keep its power over the nation.

In many ways, the Catholic Church has become the oppressive force in Polish society that it wished to destroy just four decades ago. Whereas during Communist rule the Church and its supporters fought to reintroduce pluralism into society, today, the Church fights to be the sole arbiter of morality in the nation. Ironically, the Church has even adopted many tactics to combat liberal policies that the Communist government had used against the Church decades ago, which will be highlighted in this paper. Many similarities emerge when comparing how the government used its power against the Church, to how the Church flexes its power over secular society after 1989. While control of government policies is one way the Church has tried to dominate the political field, the Church also employs its own propaganda, ignores the democratic desires of citizens, and punishes those who disregard its moral standards. Yet, considering the goals the Catholic Church has had for several centuries, such as moral hegemony, the seemingly hypocritical actions of the Church are hardly surprising. Why, then, has the Church received such enduring robust support in the 1980s? Why has the perception of these Church tactics changed amongst citizens, when, if at all, did the nation become secularized, and how much support does the Church and its political endeavors really have in this predominantly Catholic nation?

While all histories are subjective, as authors have biases and specified interests, and they must choose between including and excluding information when writing, it seems as though the scholarship on the Church's role in Solidarity has been especially variable. Many publications on

Solidarity have competing views on the impact that the Catholic Church had on the movement which now affects Pole's daily lives. During Solidarity's period of legality, newsletters, journals, and books written on the movement focused on workers and intellectuals as the driving forces behind Solidarity. After Solidarity was made illegal, the Catholic Church came to the forefront as the most obvious stronghold of government resistance, turning the focus from the people to the Church. This change of focus is what made a lasting impression once the Communism government left Poland. While the experience of participating in Solidarity and experiencing the Church as a defender of rights certainly left a strong impression on many, the Church's role in the Revolution was further drilled into minds through sermons and speeches by both low- and high-ranking Church members on the importance of the Church at that time. Additionally, many publications by Catholic publishers and authors, as well as numerous articles and newsletters from Catholic sources, emphasize the role that the Church played in unifying the nation while lessening the importance of the opposition groups that were gaining momentum by the time of the Pope's 1979 arrival in Poland—the event that is credited by many as being the start of Solidarity.

Today, the dominant narrative of Solidarity is that the Church's contribution to the movement not only birthed the Revolution but made it successful. However, the support the Church gave to Solidarity was more complicated than that. Whereas many members of the Church, with varying levels of authority, gave different degrees of support to the union and its activists, some Church members publicly discouraged union activity. The hierarchies of the Church were often caught between supporting the goals of Solidarity and having to deal with increasing pressure from the regime. Church hierarchies, such as the bishops or primate, played a relatively passive role in combating the government and sought to maintain the Church as an

institution rather than actively going against the government. Additionally, some church members outright condemned union activities, receiving at the time disdain from many citizens who were fighting for freedom and expected the support of the Church. Of the lower clergy who supported Solidarity, many had direct relations with their local communities and some fostered monumental change by creating welfare systems, opening their churches for underground activities, and providing spaces where alternative viewpoints could be spoken without fear of repercussion. It was because of these lower priests, rather than those with more authority, that Catholic churches throughout Poland became strongholds of Solidarity wherein union members could host meetings and organize protests, and where all citizens could meet to partake in free speech. Essentially, it was because of these lower priests that Solidarity flourished when every other revolutionary outlet was forbidden. Yet, even amongst the lower priests, some provided information to the government that could be used against the Church. Many of these unfavorable acts have been disregarded by the Church so that its fabricated narrative might continue to reign.

Between writings that reduce the Solidarity movement to being entirely dependent on the Church and glorify the Church as a whole while ignoring counter-narrative facts, such as Maryjane Osa's "Creating Solidarity: The Religious Foundations of the Polish Social Movement" and Jonathan Kwitny's *Man of the Century*, and writings that discount the Church's involvement to producing minimal results, such as Roman Laba's *The Roots of Solidarity*, the strong commitments many authors have due to their biases have bifurcated the history of Solidarity, with neither interpretation necessarily "true." However, by examining multiple sources with different claims regarding Solidarity, an account could be reached that encompasses the veracity of the Church's involvement in Solidarity, therefore reevaluating the narrative the Church has created, as well as explaining the Church's hold on contemporary Polish society.

Despite the hagiographic nature of some these publications, their involvement in this paper is essential for understanding the narrative that the Church has created, as well as the mentality it has produced within many Poles, because these publications and messages have greater effects on masses, than more critical works, which tend to stay in the world of academia.

In addition to these pro-Church publications, this thesis will consider several books that help to break up the dominating narrative. Namely, the Catholic priest Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski's *Księża Wobec Bezpieki* and interviews done by the historian Jack Bloom in *Seeing through the Eyes of the Polish Revolution* that expose truths that have been ignored by those who support the pro-Church narrative. Moreover, writings that focus primarily on the opposition groups of the revolution, such as Roman Laba's *The Roots of Solidarity* and Timothy Garton Ash's *The Polish Revolution,* which are critical of the Church's involvement in the movement, will be utilized for yet another viewpoint. These works, which are critically written and have undergone scholarly reviews, portray a competing narrative to the works that have been published in name of the Church which received positive responses from their targeted audience, such as Jonathan Kwitny's *Man of the Century* and Grazyna Sikorski's *Jerzy Popiełuszko,* are used to help understand the beliefs and mentality the Church-controlled narrative has created.

For the purpose of context, a basic history of Solidarity and Polish history will be provided from a variety of sources—Catholic, academic, and government. Works such as Sabrina Ramet's *The Catholic Church in Polish History: From 966 to Present,* Marian Mazgaj's *Church and State in Communist Poland: A History, 1944-1989,* Glenn Curtis' *Poland: A Country Study,* Brian Porter- Szűcs' *Faith and Fatherland: Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland,* Jack Bloom's *Seeing Through the Eyes of the Polish Revolution,* Joanna Mishtal's *The Politics of Morality,* and Maryjane Osa's *Solidarity and Contention,* will be used extensively. These works

will be juxtaposed with sociological writings on religion and its effects on the mental, emotional, and active drives behind Solidarity and politics in general, such as Maciej Potz's *Political Science of Religion: Theorising the Political Role of Religion*, and Janina Sochaczewski's "The Church As 'Good Enough' Parent: The Psychodynamics of the Polish Solidarity Movement," which will help to explain the actions of those involved both in Solidarity and contemporary politics. Further, Jan Kubik's anthropological approach in *The Power of Symbols against the Symbols of Power: The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland* provides essential theory and understanding on Church symbolism used throughout Solidarity and its impact of the movement. Lastly, philosophical works—Czesław Miłosz 's *The Captive Mind* and Václav Havel's "The Power of the Powerless"—will be used to relay an understanding of the Communist system and the emotional effects it has on the communities under it, which ultimately spurred revolutionary action in Poland. In the chapter dedicated to the contemporary political division in Poland, news articles from a variety of sources, both Catholic and secular, are used.

While scholars have studied the role of the Church in both the Communist and contemporary periods, as well as how it has gained and abused its social power, this paper addresses questions that illustrate the relationship that Polish citizens had with the Catholic Church throughout Communist Poland so that it can further the understanding of Poland's current political field. These questions concern the similarities between the tactics used by the Communist regime and the post-1989 Church to maintain control, and how citizen perception of the Church has changed despite the goals and tactics of the Church being similar in both the Communist and post-Communist eras. Additionally, this paper asserts that Catholics are not the institution of Catholicism and that the agenda of the Church is not always a reflection of the

values or desires of individuals. This distinction is important not only because it aids in explaining the disconnection between the citizens and the Church throughout Communist Poland, but also so that it stops a potential generalization that all Catholics in Poland behave as the Church wants them to.

By providing a new perspective on the Church's transformation of power dynamics as well as its tactics to acquire and maintain power throughout the last four decades, this paper illuminates how this contemporary divide in Polish politics occurred. By recreating the political and emotional world of Communist Poland, this paper argues that the nation's current divide is the result of the change in how the Church's mobilizing tactics are perceived, how the Church has inflated its role in the Solidarity movement after the demise of Communism, and how the same narrative the Church created to unify the nation in the 1980s has been twisted after Communism to create a civic religion for ultra-nationalists. This civic religion, which will be defined and discussed in Chapter One, strengthened social homogeny within Poland by building strong bonds within communities, but it also led to a strong sense of wariness towards outsiders, i.e., those that did not fit into the social norms as well as of foreigners. Brian Porter-Szűcs argues that this mentality combined with antiliberal, rightwing religions has had a major impact on the volatile conditions that affect several countries today.[1] The ultimate purpose of examining the origins behind this divide is to redefine the relationship Polish citizens had with the Church during Solidarity and under martial law, as well as to understand how the Church has been able to use its position to control Poland's political sphere. By doing so, it becomes possible that critical thinking may be applied to an emotionally charged situation, so that a healing process can begin amongst those that have competing political interests.

[1] Brian Porter-Szűcs, "Exclusionary Egalitarianism and the New Cold War," The Slavic Review 76, no. 1 (2017): 96-97, doi.org/10.1017/slr.2017.160.

Chapter One discusses the political, social, and emotional world of Poland during the Nazi occupation and under Communist control up until the creation of Solidarity. In this chapter, the history of how the Catholicism was able to (re)emerge as a keystone to Polish identity will be discussed as well as how the Church became associated with government resistance before the unification of opposition and the creation of Solidarity. Chapter Two surveys the Church during the period of Solidarity's rise and legality as well as under martial law and until 1989. This chapter is dedicated to impact that the members of the Polish Catholic Church had on Solidarity, whether it was to further the movement's cause or to provide aid to the regime. Major components of this chapter are allocated to the hagiographic mythopoeia of the Church's narrative, which is then deconstructed using the counter-narrative sources mentioned above. Chapter Three discusses the practices the Church has implemented after Communism and the social environment it has spawned since 1989, which has created a group of Catholic nationalists who support the Church's involvement in Poland's politics. Finally, the discussion will evaluate the tactics the Church used in the 1980s and compare them to contemporary practices the Church uses to ensure its authority in Poland's political sphere.

Chapter 1- The Church Emerges as a Political Player

In July of 1944, the Lublin government took over war-torn Poland after the Yalta Conference, wherein Poland was effectively placed into the hands of the Soviet Union. Through this transition, the life of each individual was drastically changed. From the way citizens communicated, socialized, and worked, to the way their cities looked, Communist Poland became unrecognizable to many Poles. In just two decades, Poland had gone from an autonomous country to being war-torn, having endured persecution and genocide by Nazi forces, only in the end to be placed under another oppressive regime, albeit oppressive in a different way. While the Communist government did bring some beneficial changes to Poland, many of the citizens who chose not to adopt the Communist ideology for themselves were left feeling disconnected from the public sphere and their communities. For many citizens, both the physical and emotional atmosphere of Poland was bleak. Despite there always existing a desire to change this government system, during the first two decades of Communist rule in Poland, many individuals were focused on adaptation to the change and day-to-day survival as many did not believe that their actions could affect change.[2]

By the time the Communist government took over, the nationalism that existed in Poland was rooted in the idea that Poland had historically existed as a Catholic nation. The tie that Polish nationalism had to Catholicism was so strong at the time that the Polish Communist government understood that the only way citizens would not revolt against its rule was if Poland was allowed to keep its national faith, despite this being against Communist ideology. Bolesław

[2] Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity*: *A Political Sociology of Poland's Working-Class Democratization* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 18.

Bierut, the first First Secretary of the Polish Republic noted that "respect for religious feelings and religious practices is the Polish people's immutable, steadfast principle, to which they will most firmly adhere."[3] Despite many Pole's strong ties to the faith, the regime would never stop trying to weaken the Church as well as the piety of Catholic Poles. Over the decades, a trend emerged: the more confident the regime was in its sovereignty, the more the Church was stripped of its previous rights. To name a few, church teachings in schools were taken away, the ability to organize for religious reasons outside of church grounds was gone, it became near impossible to build new churches, and much of church land was taken by the government. However, when the government made a misstep and needed to appease its citizens, the Church was given some of its privileges back. This one requirement the citizens gave the regime for peace to be kept would later become enough to break open the façade that Communism had created and would help begin a revolution. However, before the citizens gave the Church any symbolic authority to be a front for social resistance during Solidarity, the Church first had to become politically active.

The first section in this chapter reflects on the concept of Polish nationality before World War II, focusing on the third partition, which had direct influence on nationality during the Communist era. While "Poland" did not exist on European maps, the concept of Poland as an idealized country, one which was free from foreign rule, entered the written world through the work of Polish poets. Many of these poets cherry-picked themes from Poland's history that were related to Catholicism in some way. The identification of Polishness with Catholicism was made stronger in the January Uprising in 1863, when insurrectionists used the cross as a symbol of their movement, despite many participants being Jewish, non-religious, or belonging to another

[3] Sabrina Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History: From 966 to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 157.

religion.[4] It became the faith itself, rather than the practice of the faith, that represented the Polish nation.

Once it is established how Poles might view themselves and their country, the next section will discuss the effects, both social and emotional, of Communism. Rather than using secondary sources for this section, *The Captive Mind*, by Poland's acclaimed poet, Czesław Miłosz, is a more appropriate fit as it better captures the experiences and personal struggles that individuals went through. Miłosz writes that in this system, those who chose not to conform to Communism watched their communities change into something unrecognizable. The public sphere and the individual became disconnected as individual's inner worlds— the one in which they had grown up or wanted to exist— was a world foreign to them, which did not reflect their inner truth and actively tried to indoctrinate the person into its Communist ideology. Through this constant battle of consciousness and reality, one part of the outside world reminded individuals of the country they wanted to believe still existed: the Catholic Church.

Finally, by building on the information from the previous sections, the third will discuss how it came to be that the people as a collective allowed the Church to become politically active and associated with a Poland that was free from Communist rule. It was through nationalism for the idealized Poland, which was historically Catholic in the eyes of many, as well as the Church being the only source of pluralism in the public sphere, that the Church was given the authority to represent the collective desire of a free country. While some groups of Poles, predominately intellectuals, did not support the Church as the representation of anti-government resistance, it certainly proved to be effective because of how public the resistance was able to be. For the purpose of establishing a strong foundation for succeeding chapters, the overall aim of this

[4] Magdalena Waligórska, "On the Genealogy of the Symbol of the Cross in the Polish Political Imagination," *East European Politics & Societies and Cultures* 33, no 2 (2019: 497–521), 508-510.

chapter is to establish the reason why the Church was allowed such grand authority by the people of Poland to represent what would become a revolution as well as to give a overview of how the Church was treated by the regime, which will be important when comparing it with the Church's actions in post-communist Poland.

Polish-Catholic Nationalism

By forgetting the years between major events where the reality of religion amongst the people could be found, there arises potential for a narrative of history to be created that did not necessarily happen. A narrative that had been deployed several times throughout Poland's history when the country was going through periods of crisis claimed that Poland existed, and continues to exist, as a Catholic nation. Beginning in the nineteenth century, whenever Poland's freedom or sovereignty was threatened or gone, Catholicism was used to unify the country. Yet, after the periods of crisis were over, this narrative had negative effects on minority groups, and essentially anyone who did not adhere to Catholic teachings.

During Poland's third partition, when there was no "Poland" on Europe's maps, those who identified themselves as Polish, despite their ethnic background, wished for their homeland to have its autonomy once again. At the same time, romanticism was sweeping the literary world, inspiring many poets and intellectuals to combine Polish nationalism with the vision of an idealized country that was free from tyrannical rule.[5] Many of these writers looked to Poland's past and cherry-picked and then glorified certain aspects of Poland's history to create a new nationalism, and therefore a revival of Polish spirit, as an effort to unite Poles against their

[5] Brian Porter-Szűcs,*When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth Century Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

foreign rulers. Certain characteristics which they magnified, such as "toil, martyrdom, (Catholic) faith, and hope," would later be equated to "Polishness."[6]

Certain themes have occurred throughout Polish history that contribute to understanding the form of nationalism that would emerge during Communist Poland. Major events that have happened in Poland's history developed a Catholic mythos around them, which skews perceptions of the past and creates a version of history that is not true. An example of this Catholic mythos, which will become important when explaining a development in the Catholic Church's involvement in Solidarity, is a story that originates from the Hussite attack on Poland in 1430. In this story, a Hussite soldier was struck down after causing damage to the Black Madonna, a revered image of Mary Magdalene.[7] This story, along with several others, carry the connotation that the image, or something related to Catholicism, saved Poland from outside invaders.[8] Combined with romantic writers of the nineteenth century, the new nationalism they created and the fantastical stories of Catholicism saving Poland caused many Poles to equate Catholicism with freedom from foreign invaders, foreign rule, and martyrdom.

Many Poles who desired an autonomous Poland found that this Polish identity could be expressed by the Roman Catholic Church, which was "often the only institution that had a Polish character [in partitioned Poland]. Thus Polish national consciousness came to be strongly tied to a Catholic religious identity."[9] While Brian Porter-Szűcs emphasizes that the Catholic Church was not the only stronghold of Polish customs and that many artistic and intellectual outlets

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[6] Zygmunt Kransiński, "Poland Facing the Storm, 1848," *Polish Perspectives on Communist: An Anthology*, ed. Bogdan Szlachta (New York: Lexington Books, 2000), 25.

[7] Anna Niedźwiedź, *The Image and the Figure: Our Lady of Częstochowa in Polish Culture and Popular Religion (*Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2010), 61.

[8] Ibid., 52, 62, 100, 105.

[9] Michael Bernhard, *The Origins of Democratization in Poland: Workers, Intellectuals, and Oppositional Politics, 1976-1980* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

existed for Polish nationalists, what the Church provided was a physical reminder of Polish nationhood rather than one that existed only on paper or in poetic verse.[10]

This revived spirit ultimately manifested itself in the 1863 January Uprising. During the Uprising, insurrectionists, which included a large number of Jews and ethnic minorities who identified themselves as Polish, banded together against Russia and were in need of a symbol to unite them. Traditional Polish symbols, such as the white eagle or the national colors, were outright banned.[11] The cross, even though not associated with the minority ethnoreligious groups who participated in the uprising, became the unifying symbol of the movement to represent the separation of the predominately Catholic Poles from the Orthodox Russians. During this time of resistance against Russia, Jewish and Catholic communities became supportive of one another and began to share cultural values such as attending each other's religious services.[12]

It is important to note that this momentary unification of religions did not go beyond its purpose, which was to unite Poles against the Russian occupiers. Magdalena Waligórska emphasizes that Catholic Poles were still the majority in the Russian region, were economically better off than their Jewish counterparts, and had claims to stronger ties to Polish history. These points ultimately resulted in the alienation of minorities by Catholics once Polish statehood was regained decades later. During the partition, the minority populations had no other means to protest as a group of their own and therefore had to join in with the voice of the Catholics. Adopting the cross as their symbol was a necessity if they wanted to have a voice in the Uprising.

[10] Porter-Szűcs, *Faith and Fatherland*.
[11] Waligórska, "On the Genealogy of the Symbol of the Cross," 502.
[12] Ibid., 505.

After the Uprising, the solidarity between religious groups fell apart, but Polish-Catholic nationalism stayed and grew more prominent once Poland received statehood after World War I. Catholicism became connected to "Polishness," despite the country having large religious minority populations that did not associate themselves with Catholic qualities. These minority groups, many of whom had fought for an autonomous Poland during the January Uprising of 1863, began to experience adverse effects of the renewed nationalism. By the 1940s, minority groups experienced petty harassments, while large portions of the majority population supported the removal of Jews from Poland altogether.[13] For the purpose of this paper, it is important to remember that after the common goal had been reached, the groups that had once been unified began to atomize, whereafter the majority group persecuted the minority.

In just two decades after Poland received statehood, it would be thrown back into chaos. The tragedies that befell Poland during World War II caused radical change to the country's social makeup as ethnic cleansing by the Nazis and changes in the border had left Poland ethnically and religiously homogenous, with 95% of the population identifying itself as Catholic.[14] The narrative of Poland's religious homogeny and devotion to the faith began to reemerge.

Contrary to the narrative that Catholicism was a dominant presence in Poland from the third partition to World War II, James Bjork's research presents a radically different reality.[15] Research he conducted on Poland from the 1940s to1960s showed that not only was Poland just as, if not less, pious than Western European countries, but that levels of piety within Poland

[13] Piotr Kosicki, *Catholics on the Barricades: Poland, France, and "Revolution," 1891-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 5.

[14] Maryjane Osa, *Solidarity and Contention: Networks of Polish Opposition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 78.

[15] James Bjork, "Bulwark or Patchwork? Religious Exceptionalism and Regional Diversity in Postwar Poland." In *Christianity and Modernity in Eastern Europe*. Edited by Bruce R. Berglund and Brian Porter-Szűcs (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010).

varied by region based on the occupying power, ranging from extreme devotion to practically non-existent. Bjork's study found that the former Russian portion of Poland, where the January Uprising took place with the cross as its symbol, had low rates of both churchgoing and communion in comparison to their Austrian and Prussian counterparts.[16] Further, Catholic Poles often found that they had stronger ties to regional nationalism and their local parishes than the national level.[17]

The January Uprising, which used the cross as a symbol, took place in a part of partitioned Poland that was, comparatively, not pious. The revived Catholic-based nationalism and the example of the Uprising shows that the use of the religion does not equate the practice of it. The use of Catholicism as a way to unite the nation during periods of stress, whether or not the Catholics were indeed practicing their religion, would be deployed once again in Communist Poland.

Social and Mental Effects of Communism in Poland

The Polish People's Republic, controlled by a Communist regime, was home to dueling narratives, wherein state-sponsored propaganda clashed with the realities of many citizens' lives. The establishment of the Lublin government in 1944 ushered an authoritarian Marxist-Leninist style government into war-torn Poland, promising the people better lives. Despite Poland's general aversion to Communism, the tragedies that befell Europe during World War II reoriented many goals. While anti-Communist sentiment was still prevalent in Poland, the mass destruction of cities and loss of life took precedence. Poland shared a common goal that went beyond political orientation: rebuilding the nation. While the Communist party never achieved wide-

[16] Ibid., 132-133, 135.
[17] Ibid., 134.

spread, active support, it did have the means to rebuild Poland both structurally and economically, making the party at least somewhat acceptable to many.[18] While some joined the Party because their ideology aligned with the Party's, many realized that they could receive special privileges for joining, such as a promotion, transfer to a better job, or access to goods that non-members were unable to obtain.

Despite the Party's ability to rebuild the country, both economically and structurally, support in the party remained low. Reasons for the Party's low support were twofold. During the Nazi occupation and the post-war period, private capital was taken from the middle and upper classes, riding Poland of any class conflict that may have existed. While in Czechoslovakia the class conflict led to the Communists winning free elections, in Poland the absence of class conflict caused Communist dialectics to become insufficient on its own and there was simply no overwhelming need to support the Party. Additionally, the attitudes that many Party members had caused grief to non-members. The Party quickly became associated with inept directors who were irresponsive to worker demands regarding poor working conditions and long work hours coupled with low compensation. Padraic Kennedy attributes the Party's failure to get widespread support to its own members seeking benefits rather than supporting the ideology itself.[19]

The Communist government had created a new dynamic of the class conflict that it sought to destroy, but this time under its own authoritarian rule. A new ruling class was created, wherein Party members had many government benefits that often came at the expense of non-Party members. Milovan Đjilas, a politician and, briefly, president of the Federal People's Assembly of Yugoslavia, was a critic of Communist ideology and in *The New Class: An*

[18] Padraic Kennedy, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950 (*Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 27-28

[19] Ibid., 35-40.

Analysist of the Communist System, published in Great Britain in 1957, he labeled this concept the "new class" to describe the privilege that Party members held.[20] Despite the country being structurally rebuilt, support for the government drastically fell as erroneous propaganda, an unstable economy, and opaque agendas exacerbated unfulfilled promises.

In June 1950, Stalinism was fully implemented in Poland, creating a country that mirrored Communist ideology. Poland became embedded with propaganda, falsified reports, and bogus court trials, all with an over-reactive police force that punished even the smallest forms of deviation from the system. In the workplace, absenteeism and drunkenness, which were quite common, were targeted for punishment and missing more than four days of work per year left a worker subject to a criminal proceeding as well as a 10-15% pay reduction for one to two months.[21] In this system, worker discipline became the business of the state rather than solely the factory boss. This meant that workers who acted out or tried to quit their jobs could be blacklisted by all workplaces or could be charged as criminals rather than simply be fired.

Outside of the factories, life was just as bleak. Privacy ceased to exist as the government tapped phone calls, censored letters, and ransacked packages sent through the mail. During the government's most restrictive periods, freedom of speech was taken away and any mention of anti-government sentiment could lead to time spent in jail, if not worse. Over-worked, under-paid, and unable to speak ill of the government, the majority of citizens were often in frequent need of basic necessities, alienated from the public sphere, and unable to change their circumstances. Only in the privacy of their homes could family members and close friends speak

[20] Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1957).
[21] Glenn E Curtis, *Poland: A Country Study*, 3rd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1994), 205.

their truth about their views of the government. The private and the public sphere became two different worlds: the former being one of hushed beliefs and the latter of false realities.

Czesław Miłosz encapsulated the reality of life while living under the Communist system, which ultimately resulted in an individual's alienation not only from the public sphere, but from the individual's own sense of self.[22] Communist dialectics teach and demand a certain mindset for citizens to follow, along with obedience to itself, its ideology, and the reality that it created. Among these demands, several keystones elucidate the alienation that many individuals experienced. First, for Communism's "New Man," and new society, to be born, the death of each individual's personal history must occur. This means that the religion the individual grew up with which their parents strongly held on to and the pride they feel towards both their nation and ancestors must be forgotten from both the individual's consciousness and subconscious for them to become Communism's "New Man."[23] This is so that there are no emotional ties to the past that may disrupt the progress towards becoming the New Man. Additionally, the dialectics of Communism teach that people, "their clothes, their gestures and expressions, their beliefs and ideas… are the force of [historical] inertia personified, [they are] victims of the delusion that each individual exists as a self."[24] Individuals no longer belongs to themselves; they belong to the historical process. The divorce of the individual from religion or spirituality along with the displacement of individuals from the historical process, reduces them to someone who simply exists in time, whose purpose is to serve their nation.

Miłosz, a Catholic who often struggled with his faith and the need for religion and stated that "wandering on the outskirts of heresy" was where he lied, dedicated a section of *The Captive*

[22] Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York: Vintage International, 1990).
[23] Ibid., 17-18.
[24] Ibid., 10.

Mind to those who kept their Catholic faith under the Communist regime.[25] Chapter Three discusses the idea of a *ketman*, which he borrowed from Arthur de Gobineau, the 19th-century French diplomat to what is now Iran, who describes *ketman* as essentially lip service, wherein one acts as though they are devoted to something in order to survive their daily life, while inwardly they are in opposition. In the case of Communist countries, one becomes an actor in order to conceal their true attitudes towards their world so that they can live without fear of repercussion. The more one commits to their act, the more they can be at ease.[26] While there are several ways to perform this act, for the purpose of this paper, the *metaphysical ketman* is the most important. One who practices this *ketman* believes that they are living in a time wherein "humanity is learning to think in rationalistic and materialistic categories," i.e., those not compatible with religion.[27] During this time, they must "suspend their Catholicism" so that they may exist in the world in which they live while waiting for a world that will once again welcome their beliefs.[28] Conformity to the public sphere became superficial. Yet there existed a distrust amongst neighbors as no one knew the true motives or beliefs of those around them.

Poland's public sphere had become unrecognizable to pre-war Poland. Not only had infrastructure been rebuilt in the Communists' brutalist style of architecture, but Communist propaganda now lined the streets promoting a Leninist-Stalinist way of thinking, which was disconnected from the thoughts of many Poles. The Poland that many had grown up in and wished to have back no longer existed. Instead, the public sphere had been filled with alien styles and voices. This mental, emotional, and physical disarticulation that many Poles felt left them

[25] Czeslaw Miłosz and Robert Hass. "A Theological Treatise." *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 2, no. 2 (2002): 193-204. doi:10.1353/scs.2002.0038.
[26] Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, 52.
.[27] Ibid., 68.
[28] Ibid., 69.

alienated from their lives and sense of being. Similar to the third partition, many Poles were left wanting an autonomous Poland once again and were looking for a reminder that the Poland that they wanted to exist was still alive.

Due to Communism's anti-religious stance, religious institutions were heavily targeted throughout the Eastern Bloc. With Catholicism's distinct hierarchical structure, organized welfare programs, and presence in schools, the regime believed it could weaken the Church systematically. When Lenin, and later Stalin, took power in the Soviet Union, one of their aims was to take power away from the Russian Orthodox Church. Stalin implemented a multi-step program in the Soviet Union, which stripped the Church of its power over the course of several years.[29] Initially, the Church lost its control over religious affairs and its ability to make its own appointments, as it became the responsibility of the government to do so. Then, the program created pro-regime clergy, imprisoned religious leaders for being counterrevolutionaries (rather than for explicitly religious reasons), and took away the Church's welfare systems so that its connection with the community was removed.[30] It took only ten years for the Russian Orthodox Church to metamorphose from an influential institution to an essentially nonfunctional husk. Proving to be an effective strategy of attack, this model was exported to Poland.

One of the first organizations the regime created to combat Catholicism in Poland was the PAX association, whose ultimate purpose was to replace leaders of the Church with pro-regime priests and bishops who could further the regime's agenda.[31] If one were to look at the Church as a bureaucratic hierarchy, as the government did, stripping the Church of many of its leaders and

[29] Richard Madsen, "Religion Under Communism," In *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism,* ed. Stephan Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 587 and Anna Dickinson, "Quantifying Religious Oppression: Russian Orthodox Church Closures and Repression of Priests 1917-41," *Religion, State and Society* 28, no. 1 (2000: 585-601), 587-588.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History,* 157.

then leaving offices empty or filling them with PAX members, taking its land, resources, funding, and connections with the community, would have left the Church a husk and without any ascendency, just as it had done with the Russian Orthodox Church. Yet, despite each step being carried out, the Catholic Church in Poland remained strong.

While there are many theories to explain why the Catholic Church remained strong while the Russian Orthodox Church was gutted, two theories help to further understand Polish culture and the upcoming workers' movement. First, the Church resisted government control from within. Many priests and bishops had no problem with going against the government's authority, simply because they believed the Church was being persecuted. Despite the government demanding certain actions from Church members, many refused or were able to create underground networks in an effort to defy government control. This was explicitly because of the lay community and lower clergy, rather than the hierarchy.

Second, outside of the Church, the lay community still felt strong ties to Catholicism and Polish nationality. Many citizens considered the Communist government to be illegitimate and alien, and supporting the Church became a way to defy the government. Perhaps, unlike the Russian Orthodox Church, the Polish lay community was committed to keeping their faith, not only because it was a way to undermine the government, but because it was a way to hold fast to their Polish identity while the government was attempting to redefine it. Due to the strong support at a grass-roots level, the removal or replacement of many Church leaders had little to no effect on the faith. Instead, it created a loose structure that allowed lower clergy to have greater autonomy in their services and how they chose to connect with their congregations— which eventually allowed them to have different agendas from the hierarchy.[32]

[32] Osa, *Solidarity and Contention*, 64.

During the first decade of its rule, the regime was confident enough in its authority to strip the Church of its assets while reducing its public presence. To prevent any extreme shock or dissension against the regime's laws concerning religion, restrictions were backed by legal, rather than religious, reasoning. A preliminary measure was to nullify the Concordat of 1925, which effectively left the Church without any legal protection. Regarding education, only priests and nuns, not lay teachers, could teach religion. Although this was a seemingly reasonable law, the extreme lack of priests and nuns in Poland after Nazi persecution forced many schools to shorten allocated time for religious instruction. When the Church hierarchy offered to provide more priests to teach at schools, the government rejected the offer.[33]

Over the next few years, the government enforced increasingly stricter laws concerning religion in classrooms. While authorities took concrete measures against Catholicism, such as cutting prayer time or taking crosses out of classrooms, mental attacks were also employed. Students were pressured to stop wearing religious emblems and attending services, while parents reported to local priests that their bosses pressured them into telling their child's school that they no longer wished for their child to receive religious instruction.[34] These new laws left the Polish Church in a deadlock, because to negotiate with the government would be to accept it as the legal authority of Poland rather than the government-in-exile located in England, to which the Church was still loyal. Rather than directly challenge the government, the Church began to organize religious instructions for students outside of school hours. In return, the schools would organize compulsory courses and games, sometimes lasting throughout the entire day or weekend for the purpose of interfering with the extra courses the Church was giving.[35]

[33] Ibid., 74.
[34] Mazgaj, *Church and State in Communist Poland*, 74.
[35] Ibid., 76.

Such power struggles between the government and Church continued as both fought to be the moral representation of the country. With growing pressure for students and workers to give up their faith and join the Party, many people joined. Most people who believed in Communist ideology would have been Party members by this time, making it likely that those who now joined the Party did so either to receive benefits or to stop being harassed. Party members who wished to remain practicing Catholics were denounced by the Vatican in 1949.[36] In response, the Polish government enacted the Decree on the Protection of Conscience and Religion to undermine the Vatican's authority, stating that citizens cannot have their religious rites taken from them, and that religious freedom is guaranteed by the government.[37] Even though this decree appeared tolerant and favorable on the surface, persecution against Catholicism continued. By encouraging religious freedom while pushing for atheism, the government believed that this would encourage citizens to explore other religions, leading Catholicism to lose its grip on Polish society and the minority religions vulnerable to attack.

As the government wanted it to seem as though it were working together with the Church, a joint commission of Church hierarchs and government leaders came together to create an agreement that would function in lieu of a new concordat and lay out the legal grounds for Church-state relationships. Known as the 1950 Agreement, the government promised that it would keep out of Church affairs and reintroduce religious instruction in schools so long as the Church would keep out of anti-regime politics, not denounce the government to its congregations, and denounce all anti-regime activities. Almost immediately after the Agreement went into effect, the government violated its part and attacks against the Church continued. Two years later, the Church was ordered to give the government control of making ecclesiastic

[36] "Acta Apostolicae Sedis" (Series 2 Vol 16, January 31, 1949).
[37] Mazgaj, *Church and State in Communist Poland,* 31.

appointments. With the appointment of higher offices in the hands of the government, the regime could now directly manipulate the Church's agenda by filling positions with PAX members. From 1952 to 1954, the government arrested about one thousand Church leaders from all levels, including the Primate, Stefan Wyszyński.

In an attempt to further secularize the nation, the government revised certain laws that were aligned with Catholic teachings. The Marriage Law of September 1945 stated that those who wished to be married had to have the ceremony carried out by a government official in the Office of the Civil State Registry. Any marriages performed by clergy or in a church would not be seen as legal. At the same time, divorces were made significantly easier to grant, as the decision was left to the discretion of courts, which were told that "granting a divorce should be guided by the principles of communistic morality," instead of meeting specific criteria that had been required in Poland's pre-war era.[38] While divorce statistics are not available from before World War II, data show that between 1949 and 1956, the number of divorces rose from 11,000 to almost 14,000.[39]

At the same time, abortions were made increasingly easier to receive. In 1959, the government began to promote Planned Parenthood, made birth control readily available, and made abortions easy to obtain in an effort to control population growth. In 1955 there were a reported 1,400 abortions. By 1962, that number had skyrocketed to 140,000 annual abortions.[40] By the numbers of divorces and abortions after they were made easier to acquire, it is evident that the desire for these services had always been present, despite the pre-war government

[38] Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History* & 108 and Meletius Wojnar, "Book Review of Il Matrimonio della Repubblica Socialista Federativa Sovietica
Russa nella Filosofia e nel Diritto by Antonio Gregnanin." (The Jurist, XVIII, 1957): 361-362.
[39] Peter Siekanowicz, "Poland," *Government, Law and Courts in the Soviet Union Eastern Europe*, ed. Vladimir Gsovski and Kazimierz Grzybowski, 2 vols. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959, II): 1339.
[40] Ibid., 112.

operating in accordance with Catholic morals. The Church, now in a position where it had no authority in influencing laws the government passed, was only able to issue complaints to the government and read pastoral letters aloud during church services. Upon receiving the complaints, government officials simply ignored them.

During these early years, in the face of increasing government control, patterns began to emerge in how the Polish Catholic Church tried to maintain its moral authority in the country and defy the government's law. Yet interestingly, the same tactics that the government implemented against the religion would later be implemented by the Church in post-communist Poland in an effort to combat secularization. It is by comparing grabs for power during the Stalinist and post-Communist eras that continuities emerge in how the Church has been able to manipulate its position as the moral authority in Poland— first against the Communist government, when it was in a submissive position, and later against Polish society, when the Church assumed a dominant role. To reiterate, during this period the government made it so that only priests and nuns could teach religion in schools (even though there was clearly a dearth of qualified instructors), it pressured parents to disallow their children to take religious courses while pushing atheism, the government and its media created smear campaigns against the Church to lower its credibility in the eyes of the public, and finally, it ignored letters from the Church expressing disagreement with these actions.

While the Church was facing its own battles with the government, workers and students began to organize resistance. In 1956, worker-boss relations reached a breaking point; the Stalin Factory in Poznan erupted in protest as the workers called for higher wages and access to food, holding banners saying, "down with the red bourgeoisie."[41] The protestors were joined by

[41] Tony Kemp-Welch, "Dethroning Stalin: Poland 1956 and Its Legacy," *Europe-Asia Studies* 58 no. 8 (2006): 1267.

workers of other factories and housewives as they marched to the city center. The military opened fire, resulting in 73 (reported) deaths.[42] While the country had already been in the process of destalinization, the events that occurred at Poznan created a public outcry and the government was forced to search for a new party leader.

In October 1956, Władyław Gomułka was elected leader of the Party and brought several changes to the Communist system in Poland. He understood that rather than trying to fit Communism's inflexible saddle to Poland's proverbial cow, which refers to Stalin's remark that Poland would be stubborn and not readily accept Communist ideology, Gomułka rather sought to adopt a "Polska Droga," or, "Polish way," wherein Party ideology would adapt to Poland's society and culture.[43] He did this in the hopes that citizens would be more accepting of the regime. During the first two years of his leadership, Gomułka implemented many destalinization policies which included improving worker-boss relations, relaxing censorship, and releasing many political prisoners. Collective agriculture largely ceased and Gomułka began the process of appeasing many Poles and trying to gain their trust though making amends to the Church.[44] Primate Wyszyński and many Church members were released from prison, and in November a Church-state commission was created to help both to navigate their relationship in the future.[45] A 1956 Agreement was created in which the Minister of Education stated that all schools would hereafter be able to offer religious instruction.[46] In addition, priests and nuns were once again allowed to run hospitals and Catholic periodicals were revived. However, over the period of Gomułka's rule, many of his policies proved to be half measures. He had to be cautious in how

[42] Ibid., 1268.
[43] Porter-Szűcs, "Exclusionary Egalitarianism and the New Cold War," 88.
[44] Madsen, "Religion Under Communism," 112.
[45] Mazgaj, *Church and State in Communist Poland,* 50.
[46] Ibid., 77.

laws were administrated to ensure that the policies were seen by Poles to be a step towards improving the government's policies towards both citizens and the Church, but not be drastic enough to upset the Soviet Union.

By 1958 Gomulka's regime was fully consolidated and many citizens were relatively placated. In an effort to begin to restrengthen the Party, Gomulka turned to stricter enforcement of Communist law. The government began to reinstate strict press censorship and worker-boss relations regressed.[47] Over the next few years, the government was strong enough not to need the approval (or cooperation) of its citizens, meaning that it could push its anti-religion agenda without fear of any major repercussion. The government again deprived students of religious instruction despite the agreement made in 1956, and atheist doctrine was reintroduced in schools. In 1958, the government withdrew the freedoms granted in the 1956 Agreement.[48] In 1957, only 30 schools were without religious instruction, yet by 1960 2,713 were without it.[49] Despite these attacks, the Church and its lay community remained strong in spirit, if nothing else. Just two decades earlier, there were fewer than 3,000 seminaries were in Poland. In 1958 there were 4,327 seminaries.[50]

By this time, it was well understood by the government that the Polish Catholic Church would not be brought down systematically, nor would individuals be easily dissuaded from their faith. Members of the Church, with the security of knowing that their lay communities continued to support them, and that the government could not make an aggressive move against them, gained confidence. With this growing confidence came an increase in morale by members of the

[47] Osa, *Solidarity and Contention*, 39.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.,78-79.
[50] Ibid., 78-79.

Church, both its leaders, such as Primate Wyszyński, and lower clergy, to challenge Communism's hold on Polish society, beginning with the creation of the Great Novena.

The Church Emerges as a Political Player

Even though the Church gave and received support from Pole's, citizen's support of the Church was for both, or either, social or religious purposes. Meaning, that the people supported the Church for the benefits it gave them, but their personal practices often differed from what the Catholic faith asked of them. This section goes into the Church's emergence into the political field, as well as how the early development of the people's relationship with the Church.

The Catholic Church became the only institution in Poland that was allowed to operate independent of Communist rule, making it the only public space wherein citizens did not have to conform to state ideology. Citizens of all ideological backgrounds found a safe space within local churches. Whether committed to the Catholic faith or secular, working class or intelligentsia, those who were against the regime were able to partake in freedom of expression at the churches without fear of government punishment.[51] Throughout Communist Poland, the symbolic space for pluralism was extremely limited as it was largely reduced to whether someone was Communist or not, rather than concerning any ethnic or cultural disagreements.[52] Despite the diversity of individual's beliefs, Poland's symbolic discourse as a whole did not have room for arguments concerning anything but the regime and its ideology.[53] The other arguments did not matter if the people were unable to speak freely about what they wished out of their

[51] Janina Sochaczewski, "The Church As 'Good Enough' Parent: The Psychodynamics of the Polish Solidarity Movement" *Studies in Religion/sciences Religieuses* 47, no. 4 (2018): 522–539. https://doi.org/10.1177/0008429817729989.

[53] Mach, "The Roman Catholic Church," 70.

society. Despite the Church's awareness of this suppressed diversity, all anti-regime Poles were nonetheless welcomed under the symbolic protection that the Church provided, simply because the most urgent political matter was the regime rather than personal beliefs.

The late 1950s to mid-1960s was when many citizens began to use the Church as an amplifier for their voices. Due to the benefits the churches offered, such as pluralism and protection from regime backlash, some of the earliest forms of protest, outside of the underground intelligentsia or worker classes efforts, were through local churches. The churches provided more than a place to protest. It provided emotional support as well as a public place that was aligned with one's "truth." There was no Communist propaganda in local churches. Instead, there were reminders of a life that was free from the regime's ideology.

During the period of Primate Wyszyński's house arrest between 1953 and 1956, he made use of his time by conceiving a plan to revive the Catholic faith, as well as Polish nationalism.[54] The purpose of this plan was to dedicate Poland to Mary and Jesus so that both the Church and Poles would form a united stance against the unwanted foreign rule.[55] The Great Novena was the result. For this program, Primate Wyszyński revived the narrative that Catholicism and Polish statehood, and therefore Polish identity, were intwined with one another. For the purpose of creating a dichotomous "us versus them" to separate Communists from non-Communist Poles, Primate Wyszyński took the approaching 1000th anniversary of Polish statehood in 1966 as a chance to bolster Polish nationalist pride while grounding it in the Catholic faith. As Bjork's research has shown, devotion to the Catholic faith was inconsistent throughout Poland, depending on the occupier during the third partition. The nation-wide program involved all

[54] James Will, "Church and State in the Struggle for Human Rights in Poland," *Journal of Law and Religion* 2, no. 1 (1984: 153–76).
[55] Andrzej Micewski, *Cardinal Wyszyński: A Biography* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), 154.

villages and communities with the Great Novena while speaking on the historic significance of the faith, helping to develope a more homogenous level of piety throughout Poland.

The Great Novena was a nine-year program beginning in 1957 and culminating in 1966. Each year had a theme which corresponded with an attack made on the faith by the regime. The first year was dedicated to the belief in God, the cross, the gospel, and the Church; the second year was dedicated to living life in sanctifying grace; the third year was devoted to the defense of unborn life (against the government's liberalized abortion laws); the fourth year was to promote marital fidelity (to vilify the laxness in divorce laws); the fifth year was dedicated to the Catholic family; the sixth year was devoted to the nation's youth; the seventh year was for social justice and love; the eighth year was dedicated to the struggle of the Catholic faith; and the ninth year was to honor the Holy Mother, Mary.[56] The Church has considered these themes to be timeless, unchanging values of its faith, making their moral importance greater than any temporary, earthly morals.

The Great Novena's opening mass on August 26, 1956 in Jasna Góra, a sacred town in Polish-Catholic myth, drew one million pilgrims. There, Church leaders led the lay people in a renewal of vows that were similar to the one King Jan Kazimierz made in 1656, when he dedicated Poland to Mary and made her the symbolic queen of Poland.[57] By renewing the "Pledge of Jasna Góra," Primate Wyszyński rededicated Poland to Mary and symbolically placed her above all temporal rulers of Poland. By dedicating themselves to Mary, the participants not only placed their faith above the government, but they also placed their desire for an autonomous Poland above the government. As previously mentioned, this particular concept of Catholic-Polish nationalism was largely fabricated, yet it proved incredibly effective in uniting non-

[56] Osa, *Solidarity and Contention*, 69.
[57] Mazgaj, *Church and State in Communist Poland,* 116.

Communist Poles. Similar to the January Uprising, Catholicism became an identifying marker for Poles who wanted an autonomous Poland.

In 1962, the Office of Church Affairs stated that the Great Novena was thwarting the spread of atheism in the country. In response, the regime increased levels of its presence in the ceremonies.[58] As the program progressed over the years, government authorities inserted themselves into the ceremonies through petty harassments such as blocking people from entering churches. The authorities' maladroit action against the ceremonies created unified resistance among the lay people attending services. Maryjane Osa argues that these ceremonies were strictly religious until the government deemed them to be a political matter.[59] Osa believes that by creating these petty obstacles, the regime actually increased many visitors' commitments to participating in the ceremonies, because it showed that not only were they supporting the Church rather than the regime, but that they were taking an active stance against government ideology.[60] Without government intervention in the Great Novena, it is unlikely that so many citizens would have rallied around the Church. Actions of lay people to defy the government began with petty annoyances such as the overdecoration of the church by outlining church grounds with candles and flowers to emphasize where government ideology stopped and where pluralism could flourish. Some would even take to the streets and stand beneath the windows of government offices to sing church hymns loudly to annoy officials.[61] It was not long until these petty acts turned into a more assertive stance against the regime.

[58] Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History*, 165.
[59] Osa, *Solidarity and Contention*, 72.
[60] Maryjane Osa, "Creating Solidarity: The Religious Foundations of the Polish Social Movement," in *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* (11, no. 2, 1997): 375.
[61] Osa, *Solidarity and Contention*, 72.

In 1966, the final year of the Great Novena, the regime's actions against the program were at its height, resulting in the first demonstrations against the government for solely religious reasons. In June, as the Black Madonna painting was being transported to Katowice, militia units were sent to apprehend the painting. Crowds surrounded the militia cars that held the painting as they demanded their constitutional rights.[62] A few days after the altercation, the church that was scheduled to house the painting was unable to display it because of a new law stating that religious paintings could not be displayed in open spaces. In response, the church instead displayed an empty frame as a visualization to the public that the authorities were keeping the painting, from the Catholic community and thereby restricting its religious freedom. On June 20, the painting was on its way to a cathedral in Warsaw's Old Town. Around 9 pm authorities blocked the streets to keep the painting from reaching the cathedral. The next day, protestors took to the streets and chanted "down with Communism" and "long live Cardinal Wyszyński."[63] When the painting was taken to the cathedral, it was placed behind a window, so that when viewers from the outside looked at it, it appeared as though it was jailed "behind bars." At a ceremonial coronation, the painting was adorned with nationalist symbols and crowns to symbolize the authority and nationhood of Mary, as if she were taking her place as "Queen of the Polish nation" above all secular authority.[64]

At the final celebration, Primate Wyszyński read Pope Paul VI's sermon (in place of the Pope, who was denied a travel visa to Poland) which stated:

> In the face of a totalitarian threat to the Nation ... in the face of an atheistic program ...a great supernatural current is needed, so that the Nation can consciously draw from the

[62] Ibid., 74-75.
[63] Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History*, 166.
[64] Anna Niedźwiedź, *The Image and the Figure: Our Lady of Częstochowa in Polish Culture and Popular Religion* (Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2010), 121-122.

> Church the divine strength that will fortify its religious and national life. Nowhere else is the union of Church and nation as strong as in Poland, which is in absolute danger. Our "temporal theology" demands that we dedicate ourselves into the hands of the Holy Mother, so that we may live up to our task.[65]

The words of the pope made it so that Catholic citizens would be led to think that not only was fighting for a free Poland politically motivated, but it was morally motivated. To fight for Catholicism in the face of Communism was to fight for a free Poland.

Years later, Fr. Henryk Jankowski, who would play an active role as one of the anti-regime priests, stated that the "Great Novena program was something to cement the country."[66] Solidarity was created amongst members of the Catholic community through the coordination of events and banding together against government authorities. Jan Kubik, a political anthropologist of Solidarity and Communism in Poland, reported that many Polish citizens he spoke with agreed that the "Church, due to its uncompromising stand during the celebrations, strengthened its institutional position in the society and enhanced the faith of Polish Catholics."[67] The sociologist Maryjane Osa concurs that the during this time the Church generated "social capital" amongst many citizens by taking an open and firm stance against the government while also providing an emotional and spiritual service that many citizens desired.[68]

Further, Bjork concludes that rather than Polish Catholicism being *revived* by the Great Novena, what the program did was *reshape* the national faith.[69] The combination of political action and thought with religion resulted in the self-identification as "Catholic" to be

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[65] Kubik, *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power: The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland*. (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 113.
[66] Osa, *Solidarity and Contention*, 178.
[67] Kubik, *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power*, 127–128.
[68] Osa, *Solidarity and Contention*, 75.
[69] Bjork, "Bulwark of Patchwork?," 148 & Bruce R Berglund, and Brian Porter-Szűcs, ed., *Christianity and Modernity in Eastern Europe*, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010), 148.

synonymous with anti-Communist. The association between Catholic and anti-regime turned the practice of the faith from a purely spiritual matter to a political one. Even if some did not practice the faith, many recognized that supporting the Church or protesting through the Church was the best and safest way to openly protest the government. Other forms of underground activity were taking place through intelligentsia circles and workers, but, unlike the Church, these groups were exclusionary. However, the Church and its symbolic "history" in society made it so that non-intellectuals could partake in protest without needing to verbalize a philosophy behind their reasoning; their philosophy became *the Church*. Additionally, the Church offered something the intelligentsia could not: "freedom of action."[70] The ability to take direct action against the regime was offered only by churches.

This dominant narrative (in both religious and some academic writings) that all supporters of an autonomous Poland found refuge in the Church, is, however, a generalization. An informal study in 1966 by the writer-theologian Tadeusz Żychiewicz illuminates a different version of the how citizens viewed the Church. In his news column, Żychiewicz asked readers to write on their views of their local church and the relationships between clergy and laity. Overall, the response was negative. Many complained that the clergy stood on a pedestal, were out of touch with their communities and congregations, and that their behaviors did not invoke strong respect amongst the laity.[71] Polish sociologist Władysław Piwowarski found that two-thirds to three-quarters of Polish parishioners did not even attend Sunday services at their churches.[72] It seems odd, then, that the Great Novena drew such great crowds that even government officials stated were a threat to the Communist ideology.

[70] Joanna Mishtal, *The Politics of Morality: The Church, the State, and Reproductive Rights in Postsocialist Poland* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2015), 29.
[71] Porter-Szűcs, *Faith and Fatherland*, 38.
[72] Bjork, "Bulwark or Patchwork?" 147-148.

Further evidence showing the gap between the ideals of individuals and Church leadership is the abortion laws. Despite widespread support for the Great Novena and its agenda, especially the theme of the third year, abortion and divorce rates continued to rise. Yet there is no mention of any protest of the Church's denouncement of them at the time. This may be because there was no reason to protest the Church's stance on them as it had no power to change laws regarding abortion. Far more likely, however, is that the Church and the Great Novena received support for what it was able to give to the people. Had the people been more Catholic than they were anti-regime, it follows that abortion rates would have been the levels they were before the regime loosened them. Combined with the findings from Żychiewicz's newsletter, it is more likely that the public was attracted to the social capital the Church had and was able to provide to the people, rather than any revival of the faith.

While the Church gained this social capital, Poland's economy and outlook remained bleak as government promises failed to be delivered. Despite Gomułka's efforts at the beginning of his rule to gain trust amongst Poles through policy changes and improvements in Church-state relations, his actions caused him to lose credibility amongst many citizens. It was not long until dissatisfaction grew and culminated in student and worker protests in 1968 that were sternly put down. Despite almost half of the average worker's salary going towards food, in 1970, the government announced a price hike of staple foods.[73] Factories along the coast of the Baltic Sea, whose jobs were already being threatened, protested for several days, ending with many being killed or injured by police forces. Like the protests in 1956, the widespread outcry of Polish citizens against the regime's brutality forced it to reshuffle Party leaders and negotiate with workers on their demands. However, unlike previous worker or student protests, the 1970 protest

[73] Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity*, 18.

forced the government to meet with workers to come up with an agreement on appropriate work environments. For the first time in the Communist Poland, the actions of the workers created change, or at least a sense of change. While the 1970 worker protests would be seen as a key moment in the events leading up to the workers Solidarity movement, the protests spawning from the Great Novena had participants from all groups of society, changing the mindset of *all* groups, not just workers, that they could play a role in creating change.

Being unable to stabilize the protests, Gomułka was now viewed by the Kremlin as weak and not fit to lead the country, and he was replaced by Edward Gierek. Gierek brought a vastly new economic strategy to Poland with hopes of revamping the stagnant economy and increasing the standard of living. Large-scale borrowing from the Soviet Union and the West was invested into Poland's industrial sectors, while food prices were frozen to keep citizens appeased. Between 1971 and 1975, workers' wages saw a 40% increase.[74] The standard of living began to increase by the end of the 1970s as Western technologies became available to the public for the first time in generations.[75] However, this economic plan soon clashed with the incompatible Communist system.[76] Coupled with a worldwide recession, the economy began to falter once again.

By the mid-1970s, economic disparities began to grow. Western luxury items were no longer widely available, shortages of basic goods became more common, and money allocated by the government towards basic essentials such as medicine was cut.[77] On December 8-12, 1975, at the PZPR's 7th Congress, the decision was made that the price freeze Gierek had

[74] Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History*, 170.
[75] Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 9.
[76] Curtis, *Poland*, 44.
[77] Ash, *The Polish Revolution*, 29-30.

implemented at the beginning of his rule would end.[78] On June 24, 1976, the regime publicly announced the price hike, causing protests to erupt in factories in Poznan and Warsaw, which were promptly quelled with excessive force. These protests caused the government to rescind the price hike, proving to workers that their collective action had the power to facilitate change.

In 1975, the Helsinki Accords were signed, wherein the Western countries and Soviet leaders agreed on the idea of human rights, amongst several other topics that discussed European security and economic cooperation. While the ultimate purpose of the accords was to build a rapport between the Communist countries and the West, it gave opposition groups moral and political arguments to back their fight. As a result, rather than the force used the quell the 1976 protests creating fear or submission as it had in previous years, it created collective opposition. The Worker's Defense Committee (KOR) was created in response to this violence with the purpose of helping victims of government brutality through organizing meetings, creating and spreading underground posters and literature, and providing legal defense for those imprisoned or awaiting trial. Unfortunately, little else changed. Shortages of food and necessities still existed, lines outside shops grew longer.

Hope in a New Pope

By the late 1970s, every level of society, including workers, intelligentsia, and stay-at-home women, who often could be found organizing and spreading information about meetings at the grass roots level and running the opposition's newsletter, was mentally and emotionally ready to take an assertive stance against the regime.[79] All that was needed for the people to

[78] Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History*, 170.
[79] Shana Penn, *Solidarity's Secret: The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 5.

mobilize was another misstep by the government. These groups, however, were emotionally isolated from one another after decades of government surveillance and distrust of neighbors. The emotional distance between groups kept them from seeing how many citizens were against the regime and how many would join one another in resistance. The visitation of one man became enough to bring these isolated groups together.

In October 1978, Karol Wojtyła became the first non-Italian pope in 455 years and the first Polish pope in history. Upon the announcement that Wojtyła would be the next pope, a wave of national pride swept over Poland, regardless of levels of piety or religious orientation. The Cardinal of Vienna at the time, Franz Koeing, reportedly stated that the ascension of a Polish pope would create a "psychological earthquake" amongst Polish citizens and, apparently, the Polish government felt the same.[80] The regime understood that now that a Pole had become the highest symbol of the Catholic faith, Catholic communities around the globe would be watching the Polish government's actions towards its citizens.

The regime allowed Wojtyła's visit to occur during the 35th anniversary of the Polish People's Republic and he was only allowed to visit six cities.[81] In preparing the public for the Pope's visit, the government began a propaganda campaign to downplay the impact of his visit. The press stated that "the basic ceremonial significance of the visit is secular: the pope came to lend splendor to the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Polish People's Republic and to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the German invasion of Poland."[82] These statements had little affect on Pole's views of the pope's visit.

[80] Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History*, 173.
[81] Mazgaj, *Church and State in Communist Poland,* 122 & Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History*, 172
[82] Mazgaj, *Church and State in Communist Poland,* 122.

On June 2, 1979, the Pope gave his first speech in Poland in Warsaw at Victory Square. This space, named Victory Square to represent the Soviet Union's victory in Poland, was used for many Communist rituals and events.[83] The presence of a 50-foot-tall cross and a Polish pope speaking of the Catholic faith and its connection with Polish nationalism was a major turning point in the mentality of many Poles as they witnessed an event that represented a nation free from Communist control. An estimated one million people filled the square and surrounding streets, while millions listened to the pope on the radio.[84] To deemphasize the impact of the pope's visit, authorities ordered reporters and broadcasters not to show panning shots over the crowd so that viewers would not be able to see the massive number of people who attended the Mass. Some broadcasting stations were even ordered to be "temporarily out of order," while reception in parts of northern and eastern Poland was reported to be "poor and scanty" to prevent viewers from watching the Mass.[85]

The speeches the Pope gave during his 1979 visit were religious in nature without specifically denouncing the government. He chose to emphasize universal and long-lasting values of the Church (such as the importance of truth and the value of labor, family, and community) that appealed to everyone, making the Church the center of a counter-cultural movement. For the first time in decades, Polish citizens' feelings of isolation were validated. The crowd felt unity in knowing that others around them felt the same towards the government. One member of the opposition, Janusz Onyszkiewicz, stated:

> Before the Pope's visit, people used to talk all the time in terms of "we" and "they." Everybody knew what "they" was: the ruling group, the Party, the whole establishment.

[83] Magdalena Kubow, "The Solidarity Movement in Poland: Its History and Meaning in Collective Memory," *The Polish Review* 58 no. 2 (2013): 10.
[84] Weigel, *A Witness to Hope*, 292.
[85] Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History*, 173.

> "We" was not so clear. "We" were the others, but people felt fairly atomised and somehow 'we' was practically family. With the Pope's visit, people saw themselves, and they realised that "we" was not just myself, my family and my five friends, but millions, basically the whole nation. And "they" were a very tiny, isolated group. So we really felt that we had power.[86]

While the Pope's words did have a significant impact on individuals' psyche in how they viewed their place in their community as well the validation of the emotions and suppression they experienced under Communism, the pope's visit also had a significant sociological impact. Poles from all walks of life—workers, intellectuals, students, mothers, Catholics—were now standing shoulder-to-shoulder, listening to a fellow Pole unapologetically proclaim values that all viewers believed but could never speak aloud. This realization had a profound impact on the opposition and, now that change seemed possible, it emboldened some to invent new modes of opposition. Anger at the system and desire for change had already existed; now, the opposition was united.

Many writings on Solidarity accredit the visitation of Pope John Paul II as the event that put Solidarity in motion. Since this visit, historians and certain, predominately Catholic, article sources have exaggerated the role Pope John Paul II had in the Solidarity movement to the point of creating a myth. In one of the more extreme cases, the historian Jonathan Kwitny writes in his book *Man of the Century* that:

> "Karol Wojtyła… forged the Solidarity revolution.... Even in its name, Solidarity was not just a shipyard union, but an idea rooted in Catholic tradition and formulated afresh by Wojtyła…. In interviews, colleagues reveal how Wojtyła guided them in a major hunger

[86] Janusz Onyszkiewicz, Interviewed by Jack Bloom, *Seeing through the Eyes of the Polish Revolution: Solidarity and the Struggle Against Communism in Poland* (Historical Materialism, Volume 50. Leiden: Brill, 2013), 139.

strike that was the Boston Tea Party of the Solidarity… Time and time again, as pope, he single-handedly rescued the revolution he begat."[87]

While his presence brought numerous people together, where they were able to see the strength in their numbers and gain emotional support, the pope's visit needs to be placed within historical context. The pope came at a pivotal time in Poland's history, when citizens were emotionally as well as physically ready for change. Comparing Wojtyła's role in the movement to starting the Boston Tea Party, or stating that the Solidarity movement began because of him, is not only inflation, but it discounts the efforts of the members of KOR and opposition movements that occurred prior to his visit, who put their safety at risk by committing anti-state acts, as well as the experienced of every non-Communist citizen who had been negatively impacted by the government. The emotions, the reasoning, and the desire for change already existed within the opposition. The pope's visit unified those isolated groups, giving them hope that change was possible.

By 1979, many of the opposition groups in Poland were not only organized, but were active in providing real help, such as legal aid or spreading pamphlets. Even those not in opposition groups were now at a place where they understood how to defend themselves from the government. Due to the protests of 1970, workers understood the best tactics in creating effective protests and, should a protest happen again, workers knew what to do to effect positive change. During the time that the people were mobilizing themselves and gaining experience and knowledge in protesting their government, the Church's confidence in its representation of a free Poland was growing.

[87] Jonathan Kwitny, *Man of the Century* (New York, Henry Holt and Co., 1997), xi.

From the 1950s to 1979, the Polish Catholic Church had been weakened systemically, such as its loss of money and resources, but had grown in members, community, and devotion. The sense of nationality created during the third partition and reformulated through the Great Novena, combined with Catholic churches being one of the only physical reminders of Poland before Communism, enabled the Church to become the representation of a free Poland. This potential turned actual through the Great Novena when the people gave the Church authority to speak for the people. Yet the growth in church communities grew did not necessarily correspond with a growth in those citizen's following the teachings of Catholicism. While this is not meant to minimize the faith or experiences those individuals felt, it does help to explain the sharp increase of church participants over the course of the Great Novena.

The Church, still in a submissive position with respect to the regime, could protest the regime in specifically religious ways, rather than ones that were directly anti-state. Through the Great Novena, the people had given the Church their trust as well as their voice. The people and the Church protested the regime by advocating for the Church's survival in the face of Communism. Whenever the Church demanded a greater presence in Polish society or stated it was a part of Polish heritage and culture, the people agreed. Years later, when the Church would continue to advocate for the same things, it would be labelled power-hungry.

Chapter 2- The Nation Finds Solidarity

The relationship the Catholic Church had with Polish citizens during Solidarity's legal period was when it fully realized its potential to symbolize the nation. Similar to the January Uprising, symbols belonging to the Church became symbols of the Solidarity movement. While anti-state citizens used Church symbols in part for their historic representations of a sovereign Poland, they also used them because these religious symbols represented their movement, without explicitly denouncing the anti-religious regime. An independent union that operated outside of the government had greater implications than workers' rights. To have one aspect of Polish society that was separate of the government was to break away from the Communist system. Therefore, through the workers' movement, the Church symbols not only came to mean "workers' rights," but also "free Poland." This is what made the Church symbols represent the movement rather than the notion that so many citizens were passionately devoted to Catholicism. The emotions and unity that the Church symbols cultivated held the revolution together during Solidarity and throughout the period of martial law. Under martial law, all anti-regime activity and speech, such as talking about unions or gathering in large groups, was illegal. While the Church did provide emotional support for those suffering during martial law, it also provided the only spaces where large groups could gather without government interference. This made the Church practically the only open front for the revolution.

One reason for Solidarity's popularity was that it acted as an umbrella, taking in everyone who would support it regardless of their political views. While Westerners tend to view Solidarity as a democratic movement, discounting it as not a revolution, the reality is much more complex. Non-Communists who identified as left or right, KOR members and those believing in the Marian cult, those who desired democracy and those who wanted strong leadership, all found

their place within Solidarity. Jan Kubik argues that there were two important aspects of the movement made it such a strong platform: its purpose of uniting citizens against a common enemy and its utilization of collective values which stemmed from symbolic and cultural ideals, rather than political.[88] This decentralization made the movement all-encompassing and welcoming, as each citizen could find their own views represented within the group. This decentralization proved to be one of Solidarity's strengths under Communism, but after Communism, this characteristic of Solidarity became a source of many problems.

While the movement was eclectic and diverse, representing an anti-hegemonic culture, the outside world saw a group of people who were united under the Catholic Church, and who used Catholic symbols for their movement. While the Church was aware of Solidarity's diversity, many non-academic sources that are written on the entirety of the movement, and are more accessible to the public than peer-reviewed publications, notably Jonathan Kwitny's *Man of the Century* and Gregory Baum's *Compassion and Solidarity: The Church for Others,* exalt the Church's role in Solidarity and martial law. In an article from 1982, "The Church in Poland and Its Political Influence," Suzanne Hruby stated that the utilization of Church symbols "provided indication of religious vitality in Poland."[89] It is statements such as this that this chapter will deconstruct.

This chapter deconstructs the dominant narrative of the role the Church played in Solidarity and under martial law when it gained its reputation as defender of Poland. Additionally, this chapter re-examines the relationship between the people and the Church to consider just how Catholic the Catholic nation was. The following two sections of this chapter

[88] Jan Kubik, "Who Done It: Workers, Intellectuals, or Someone Else? Controversy over Solidarity's Origins and Social Composition," *Theory and Society* 23 no. 3 (1994): 460-461.
[89] Suzanne Hruby, "The Church in Poland and Its Political Influence," *Journal of International Affairs 36* no. 2 (1982): 317.

examine the "surface level" of this movement. That is, the events and people that the Church has accredited to be the most influential in making Solidarity successful. While the Church acquired clout during this time that carried through to post-Communist Poland, its involvement in the revolution was much more complicated. The Church came to be praised as an advocate of the revolution despite a majority of higher clerics that were explicitly anti-revolutionary or denounced Solidarity. Even amongst the parish priests, very few initiated positive changes for their communities. The following section will discuss stories and information uncovered in recent decades that challenge the dominant narrative and reveal a more kaleidoscopic image of Polish life in the 1980s.

A Carnival

On July 1, 1980, the government gave the people a new opportunity to mobilize. The progression of strikes of 1956, 1970, and 1976 and the lessons learned by each had taught the people that work-stoppages and peaceful protests were the best way to make the reactive government listen to them. So, when price hikes were announced the morning of July 1st, workers knew exactly what to do. The same morning the hike was announced, several factories went on strike to demand either a reversal of the price hike or higher wages to compensate. That evening, the Central Committee agreed that deputy Prime Ministers Kazimierz Barcikowski and Mieczysław Jagielski would be sent to every factory that went on strike to agree to some of the workers' demands. Initially this worked, and factory workers agreed to end their strikes once a compromise was made. The confident Gierek, then on vacation at the Black Sea, stated on July 24 that "here and there various kinds of pimples might pop up… those minor conflicts would

burn out."[90] If Poland had had the same atmosphere as it had during the previous protests, then this might have been the case.

The Pope's visit, the unity of the opposition, and the creation of KOR, with its ability to provide legal advice or aid, all played their role in creating a different mentality and sternness within the protesters that was not present in a large scale in previous decades. While the Pope broke the tension between public and private and allowed people to gather and therefore realize their shared underlying desires, KOR was able to help in a more tangible way by organizing and spreading information to workers on what they needed to demand from the government to be able to create a unified front. Combined with the lessons the workers had learned from their previous protests, all these groups, affecting all different segments of Polish society, created an atmosphere that mentally prepared opposition groups to risk their well-being not only for themselves, but for all citizens who suffered under the regime.

News spread that the striking factories were having their demands met, which incentivized other factories to join the strike. By mid-August, over 200 factories across 50 towns and cities were, or had been, on strike. On August 14, workers of the Gdańsk Shipyard saw some of their demands met, such as the reinstatement of workers who had been fired, the erection of a memorial of the workers who died in the 1970 protest, and a pay raise of 1,500 zloty per worker. The prime ministers agreed that other demands that were more community-based, such as a free trade union, improvement of food and supply chains, and family allowances of those who served in the military, etc., would be met at a later time.[91] Once the former promises were made, Lech Wałęsa, leader of the Gdańsk Shipyard strikes, announced to his fellow workers that the strike

[90] Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989: Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2015), 13.
[91] Wałęsa, *A Way of Hope,* (New York: H. Holt), 121.

was over. However, workers belonging to smaller factories, or whose jobs were less essential in the eyes of the government, were not able to get as many of their demands met as workers in the larger factories. Delegates from neighboring striking factories were dismayed as the Gdańsk workers began making their way out of the shipyard. Four women, including one of Solidarity's leading figures, Anna Walentynowicz, recognized that ending the strike was not in the best interest of the country. They blocked workers from exiting the shipyard and called for the strike to continue in solidarity with other factories.[92]

When the strike was announced to continue, the factory director stated that the workers were "striking in solidarity."[93] After this, the phrase caught on and "Solidarity" became the name of the movement. Father Jozef Tischner, who published *The Spirit of Solidarity* in 1982, wrote that "to speak Solidarity" is to speak of human suffering. Born from mass, needless adversity, Solidarity was, above all, a solidarity of conscience. "To be in solidarity with a person means to rely on that person, and to rely on a person means to believe that there is something permanent in a person, something that does not fail."[94] Jerzy Janiszewski, who created the popular logo of Solidarity, stated that Solidarity was the "characteristic of the crowds in front of the gate. They didn't press or push each other, but they leaned on each other, neither standing by themselves nor falling on others."[95] This became the Solidarity movement's disposition: supporting one another while relying on others for support.

Other factories chose to join this continued strike, which forced the government to make a concrete agreement with factories that were united in regional associations, known as the Inter-factory Strike Committee. On August 23, negotiations took place at the Gdańsk Shipyard

[92] Penn, *Solidarity's Secret*, 73-75.
[93] Ibid., 123.
[94] Tischner, *The Spirit of Solidarity* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 7.
[95] Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity*, 133.

between the workers and government. On August 31, 1980, the government and workers from the Gdańsk Shipyard signed the Gdańsk Agreement and thus created the independent trade union—Solidarity. The Gdańsk Agreement came to affect workers of all vocations, including students and agricultural workers, as well as family well-being, and it went beyond working conditions.[96] While the main points of the Agreement concerned the creation of a self-governing union independent of the government, workers' rights, and the Interfactory Committee's ability to publish its own research on fair wages and prices of goods, several points of the Agreement were dedicated to life outside of the workplace. The Agreement stated that within three months of its publication, freedom of the press, religion, and entertainment be allowed within the country. Additionally, the Agreement addressed issues such as the availability of meat, protection of those working in agriculture, additional wages for large families, the retirement age and pensions, maternity leave, and medical care. Concerning religion, the Agreement demanded that religious organizations would have the right to operate their own presses and that Sunday Mass be aired on the radio. What extended this agreement from protection of rights to having the potential to break the hold the government had on its citizens was the reintroduction of pluralism into society. By guaranteeing the rights of the press, media, and religion, freedom of conscience and the public expression of that conscience followed.

The period of Solidarity's legality became known by historians as a carnival because citizens felt excitement from their new freedoms, but a looming dread of regime retribution hovered over them.[97] Soon after its creation, citizens belonging to other segments of society, such as students and farmers, developed their own Solidarity unions. About 1 in 4 Poles took an

[96] Khronika Press. "The Gdansk Agreement: Protocol of Agreement between the Government Commission and the Interfactory Strike Committee Concluded on August 31, 1980 at Gdansk Shipyards" *World Affairs* 145, no. 1 (1982: 11–19).
[97] Osa, *Solidarity and Contention*, 2.

open stance against the government by becoming members of Solidarity. [98] This included about 30% of PZPR members.[99] In fact, according to a report from the United States' Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, during the time of Solidarity's legality, Party membership declined from 3.2 million to less than 2.5 million.[100] On September 6, 1980, Gierek was expelled from the Politburo for allowing Solidarity to form and was replaced by Stanisław Kania, who was shortly thereafter replaced by the much more militant Wojciech Jaruzelski.

During the strikes, the gates of the shipyard were adorned with religious articles such small crosses, images of the Pope and the Black Madonna, and a large cross at the entrance.[101] Priests would even give strikers communion through the locked gates as a way to give them morale and emotional strength to continue their battle.[102] Lech Wałęsa later stated that "the first thing the Gdańsk workers did was to affix a cross, an image of the Virgin Mary, and a portrait of John Paul II to the gates of the shipyards. They became the symbols of victory."[103] In 1981, Timothy Garton Ash interviewed Solidarity members from Poznan and asked about the most important changes in their lives since Solidarity's creation. One worker replied "that" while pointing to a cross on the wall. When pressed further on what he meant, another worker replied "you see . . . it is a revolution of the soul!"[104] By using religious symbols, the strikes went beyond politics and extended to the very root of government ideology and the world of appearances the regime had built.

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[98] Curtis, *Poland: A Country Study*, 46.
[99] Ibid., 47.
[100] Stuart Goldman, "Martial Law in Poland." Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division. (Library of Congress Congressional Research Service Major Issues System. December 30, 1981), 2.
[101] Wałęsa, *A Way of Hope,* 123.
[102] Kubik, *The Power of Symbols*, 1.
[103] Lech Wałęsa, *The Struggle and the Triumph* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1992), 10.
[104] Ash, *The Polish Revolution*, 290.

By stating that the cross affixed to the factory wall represented the revolution rather than religion, the worker, perhaps inadvertently, recognized that Solidarity had little to do with the Church. Rather than these Catholic symbols representing the Catholic faith, they represented freedom of conscience. It represented national pride, resilience against oppression, and defiance of the regime, and it took Solidarity from being a workers' liberation movement to one of national liberation. Additionally, the use of these symbols legitimized the revolution by grounding it in an ideology that happened to be not only Catholic, but one in which much of the nation already believed.[105] By this time, the Church's presence in the revolution remained primarily at the symbolic and emotional levels rather than the physical. Yet, it was enough to solidify the Church's position as the defender of pluralism in Poland.

Many critics in the West question whether or not Solidarity was a revolution. While there was no attempts to overthrow the government and no "revolutionary" changes made in the factories, what did happen was a societal change in consciousness, which is always the precursor to a revolution. The historian Timothy Garton Ash explains in *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity,* that the major shift of consciousness that Poles experienced through the creation of Solidarity was that they no longer had to live the "double life" of private versus public.[106] Those who participated in Solidarity, through creating pamphlets, attending political Masses, or advocated for workers' rights all "made the personal decision to live one life rather than two."[107] This decision had a huge psychological impact on the community that not only gave them hope, but dignity.[108] To many outsiders, Poland was still under the oppressive control of a foreign power

[105] Mikolaj Kunicki, *Between the Brown and the Red: Nationalism, Catholicism, and Communism in Twentieth-Century Poland (*Ohio University Press Polish and Polish-American Studies Series. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012), 183.
[106] Ash, *The Polish Revolution,* 279-280.
[107] Ibid., 280.
[108] Ibid., 281.

and the opposition had asked for the bare minimum in the Gdańsk Agreement. The misunderstanding lies in what the desired outcome was seen to be. Polish citizens had little to no desire to overthrow the regime to rule themselves. Václav Havel, an author, and later statesman, in Czechoslovakia, stated in his essay "The Power of the Powerless" that what dissenters wanted was simply to be able to live and speak freely, along with an increase in workers' rights.[109] Though undoubtedly many hoped that they would eventually be freed from the Communist regime as well, Solidarity's official agenda was to create better working conditions for its members. In February 1981, Solidarity's official program stated: "we do not intend to replace the government in [carrying out its] tasks" to clarify that Solidarity intended to work with, not against, the government.[110] Father Józef Tischner wrote in *The Spirit of Solidarity* that the reason why workers did not violently revolt against the government, as many revolutions do, was because what Poles wanted was to reclaim what was rightly theirs, rather than to destroy it. They desired to put their "home in order."[111]

As the months passed after the Gdańsk Agreement was enacted, the government failed to deliver on its promises, and it became increasingly evident that the government was buying itself time. On the night of December 12-13, 1981, martial law was enacted under the direction of First Secretary Jaruzelski. That night, government agents had the phone lines cut and hundreds of Solidarity activists and KOR members were arrested in their homes. Solidarity and all union activity was suspended (but not proscribed), schools were closed, travel was restricted, curfews were put in place, speaking publicly against the government became illegal, and Catholic lay

[109] Václav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," Trans. Paul Wilson, *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures 32, no 2 (May 2018: 353-408).*
[110] Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland*, 19.
[111] Józef Tischner, *The Spirit of Solidarity*, 82.

organizations were closed.[112] The United States' Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, issued a report in December 1981 that speculated on the legal reasoning behind why martial law happened when it did as well as the effect it had on Polish citizens. According to the report, more than 6,000 activists and union members—and even former high-ranking government officials—were interned.[113]

Knowing that Church cooperation would be essential during this time, Jaruzelski appealed for aid from the new archbishop, Józef Glemp, whose appointment began in July 1981. The morning of December 13, government officials went to Glemp's house to inform him personally of the enactment of martial law.[114] Jaruzelski ensured Glemp that the Church would remain autonomous. Additionally, a few days after martial law was declared, it became illegal for the police to arrest priests, and religious rights were awarded to political prisoners, as per the request of many bishops. The rights the Church was afforded during martial law would prove to be a main element needed for the survival of the mentality of Solidarity.

The Church as Physical and Emotional Safety

The freedom of voice that citizens experienced during Solidarity's legality was suddenly taken away, yet the desire to keep living in truth remained. Supporters of Solidarity had already placed higher moral authority on their beliefs than the government's laws. With their briefly experienced freedoms taken away, whole communities, not just of workers, were emboldened, and protests and dissent became more common than they were before Solidarity.

[112] Goldman, "Martial Law in Poland," 1.
[113] Ibid., 3.
[114] Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History*, 175.

It was under martial law that the Church became more active in government resistance, and the concept of the Church as Poland's defender was solidified. With all other outlets of protest strictly forbidden under the law, union and intelligentsia activity ceased once again in the open and moved to smaller, underground circles. As the Church was allowed to keep its autonomy, parish churches became places for anti-regime activity.

Depending on the political leaning of the local priest, churches would be opened for anti-regime activities. Churches would offer their mimeograph machines for underground activity, allow opposition groups to post notes on bulletin boards, or operate as a safe house for those in hiding.[115] Often times, these organizers who used church space had no strong connection to the Catholic faith and used the churches simply because it was the best option. This did not matter to many priests simply because they supported Solidarity and believed that active resistance and unity were the best ways to achieve its legality. By the end of martial law, there were more churches acting as "Solidarity fortresses" than there were independently operated underground groups.[116]

To borrow the language of Václav Havel, the local churches became a space where a "second culture" could still exist in an open setting that was separate from the regime and necessary to break apart the façade of the public sphere.[117] Sunday Masses were the only time when people could gather to hear someone speaking the truth aloud without being arrested. However, if an anti-state protest ever took place, often times the demonstrators met on church grounds before beginning their protest. While this may have been the most effective way to organize resistance, it gave the regime the opportunity to state how the Church was in direct

[115] Osa, *Solidarity and Contention,* 79.
[116] Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland,* 233.
[117] Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," *395.*

defiance of its laws. These churches certainly were, but these actions enforced the government's narrative that the Church and its lay community were aggressive and non-compliant with the government's authority.

Religion aiding the movement extended beyond the physical institution of the Church and into the private practice of many activists to provide hope and foster emotional endurance. Stanisław Zurowski, a Solidarity chairman of the City Commission for Zakopane, was one of many activists interned the night martial law went into effect. Years later, he wrote about how during his imprisonment, the Church was the first, and the only, source of hope and help for many of the interned. He stated that, while in an isolation camp in Załęże "religiosity was a release of stress, an antidote to the reality that [surrounded] us, a form [of] patriotism and firm opposition to the violence applied to us."[118] The use of prayer and religion had multiple motives. Internally, praying for oneself or family helped relieve emotional stress and keep the hope that a situation will be improved. Externally, prayer was the most inviolable tool the prisoners had to show that they firmly remained against the government. While the internal motive for relying on religion could be said to be a "means to an end," the external motive acts more as a tool of dissent.

One of the few freedoms prisoners were allotted was the freedom to worship. Clergymen and even an archbishop came to visit the internees to give them food and words of encouragement, telling the prisoners that their actions and the fact that they were imprisoned showed that they were "courageous and of high ethical level."[119] On December 27, the first Holy Mass during martial law was played on the radio in the prison and for the first time the prisoners

[118] Stanisław Roman Zurowski, "Obóz Odosobnienia w Załężu: Internowanie 13.12.1981- 3.07.1982," ed. Hanna Błaszczyk-Żurowska. (Kraków: Stempel Wszechnicy Internowanych, 2021), 17.
[119] Ibid., 15.

were allowed to leave their cells to join one another in the ward. During the homily, the bishop addressed the prisoners and stated that, because those imprisoned fought and were arrested for supporting Solidarity, they need not worry about their families because the Church would be sure to look after them.[120] While listening to the Mass, the prisoners all raised their hands to form a "V" (for Victory) and sang religious songs. Zurowski commented that listening to the sermon brought an emotional relief to many of the prisoners, who were openly crying at the bishop's words. Afterwards, the prisoners were allowed to listen to every Mass and, after March 1982, a common room was provided for the prisoners, which they subsequently turned into a chapel. The priests' weekly visits provided the prisoners with great comfort by being told that what they were going through meant they were morally upright and that their suffering would be rewarded.

While it is easy to dissect past emotions and give logical reasoning to extreme belief and behavior, religion gave many Poles the ability to keep fighting, and most importantly to keep having faith that their struggles will end, throughout martial law. The quote from Zurowski, that religion was both stress relief and was able, briefly, to change the reality around those who suffered, encapsulates the importance of personal faith throughout the duration of martial law. While faith was a means to an end, it was also the only way to survive daily life. Hope is just as important to any social movement as other, more concrete factors are.

The lower clergy members and the local churches had a far more influential role than the upper hierarchy in creating an atmosphere in which opposition could flourish, or at the very least survive, throughout the period of martial law. Members of the upper hierarchy, as will be discussed more thoroughly in the next section, often played a more aloof role simply because they had to deal directly with the government and their idea of combating the government was

[120] Ibid., 18.

vastly different from that of the rest of the population. Lower priests had endorsed "divine disobedience" by telling their lay communities and political prisoners that their actions were supported by God, and they would be rewarded in heaven because of their continuous fight against evil, i.e., Communism.[121] Not only did they provide a physical and emotional space for those affected by martial law, but they also helped in more tangible ways by donating food, money, and medicine to those in need. Additionally, many churches compiled names of prisoners and missing people, finding what prison they were being held in, and oftentimes paying the prisoners' fines to obtain their release.[122]

Throughout the period of Communist rule, and especially under martial law, for citizens to attend a church service was a political act on its own, regardless of the sermon's message, simply because any religious message was inherently against state ideology. Despite the already anti-Communist nature of the Catholic faith, some priests chose to dedicate their voices to supporting their faith and Solidarity. During the beginning of martial law, Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, a parish priest at the Saint Stanisław Kostka Church in Warsaw, was preparing to take on what would become a large role, making him become one of the leading figures to represent Solidarity. On Fr. Popiełuszko's initiative, along with that of Fr. Teofil Bogucki, he began a special service that was given on the last Sunday of every month at Saint Stanisław Kostka Church. These Masses were the most popular church services throughout Poland that were explicitly political, making Fr. Popiełuszko a target of the regime. These services were Fr. Popiełuszko's way of placing God at the center of people's suffering while putting it in a

[121] The insinuation comes from Fr. Popiełuszko's sermons during his Masses for the Fatherland. Throughout his sermons, the term "evil" often accompanies the mention of the products of the Communist system (such as "wrongful" imprisonments) or refers to the actions of the Jaruzelski government and martial law.

[122] Jack Bloom, *Seeing through the Eyes of the Polish Revolution: Solidarity and the Struggle against Communism in Poland*. Historical Materialism (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 347.

nationalist perspective. These Masses came to be the most popular anti-state church services throughout Poland, making Fr. Popiełuszko a target of the regime.

Citizens would come from throughout the country to attend these Masses to show their support for Solidarity and to hear words of comfort. Solidarity supporters would attend these services regardless of their religion, simply because they were among the only places where open defiance of the government could exist. These Masses would often be turned into Solidarity rallies, as the congregation would wave banners outside of the church while Fr. Popiełuszko's sermon echoed from the speakers placed so the thousands of attendants could hear his message. Many underground activists credited Fr. Popiełuszko for providing emotional strength as well as tips on how to organize themselves.

During these services, the church grounds would be surrounded by riot police with water cannons in hand, aimed towards people leaving the church, and waiting for any reason to fire on them. Keeping the public sphere under control was so important to the government that special police rosters were written especially for these masses.[123] The atmosphere the church created, where freedom of speech could exist, was dimmed as the attendees would leave the service and have to walk through a corridor of police officers. Often after his homily, Fr. Popiełuszko would ask that the congregation be silent amid the policemen's verbal attacks. The congregation would leave the church property in a somber mood, walking past police who would be calling out to them, shouting, singing religious songs satirically, and provoking them in any way possible.[124]

The retelling of the above-mentioned events, the Pope's visitation, the bravery of Fr. Popiełuszko and other parish priests with strong connections to their communities, the people coming together under the Catholic faith to fight Communism, is only one side of the truth. Yet,

[123] Sikorski, *Jerzy Popiełuszko*, 46.
[124] Ibid.

this is the side that the majority of people are told and believe. Just as the words of Fr. Popiełuszko uplifted many people, they also carried extremist and nationalist language.

A Shift in Narrative

Despite the decree that all anti-regime speech was illegal, at these masses Fr. Popiełuszko confidently spoke against the government's inhumane laws and the suffering they had caused. In his first Mass for the Fatherland on February 28, 1982, Fr. Popiełuszko stated that the "[C]hurch stands on the side of those who have been deprived of freedom, whose consciences are being attacked."[125] He repeatedly proclaimed that Solidarity and the fight to live in truth was not only supported by God, but was one's moral responsibility. By continuously positioning the Church as the source of authority and stating that God blessed Solidarity, Fr. Popiełuszko and many other pro-Solidarity priests sustained a feeling of moral superiority amongst their congregations. Additionally, Fr. Popiełuszko would not simply refer to the government as such, but he would consistently reference the government as evil and Party members as those who had been led astray or whose morals were compromised. On one occasion, Fr. Jerzy even referred to the police as "Satan" for circling their prey before an attack.[126]

The black-and-white language used in these Masses had a profound impact on listeners, as it combined classic Christian traits, such as martyrdom and perseverance, with Poland's contrived history as a Catholic nation. Oftentimes in these masses, Fr. Popiełuszko would mention Poland's long history of suffering and how it was the "national faith" that helped the country overcome whatever adversity it faced. He would go on to speak of how suffering

[125] Jerzy Popiełuszko, *His Sermons, 1982-1984: From the Masses for the Fatherland at Saint Stanisław Kostka Church Warsaw, Poland,* Trans. Ewa Hermacinski (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sióstr Loretanek, 2014), 17.
[126] Ibid., 130-131.

brought beneficial outcomes. Solidarity, for one, was the fruit of suffering.[127] His continued use of the word "suffer" (and its variations)—over 125 times throughout his 30 "Masses for the Fatherland"—undoubtedly had an impact on the listeners and how they viewed themselves with regard to the government and Party members. The use of "suffer" may imply victimhood and wrongdoing by the dominant party. A sense of martyrdom was instilled in many of the listeners as the priest that they idolized told them that they were "like the suffering Christ" and that "Christ bleeding on the cross is the suffering of [the] nation."[128]

The long-lasting effects of this Manichean language can be seen when comparing Poland during martial law to contemporary Poland and could be partially responsible for the charged political atmosphere today. Insinuations that could be made from Fr. Popiełuszko's sermons such as "what is not Christian is evil" or "Christians must fight their enemies to bring good back to their country" carried the potential to create militant Christians who believe that politically debatable topics are moral issues, rather than political. The inclusion of God into these debates makes it seem to the militant Christians that their beliefs are non-arbitrary and non-negotiable, and that it is Christians' duty to bring God's will to earth, lest their salvation be at risk.

While Fr. Popiełuszko's inflated language was having its effect, a *mythos* surrounding the Pope's visit was being created. In addition to the exaggeration that surrounds the Pope, many claims about him are simply untrue. An investigation was done on Jonathan Kwitny's book by Public Broadcasting Services (PBS) journalists wherein much of the claims in *Man of the Century* were found to be nonfactual. The journalists conducting the research, Jane Barnes and Helen Whitney, used witnesses and first-hand accounts that stated the opposite of claims in

[127] Ibid., 33.
[128] Ibid., 42-46.

Kwitny's book, or flat-out rejected his claims.[129] Some of the claims they found to be nonfactual were the Popes involvement in starting a hunger strike, secretly ordaining priests in Czechoslovakia, and participating in any clandestine operation during the Cold War period, essentially, many of the stories that placed the Pope as an involved figure in Solidarity.[130] Once again, the problem becomes one narrative versus another. Both Kwitny's book and the journalists' article use first-hand accounts for their claims, which creates possible fallacies from beginning to end, from the research stage to the writing stage. Additionally, just because the PBS article is a counter-narrative does not make it more credible than the other. While it is a historian's responsibility to sort the wheat from the chaff, the (purposeful or accidental) lies of previous authors have created a "truth" of their own that has influenced the thoughts, beliefs, and actions of some. These narratives, along with the ability to influence its readers, carry the potential to form incorrect histories which, when introduced in a climate that has xenophobia or increasing secularism like Poland had after Communism, helped caused extreme forms of nationalism.

The regime often sought the help of priests to give it inside information on the workings of the Church and its agendas in order better to extort the Church. While many records of this process as well as the names of priests who aided the government were destroyed by 1989, some personal memoirs, as well as testimonies from priests and government officials, have surfaced in recent decades that give some insight into the process. To get first-hand accounts on how the regime would coerce priests into acting as informants, historian Jack Bloom interviewed secret police colonel, under the pseudonym Adam Sucharski, who led the state Department of Church

[129] Jane Barnes & Helen Whitney, "John Paul II and the Fall of Communism," *PBS Frontline*. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/pope/communism/

[130] Ibid.

Relations and Priest Cooperation in his region (not given). The ex-colonel agreed to give a truthful account so long as his name and region were not mentioned in the book. Sucharski stated that police would coerce priests they knew to be weak into becoming informants for the government by incentivizing them with a driver's license or passports. Or, for priests who had a secret they didn't want to get out (usually a romantic partner or evidence of child abuse) the government would threaten to expose them unless they become informants. Sucharski stated that about 95% of the priests they contacted who had a secret agreed to cooperate with them.[131] Sucharski estimated that in some provinces upwards of 20% of priests would act as informants for the government.[132] While the Ministry of Internal Affairs estimated that 5 to 10% of Polish priests aided in dissent against the government, Sucharski's statements lead one to suspect that up to twice as many priests acted as informants.[133]

As for Church hierarchies, some bishops and archbishops spoke out against the government, but their actions were still confined to letters sent to both the lay community and the government demanding change. More often than not, many remained silent and advocated that the Church not have an opinion on the matter, or they remained neutral while pushing for smaller milestones not related to Solidarity. Rather, they tried to increase freedoms of religion or the Church's ability to become re-involved in public activities or aid. The hierarchy did not make public statements that explicitly denounced either the government or union members. However, many of them adopted Jaruzelski's excuse for why martial law was declared: that he wanted to avoid a Soviet invasion of Poland due to the freedoms Solidarity had achieved for citizens. During the first two days of martial law a message by Primate Glemp was repeatedly broadcast

[131] Bloom, *Seeing through the Eyes of the Polish Revolution,* 134.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Andrzej Packowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland,* 234.

on the radio, in which he called for peace from protestors and that they accept martial law.[134] Not only did this message dishearten many Solidarity supporters who began to question whether being a part of the movement was morally right, Glemp's call for submission to the government inevitably led many to think that Glemp sided with the state. Many Solidarity supporters villainized Glemp became villainized and was given the nickname "Comrade Glemp" and the "Red Cardinal" for talking as though he bought into the government's narrative.[135]

Glemp's motives remain an object of speculation. To Glemp's critics, it seemed as though Glemp had made deals with Jaruzelski and sided with the government in an effort of self-preservation based on his public comments against Solidarity members. However, Sabrina Ramet points out that, rather than his actions being pro-government, Glemp may have been acting in the way he saw most fit to protect the Church as an institution and the safety of clergy members. His decisions to follow Jaruzelski's demands by moving priests to isolated churches, banning some priests from preaching in Warsaw, or denouncing the actions of out-spoken priests could have been to give the impression that the Church was willing to act as a neutral partner rather than provoking Jaruzelski into an all-out war with the Church, to protect his own position as Primate to be able to work with the government to ensure future Church rights, or to get officials and police to stop harassing priests.

By still attending church services and strengthening their devotion to the Church and the Catholic faith, yet largely disregarding the pleas of the Primate to not participate in underground or anti-state activity, Poles supported the Church when it benefitted them. Perhaps a truly Catholic nation, the one that the hierarchs claimed had existed for centuries, would have obeyed

[134] Jonathan Luxmoore, "The Polish Church Under Martial Law," *Religion in Communist Lands* 15, no. 2 (1987), 127.
[135] Ibid.

its Primate with little defiance or quarrel. Yet, protests and disturbances continued to arise, with church grounds still acting as a meeting spot. Protestors supported their church when they agreed with their priests' messages, and they dismissed (or condemned) hierarchs when they did not agree with them. The people supported the Church on their own terms, rather than the Church's. When the local parish allowed over-decoration of its property during the Great Novena, or opened its doors to underground activity during martial law, people not only took these opportunities to defy the government, but they adopted the faith as symbolic defiance. When the Church asked the people to use other means to resist the government or stop resisting all together, the people did not listen, and in turn criticized the primate for giving into state propaganda. Had the people supported the Church because of their unquestionable devotion to the Church rather than because of what they benefitted from it, obedience to the Primate would have been more visible.

A poll taken in 1981 and again in 1986 showed that in those five years the number of Polish youths who proclaimed themselves to be Catholic rose from 32.2% to 66.2%.[136] The likelihood that in five short years, the number of believers within a demographic would more than double, suddenly believing in the supernatural aspects of the Catholic faith, such as belief in God, saints, heaven and hell, when all concepts were known to them before Solidarity and martial law, is extremely unlikely. More likely, is that people found that the Church supported their own beliefs under martial law, when they were persecuted for their beliefs. It is not so much that the people supported the Church as that certain representatives of the Church supported the people. Despite the comfort that religion brought to individuals, the rise in church attendance, and the use of Church symbols, the only truly anti-state "tactic" that members of Solidarity

[136] Leonid Luks, *Katholizismus und Politische Macht im Kommunistischen Polen 1945–1989. Die Anatomie einer Befreiung* (Köln/Weimar/Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1993), 160.

followed in accordance with Church teachings was to be non-violent. Yet even this characteristic of the early months of Solidarity was due to workers' understanding of how to deal with the government through previous negotiations.[137] Additionally, when martial law was in place people disregarded Primate Glemp's pleas not to engage in protests. In some ways, people used the Church when it was convenient for them.

While many authors either vilify or commend the Church's role with respect to Solidarity and martial law and highlight the people and events that support one narrative over another, the veracity of what life was like at this time cannot be understood by accepting only one view. The truth, it seems, was that, despite the majority of the clergy and hierarchy having no impact on the government, a large portion was corrupted by the government and acted as informants. However, it is also true that the continuation of the spirit of Solidarity may have been impossible without the help of an even smaller portion of clergy members. Rather than many competing narratives, a more accurate observation would be to say that a small percentage of priests were openly anti-state and took advantage of the Church's strong position in Polish society and they had an enormous impact in fostering a community that kept the spirit of Solidarity alive during its illegality. As for the hierarchy, its support was standoffish, but it was able to protect the long-term interests of the Church as an institution while keeping a passable relationship with the regime.

The Deteriorating State and Communism's Final Years

Unrest never ceased throughout the period of martial law. On the second anniversary of Solidarity's founding, demonstrations erupted in Warsaw, Wroclaw, Lublin, and Gdańsk. In the

[137] Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity.*

article *TIME Magazine* published on the event, the opening statement was: "Teargas, Molotov cocktails and bullets marked Solidarity's second birthday. It was a day of rage, violence and bloodshed, and it proved again that Solidarity and the spirit the union embodied were far from cowed."[138] The government used these demonstrations to prove that the citizens were not "worthy partners" of negotiations and the military council stated that these demonstrations ruined the nation's chances of being rid of martial law by the end of the year.[139] Nonetheless, Jaruzelski yielded to public outcries and released Wałęsa from confinement.

To motivate good behavior amongst citizens, Jaruzelski made a statement that martial law would be lifted if he was satisfied with how people acted during the Pope's visit.[140] This visit came at a time when morale was low amongst citizens. Martial law and the fight for its end had been going on for 18 months and people were emotionally exhausted. Yet, upon the Pope's arrival on June 6, 1983, thousands of Poles had their hopes reignited, just as with his first visit four years before, On the day of his arrival, several thousands of people participated in demonstrations in Warsaw, while in Nowa Huta more than one thousand people marched and were subsequently attacked by police after the mass.[141] Other than being a symbol of national pride to Poles, the opposition knew that the Pope would speak out against the government for them and demand change, things that they needed from a religious leader that the Primate was not providing.

During the papal masses, flags stating "freedom for Solidarity" or "Solidarity is fighting and will win" peppered the landscape of thousands of people listening to his messages.[142] The

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[138] Thomas Sancton, Thomas, and Richard Hornik. "Poland: Defiance in the Streets." TIME.com, September 13, 1982. https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,951804,00.html
[139] Ibid.
[140] Luxmoore, "The Polish Church Under Martial Law," 230.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid., 232.

Pope's messages, like during his first visit, were on Poland's right to sovereignty, and he called for amnesty for all political prisoners and the relegalization of independent trade unions.[143] Most importantly, his visit bolstered the spirits of many who had seen the last year as evidence that their desires for political freedom would not be fulfilled. Throughout his visit, his homilies positioned Poland as the "Christ of nations" by continuously referencing how, just as Jesus questioned God while on the cross, so was Poland's faith shaken during martial law, but, just as Christ, it too, would rise in the end.

Despite Jaruzelski warning against demonstrations, several occurred throughout the country. However, the regime could no longer afford to keep enforcing martial law and preparations to lift it continued. As part of these preparations, new laws were put in place to make the transition relatively peaceful. On October 8, authorities formally banned all trade union activity, and many laws created while martial law was in force were to be carried over after its end.[144] On July 22, 1983, the regime announced an amnesty and at midnight martial law ended in Poland. Over 500 political prisoners were released, and 100 prisoners received reduced sentences, leaving only 83 people in confinement.[145] The government soon announced that its reason for ending martial law was the aims it had sought to achieve were fulfilled—that "political and social stabilization and improved internal security and public order" had been achieved—which was certainly far from true, but many authorities believed that Solidarity would not be revived on a large scale.[146]

By the time martial law had been lifted, its toll had left deep psychological wounds on the country. A melancholy atmosphere in Poland continued as emotional exhaustion and the fear of

[143] Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History,* 180.
[144] Ibid., 178.
[145] Ibid., 274.
[146] Ibid., 275.

martial law being reinstated combined with the hardships of daily life. Underground activity, government resistance, and the desire for liberation still existed, but it seemed as though there was little opportunity for any real progress to be made.

The Church would be given a few benefits, such as the building of several new churches around the country, but at the same time police harassment of clergy members persisted, and the government continued to push for the removal of religious symbols in public spaces. During the last few months of martial law, the Ministry of Internal Affairs created a new department that aimed at "limiting and liquidating the clergy's politically negative activities" through "special projects," which was done through spreading false accusations to discredit the clergy as well as the pope, assaulting clergy, destroying property, setting fire to apartments, and murder.[147] This department was put to use only after the lifting of martial law.

In the summer of 1983, authorities opened an official investigation against Fr. Popiełuszko for "abuse of freedom of conscious and religion" because he "constantly included political slanders against the state and authorities in his sermons; he claimed particularly that the state authorities were violating human dignity and depriving society of freedom of thought and actions through lies and anti-democratic laws," which was certainly true.[148] The regime used tactics such as imprisonment and slander as attempts to change the public perception of him. Yet none of these attacks deterred Fr. Popiełuszko from continuing his work to support Solidarity and bring aid to the people suffering under the regime, nor did the propaganda against him cause any change in the public's support of him.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs became increasingly frustrated, and in September 1984 a meeting was held wherein it finalized a decision to create a team of three men to carry out Fr.

[147] Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland*, 235.
[148] Sikorski, *Jerzy Popiełuszko,* 50.

Popiełuszko's murder. After delivering a service on October 19, the team from the Ministry of Internal Affairs stopped Fr. Popiełuszko and his driver, when they killed Fr. Popiełuszko and threw his body into the Vistula River. In response to the public outcry that followed Popiełuszko's disappearance, the government was forced to begin an official search for his body. On October 30, his body was found in the river. An autopsy showed severe damage to his spinal cord and head, as well as broken bones and pieces of skin torn off his body.[149] The night his body was found, thousands of lay people and numerous priests celebrated Mass every hour at the Saint Kostka Church. Thousands of lamps and candles were placed alongside the fence surrounding the church grounds.

Popiełuszko's murder not only shocked the nation and discredited whatever integrity the government had in the eyes of its citizens, but it reignited both anger and unity within the opposition towards the government. Jan Lityński stated that "not everyone identified with Solidarity, but everyone identified with Fr. Popiełuszko.... If there were any debate about whether or not… Solidarity should exist, from this moment there was no doubt."[150] Looking beyond the nationalist language of his sermons, which most likely would not have been obvious to his listeners, citizens saw that the physical and emotional aid Popiełuszko gave went beyond religion and politics. While not all Poles may have agreed with the ethics or tactics of Solidarity, it was generally agreed that Popiełuszko's death was the culmination of everything they disliked about the government. Fr Zalewski commented that "the murder of Popiełuszko, and the investigation and trial [of those who killed him], contributed to radicalising attitudes of the priests. Masses for the Homeland spread across the whole country; priests became more radical:

[149] Sikorski, Grazyna. Jerzy Popiełuszko, 53.
[150] Bloom, *Seeing Through the Eyes of the Polish Revolution*, 354.

in general, they were no longer afraid of speaking out in public."[151] The aid that Fr. Popiełuszko gave to people, emotional or physical, as well as being seen by many as an embodiment of Solidarity, caused his death to capture the attention and hearts of the nation.

During his funeral, Solidarity banners and flags were displayed, as if to show that the spirit of Solidarity was alive and that Popiełuszko's death meant the revival of Solidarity. Lech Wałęsa commented that the funeral had a mood that "was a combination of hope and despair."[152] The despair was at the loss of a beloved priest as well as at the nature of his death and what it represented, but while the hope lay in what change might come from it. Popiełuszko's funeral resolved many differences within the crowd and the population at large and reunited the opposition against the regime, as it saw the strength of numbers and needless suffering of others once again.

For the remainder of Communist rule in Poland, there is little literature on Church-state relations. Glemp moved many clergymen to less influential churches in rural communities, quieting many anti-state priests. Over the next few years, scattered protests against the regime persisted, but they amounted to little. As for the Church hierarchy, Glemp had pushed for a few projects to boost the Church's public presence, such as an agriculture fund for independent farmers, but they failed to come into existence. Otherwise, there were few headline events. Struggle and survival continued to characterize citizens' daily lives as they moved on as best as they could.

When Gorbachev took over the Soviet Union in March 1985, he adopted policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*—essentially, transparency and economic reconstruction—and later he declared that Moscow would no longer interfere in the policies of Eastern bloc countries. On

[151] Ibid., 353.
[152] Walesa, *A Way of Hope*, 305.

September 11, 1986, the government passed a law that stated that Solidarity and opposition activists could no longer be taken to court, and soon after activists established an above ground Temporary Council of Solidarity along with several other pluralist groups.

On February 1, 1988, a price hike that affected food, alcohol, gasoline, rent, and transportation went into effect in Poland. By late April and early May, strikes had broken out in Nowa Huta and Gdansk, the strongholds of Solidarity, and it was not long until Solidarity leaders demanded that government authorities to start negotiations. With the country's economy weakening at a rapid pace and with pressure from outside countries such as the United States, the government decided to open negotiations. On the anniversary of the 1980 Agreement, members of Solidarity and the government, co-chaired by Lech Wałęsa and the head of the Minister of the Interior Service Czesław Kiszczak, met to set up what later became known as the Roundtable Talks.

The Roundtable talks, taking place between February 6 to April 5, 1989, had 29 delegates from the government, 26 from Solidarity (all having a unified stance, unlike the government representatives), and three observers from the Church to act as a type of mediator. According to a government minister present during the talks, Aleksander Kwaśneiski, the Church sought its own interests, including freedom of religious associations, no government censorship, and an improvement to its legal position throughout the discussion rather than simply the restoration of the rights mentioned in the Gdańsk Agreement.[153] With the Communist government adopting a position of transparency with regard to the economic situation, the opposition knew that the government was not as powerful as it had let on and that the opposition could demand more than had been possible in 1980. Rather than stopping at the relegalization of trade unions and

[153] Jon Elster, *The Roundtable Talks and the Breakdown of Communism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 35.

demands for economic reform, the opposition was able to gain a partially free election in 1989 and the formation of a new Senate, as well as trade union pluralism.

In June 1989, the partially free elections resulted in Solidarity taking all freely contested seats in the Sejm and all but one freely contested seat in the Senate. Later that year, Prime Minister Kiszczak appointed Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Catholic author and member of Solidarity, to take over his position as prime minister. Over the next few years, Mazowiecki's government prioritized economic reform, transforming Poland from a centrally planned economy into a market economy.[154]

For the entirety of Solidarity's existence, the Church had acted as a symbol of hope and support for the people of Poland. As the more unpleasant dealings of Church members with the government, such as clergymen cooperating with the regime, were not yet public, people had placed an enormous amount of trust in the Church, as both an emotional refuge and an institution. Yet many citizens, apart from the intelligentsia, failed to see how the Church as an institution desired to promote its own agenda, as it had done centuries before despite social and moral changes in the world, and the many hierarchs failed to see the motives behind the piety that truly existed within the people.

From the perspective of the citizens, since the Great Novena, churches provided an emotional and sometimes physical refuge for them. It was in the churches where communities would gather, offer support to one another, and have a voice to speak out against the regime. The hierarchy took the support that citizens gave to their local churches and used it to support its own survival. The Church had pushed its own agenda in prior centuries, and it wanted to do the same in post-Communist Poland. However, the Western technologies, media, culture, and morals that

[154] Jeffrey Sachs, *Poland's Jump to the Market Economy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 44-46.

were introduced to Poland, combined with the secular liberties Communism had introduced, to which Poles had grown accustomed for over four decades, made many Poles unwilling to "regress" back to the essentially theocratic government that the Church wanted.

From the Church's view, the nation had never been more proudly Catholic. The usage of Church symbols in association with Solidarity, the utilization of Church grounds as protest sites, and high attendance rates at churches led the Church to believe that Poland was a devout Catholic nation, as many people had been proclaiming it was since the Great Novena. Crowds chanting "We want God" after Pope John Paul II's first homily at Victory Square or prisoners of martial law congregating to listen to Sunday Mass would make any viewer think that the people were dedicated to their faith, and they were. The usage of Catholicism as a civic religion does not mean the faith had less personal meaning to individuals who needed the faith as an emotional outlet. Yet when pluralism was reintroduced to Poland's political sphere, commitment to the faith certainly became more lax. This did not stop the Church from pushing its agenda.

People's devotion to the Church lessened when their freedom began, whether it was understood by them at the time or not. However, the Church either failed to realize this or chose not to do so. Over the course of the next decade, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the Church pushed its agenda, and the people let it. For the last four decades, the Church had been a symbol of freedom for the people. Now that their freedom was won, the people could not believe that the Church would become something they would fight against.

Chapter 3- Post-Communism and Contemporary Politics

As early as the 1989 elections, the unity amongst citizens that Solidarity created, as well as the bond between Catholicism and the state, began to fall apart. One reason for this dissolution was that during Communist Poland there was no space in political discourse for topics concerning gender, religious minorities, race, cultural issues, etc.[155] The topic that overshadowed the majority of political discussions at the time was "Communist or not Communist." The black and white nature of political discourse during Communism did not leave room for internal divisions. With the "enemy" no longer in power, Poland's multi-party system was reintroduced, and national identity was no longer limited to the symbolic sphere. One's expression of his or her political views now had a legitimate outlet which outweighed the need for the Church to represent citizens' desires. Over the next decade, citizen devotion to the Church fell, which left the Church to compete for support in a new society that featured individualism, pluralism, and secularism.

Despite Poland's increase in secularization, the Church believed that the country should remain grounded in the Catholic faith, as it had claimed Poland had been for the past millennium. The re-introduction of pluralism in Poland affected every level of society, including the symbolic. The Church, now thrown into a competitive market, had to compete in the symbolic field to remain a major component in Polish nationalism. The historian Zdzisław Mach argues that, instead of competing in this "free market" of symbolic discourse, the Church chose to dominate it, as it had done during Communism.[156] The clout the Church had, along with the trust it had gained from citizens while playing the role of the defender of people's rights, made it so that many citizens were initially unsuspicious of the Church's involvement in politics. Many

[155] Mach, "The Roman Catholic Church," 78.
[156] Ibid., 66-67.

citizens did not realize how far the Church had gone in promoting its own agenda in the country until it became a dominating force in the political sphere. It was not long until a new "us versus them" dynamic was created, wherein the Church was battling secularism.

There was not a definite point of when Poland secularized. Of course the importation of culture from the West introduced ideas and desires that were not present before 1989 and were against Church ideals, such as individualism, consumerism, and pornographic images, but to say that it was that point in which Poland secularized would be to say that Poland was a devoutly Catholic state before 1989.[157] As previously mentioned, the Communist government brought in secular changes to laws, especially concerning easier access to abortions and divorces. The fact that Poles had limited abortions before Communism took over did not make them faithful to the religion. Instead, it made them citizens who had to follow a law that happened to reflect the Church's values. Despite these secularized laws being against Catholic teachings, Poles who identified as Catholic still utilized them. Additionally, the previous analysis on Poles who chose to not following Primate Glemp and other hierarchs' pleas to stop participating in anti-regime activity shows a nation that is not devout to the Church, but to their own personal relationship to the faith and what it provided them. Rather than there being a "point" of secularization, there was simply an increase in liberalization from Church laws.

The actions the Church took to ensure its authority in Poland after the demise of Communism were similar to those during the Communist era. Some examples included priests and bishops telling their communities what to believe about political parties, saying what and whom to support, and supporting and initiating mass movements against secularism. These parallels to the Communist era demonstrate that it was not that the Church that had changed or

[157] Porter-Szűcs, *Faith and Fatherland*, 10 & Jan Kubik, *The Power of Symbols*, 198.

even taken advantage of citizens' trust in it. Rather, what had changed was what people needed from the Church. The Church had either failed to see the change or had disregarded it. Yet, over the next decade the Church's authority began to be questioned, which caused the Church to become increasingly stubborn and employ more aggressive tactics towards lawmakers and the lay community to preserve its status. In addition to the more public displays of political action, the Church also undertook aggressive lobbying, supporting or partaking in hate-speech, banning its own priests from speaking out against the Church, threatening excommunication to law makers and doctors, and thereby unwittingly copying tactics against secularist groups that the Communist government had once deployed against the Church.

The effects of the Church's actions have been prominent and have caused divisions within Polish society. Laws concerning abortions and equal marriage rights as well as student education, which will be discussed in later sections, have been at the forefront of political controversy in recent years. Political scientist Maciej Potz argues that the principles that religious organizations believe in are seen to them as grounded in biblical, and therefore supernatural, morals, making them non-controversial to those who support them as well as necessary in order for their country to be seen as "properly" functioning, i.e., not being overrun by nonbelievers.[158] The Polish nationalism centered around Catholicism used during Poland's third partition, revived during the Great Novena, and strengthened in connection with Solidarity, gave the Church the narrative advantage to claim that Poland had always been a Catholic nation. Similar to what happened during the interwar period, in post-Communist Poland this national attachment turned into a form of paranoia that Catholic piety would fall throughout the nation, raising xenophobia and antisemitism amongst a portion of the right-wing Catholic population. It is the combination

[158] Maciej Potz, *Political Science of Religion: Theorising the Political Role of Religion* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 38.

of politics and religion that has caused some supporters of the Church to become so militant in their beliefs.

The effects of the Church's actions have made the Church as a political player extremely controversial in Poland's political landscape since the 1990s. This chapter, largely drawing from the work of Joanna Mishtal, will lay out the political actions the Church has taken after Communism, how it has mobilized its supporters, and how it has gone from supporter of pluralism to competing for political and moral dominance in three decades. An analysis will then be done on the relationship between how the Church acted under and after Communism, and how the narrative of Catholicism in Poland has been manipulated for the purpose of keeping the Church in power. This chapter argues that the Church sought its moral monopoly through the advocacy that laws concerning education, reproductive health, and marriage were to be reflective of Catholic values. Additionally, this chapter argues that not only were the Church's tactics in gaining control unsurprising, but they were similar to tactics used to gain an upper hand under Communism.

Political Practices of the Church after Communism

Before discussing what laws the Catholic Church has influenced in Poland and the controversies it has stirred, it is important to explain the effects that religiosity may have on people and how their beliefs are translated or transformed into political action. First, the Church has very clear and expressed goals it would like society to meet. The laws that the Church wants to see pass arguably come from God, the ultimate and non-arbitrary source. While the very nature of the democratic process calls for compromise, laws from God cannot be compromised. Otherwise, in the eyes of His followers, they have failed to accomplish His will. The actual

validity of the faith is a somewhat moot point, because regardless of others' opinions, people following the religion are influenced to think and behave a certain way.[159]

Second, is the Church's ability to create voter mobilization. A study by the sociologist Mikołaj Cześnik found that between 1997 and 2007, citizens who went to church were reported as being more likely to vote in parliamentary elections than non-religious people.[160] Catholic voters are more likely to be conservative and right-leaning and vote for those whose platforms are close to the Church's teachings, and Catholic priests and bishops have been reported in the same study as telling their audience which candidate to vote for during election cycles.[161] A part of this connection is due to the community and socialization of churches. Members of churches are likely to experience pressure to conform or receive a reprimand from their community if they act against the group's beliefs. In a speech given in May 2015, Polish Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki stated that not to fight for God's will on earth is to deny God's will; not to vote for those whom the Catholic Church believes are the best candidates is a sin of neglect.[162] The combination of the Church having clear and defined goals, with the concept that those who bring about these goals help accelerate God's will, and the social pressure to fit in with the community, has the potential to create a group of people who are militant about imposing their beliefs on society. These two points show that even without the Church being explicitly political, the Church always exerts a political influence due to the effects religion has on its community members.

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[159] Potz, *Political Science of Religion,* 26.
[160] Mikołaj Cześnik, *Partycypacja wyborcza Polaków* (Warsaw: Spraw Publication Institute, 2009).
[161] Potz, *The Political Science of Religion,* 152-153.
[162] Teofil Lenartowicz and Salve Regina, "Bond with Christ—Homily by Archbishop Gadecki. Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Poland," *Konferencja Episkopatu Polski*, May 5, 2015. https://episkopat.pl/homilia-abp-stanislawa-gadeckiego-wygloszona-podczas-uroczystosci-nmp-kolowej-polski/.

Throughout the 1990s, bishops and priests continued with the agenda and political messages that they had embraced in Communist Poland, such as the concept of Polish-Catholic nationalism and the Church acting as the moral authority of the country. The only difference now was that the Church was no longer in a submissive position, struggling for power or authority. To ensure that Catholicism remained at the center of Polish society, throughout the 1990s Polish bishops and priests championed Catholicism as the keystone to Polishness, just as they had done during the Great Novena and Solidarity. They would make statements that would infer that the rejection of Catholicism would "weaken national feelings [and cause citizens to] question the nation's identity" and emphasized that Poland had been a Catholic nation since its birth.[163] According to Primate Glemp, to get rid of concept of Poland's Catholic foundations would weaken society as a whole because secular values are not strong enough to keep communities together.[164]

Further, the Church has turned religious figures into political ones, such as the declaration in 2016 crowning Jesus as the King of Poland alongside Mary, and gave blessings to objects of representations of national pride, such as military equipment, city busses, sports teams, even bypasses.[165] While many of these actions are devoid of real-life consequences, the use of these symbols over the whole country is a way in which the Church tries to dominate the public sphere. The phenomenon also recalls practice from the Communist years, when there was a fight for symbolic dominance of the public sphere. Then, religious symbols represented a fight for freedom. Since 1989, the same symbols have come to represent a suppression of pluralism. In

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[163] Ibid., 135-136.

[164] Krzysztof Kowalczyk, *Partie i ugrupowania parlamentarne wobec Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce w latach 1989 - 2011*. (Poland: Przedsiębiorstwo Produkcyjno-Handlowe Zapol Dmochowski, Sobczyk, 2012), 102. Cited from Pots, *The Political Sciene of Religion*, 136.

[165] Katherine Moyes, "Jesus Christ Enthroned as 'King of Poland,'" *The Krakow Post*, November 22, 2016. http://www.krakowpost.com/13911/2016/11/krakow-news-22-november-2016.

Communist Poland, these symbols have fostered an "us versus them" dichotomy in the public sphere, with "us" being the true Poles and "them" the outsiders. Since Communist Poland, the "us" represented Catholic Poles, while the outsiders have transitioned from Communists to non-Catholics. Even the more obvious signs of anti-secularism the Church showed in later decades, such as blatant hate speech, were not exactly different from the speeches and messages of previous decades. A key example, which will be discussed in further depth, is labeling many Jews, Muslims, or those not belonging to the Catholic Church, as outsiders who have no place in Poland, just as the Communists had no place in Poland.[166]

What this shows is that the Church's values, goals, and tactics have been consistent. The only difference is the amount of power or authority it has held, and citizen's perception of this power. The way that people view the Church is evident in writings on Poland under and after Communism. When writing on the Church during Communist Poland, many authors, including Sabrina Ramet's *The Catholic Church in Polish History*, and Robert Alvis' *White Eagle, Black Madonna*, as well as a number of news articles written during the 1980s, such as "The Church backs Groups in Poland Trying to Keep Gains Made by Solidarity" by Bradely Graham and many more found in both Catholic and main-stream news sources, write on the Church's actions under Communist cast the narrative in a romantic mode, featuring a power struggle between Communism and the underdog, the Church. After Communism, many authors, such as Ramet in the same book mentioned above, have characterized the Church's actions as venomous, trying to take advantage of people and cause political division. While the Church has created this

[166] Adam Zamoyski, "The Problem With Poland's New Nationalism," Foreign Policy, January 27, 2016. https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/27/the-problem-with-polands-new-nationalism/

unfortunate effect within Polish society, it has not actually changed its tactics to gain societal clout. Rather, the people's support for and needs from the Church have changed.

One overwhelming reason why the Church has such authority over Poland today is that during the Communist era, Polish citizens gave the Church the potential to dominate the moral and political field. While the Church is responsible for how much power it has accumulated for itself, and the cost at which it has come, this paper argues that this power was given by, rather than taken from, the Polish people. During Solidarity's legal period and under martial law, the people allowed the Church to act as a voice for themselves, to create space for protests, and be a symbol of the nation. Catholicism became nationalism, and vice versa. Yet the historian Mikolaj Kunicki states that after 1989, the emergence of a legitimate government wherein its citizens were able to express themselves through civic means, as opposed to symbolic ones, caused Poles' vision of national identity to change.[167] While the people's perception of nationhood changed, the Church's did not, and the Church was eager to fill a power vacuum the Communist government left behind.

A second reason for the Church's power has been a matter of perception. Beginning with the Great Novena, some Poles, predominately those belonging to the intelligentsia, did not agree with the idea of the Church representing non-Communists and fighting the government. However, their opinions were overshadowed by the rest of the opposition, who gave overwhelming support to the Church. It was always clear that the Church was on the democratic side under Communism. It supported the people and the fight towards an autonomous government, both things that contemporary people would agree were positive goals. Yet through this fight for the people, the Church was still supporting itself and advocating the restoration of

[167]Kunicki, *Between the Brown and the Red*, 185.

its own rights. While the goals of the Church remain largely the same, its focus and the context in which it operates have changed. While the practices of the Church will be discussed in further detail, it is important to note that the bad image the Church now has is because there is no longer a consensus on its agenda, when just four decades ago there was.

One major theme during this period is the change in values the Church exhibited. Before Communism left Poland, the Polish Catholic Church focused on themes at a macro level, such as national identity, and the idea that Catholicism was a keystone to Poland's history and what it meant to be "Polish." After the Communist regime left, the Church turned its focus to the micro, concerning itself with the morals of family life and individual conscience.[168] This transition of Church politics exacerbated the divide between Catholicism and the secular in Poland, as the Church began to police individuals rather than the nation as a whole.

The Church against Pluralism

This section addresses the ways in which members of the Church have actively tried to stop the spread of secularism in Poland and how they have tried to maintain their moral control over the country. In a 1989 statute concerning Church-state relations, the Church regained its pre-war status, as well as its legal rights and property lost through the Communist government's nationalization process. As the country began to adjust to a non-Communist world, the Church began to translate its confidence and social clout into political activity. The people were still championing the Church as a key factor in the downfall of Communism, religious symbolism decorated cities, and over the prior decade around 80% of the Polish population had been attending weekly Masses.[169] As far as anyone could tell, Poland was certainly a pious, Catholic

[168] Mach, *The Roman Catholic Church*," 68.
[169] Mishtal, *The Politics of Morality*, 29.

nation. Yet as mentioned above, many people's priorities, as well as their political goals, shifted after the Communist government fell.

Once Poland had consolidated its new government in 1990, one of the first laws the Church pushed was the reintroduction of religion, i.e., Catholicism, into schools. The reintroduction of religion in schools was quickly contested as non-Catholic Poles argued against the compulsory study of Catholicism as an ethics course. Soon after, people belonging to other faiths, as well as Catholics, began to denounce the Catholic Church for wanting to be the sole source of moral authority in the country. In response to the protests, the school boards introduced a secular ethics class, but it became mandatory that students take either religion or ethics. Similar to when schools in Communist Poland did not have enough "qualified" clerics to teach religion, ethics classes face a similar problem today.[170] The availability of ethics classes is largely dependent on teacher availability, which leaves many schools in rural areas with only religion courses. Just as the Communist government benefitted from the lack of qualified clerics to teach religion, the Catholic Church today benefits from the lack of qualified ethics teachers. Today, students are opting to take neither ethics nor religion, which current Minister of Education and Science Przemysław Czarnek has stated that by having students refuse the courses, it creates a society wherein people do not think similarly, suggesting that the courses are necessary for a functioning society.[171]

Another controversial law the Church pushed, which would become one of the most controversial laws in contemporary Poland, was an abortion ban. Before the Communist government took control of Poland, Poland's abortion laws had been in accordance with the

[170] Mach, "The Roman Catholic Church," 71.
[171] Agnieszka Wądołowska, "Polish Education Minister to Stop Pupils Dropping Both Religion and Ethics Classes." *NFP*, April 22, 2021.

Vatican's beliefs, which were extremely limiting. As mentioned earlier, after the Communist government expanded the criteria for legal abortions, the number of abortions performed increased by almost 10,000% between 1955 and 1962. Clearly, the desire for abortion was there despite the Church's stance on the matter, and despite the level of devotion to Catholicism that Poles portrayed. Year three of the Great Novena was dedicated to defending unborn lives. Despite the number of abortions being performed, there was still a general support of the theme, or at least a lack of open opposition. Again, citizens supporting the Church while ignoring its moral code shows that they valued the ability to protest through the Church, rather than having a desire to act in accordance with Church teachings.

In 1990 the Ministry of Health declared that contraceptives would no longer be covered by health insurance and in January 1993 both the Sejm and Senate criminalized abortion except in cases of rape or incest, if the mother's health or life was at risk, or if the fetus was damaged beyond repair.[172] While many citizens viewed these laws as extremely limiting, especially since between 1956 and 1993 only 3% of abortions had been performed for those reasons, the Catholic Church kept pushing for laws to be passed where abortion was illegal under all circumstances.[173]

Despite the possibility of the Church believing it was acting as Polish society wished it to, there was widespread public disapproval at the passing of these laws. In 1991, a poll showed that 82% of Poles believed that abortions should not be banned outright and 60% were in favor of access to abortions with little to no restriction.[174] In spite of restrictive access to abortions, they continued to take place; pregnant women had abortions in another country, or the baby was abandoned or given up post-partum. While the religion of these mothers is not known, there is a

[172] Mishtal, *The Politics of Morality*,140.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid., 71.

great likelihood that these women grew up supporting the Church in Communist Poland. Their actions, however, did not exactly reflect the values of the Church.

Private practitioners continued to perform abortions despite their illegality and reproach from the Church. During this time, Dr. Wacław Dec openly announced that he was performing abortions in cases where genetic issues existed. After Dr. Dec's death, his local parish denied him a Catholic burial.[175] While public opinion was divided with respect to the parish's actions, the incident gave real fear to many doctors and hospitals who performed abortions. Soon, it came to be that doctors were refusing abortions to women who were legally qualified to receive one, out of fear of retribution from the Church.[176]

Alongside denying Catholic rites during one's death or a Catholic burial, there also exists the risk of being a social outcast. In an interview by Joanna Mishtal, Dr. Zaremba (first name not given) stated that social as well as financial backlash might occur if a priest knew a doctor who was performing abortions. Members from the doctors church or their colleagues might chastise them for allowing the service to be done if the priest caught word that it was happening whereupon he could "publicly curse [the] practice or he'll say something from the pulpit, like: 'Don't go to this doctor!'"[177] As for women who receive an abortion, the possibility exists of being shunned by their community. Undoubtedly, many priests and church members have caused these individuals social and emotional strife.

Under Communism, the Church still possessed the power to deny a doctor or woman Catholic burial rites if an abortion was performed or received. Yet no record of such a case exists. The only concrete evidence of the Church's battle against abortion over the four decades

[175] Ibid., 50.
[176] Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History,* 204-205.
[177] Mishtal, *The Politics of Morality,* 49-50.

of Communist rule was the third theme during the Great Novena, which was a rather passive fight. After 1989 the Church had the same, if not less, moral support and control over people. With overwhelming support for access to abortions and general gravitation away from the Church, the Church's push for abortion restrictions is a flex of its power rather than a reflection of what Polish society wanted.

Over the 1990s, the left-leaning Sejm presented many drafted bills to liberalize laws that the conservative Senate turned down. In 1993, Senators Zbigniew Bujak and Barbara Labuda gathered more than 1.3 million signatures to support a referendum to liberalize laws on abortions. When the draft was sent to hierarchies within the Church, they replied that morality cannot be the subject of a referendum and pressured the government into rejecting the referendum.[178] Just as the Communist government had been dismissive of all letters the Church had sent it in the prior decades, the Church became dismissive of many citizen's requests to liberalize laws over which it had control.

The power that the Church has been able to wield extends beyond the fearmongering they exert over doctors and politicians and into influencing members of their communities to act aggressively in efforts to achieve the Church's will over society. In 1996, churches began organizing protests in response to the left-leaning Sejm voting to liberalize abortion laws. These protests, along with the pressure of excommunication of law makers, encouraged the Senate to overturn the proposed law. In 2006, the Church organized the first March for Life and Family, which was to take place on the eve of a Sejm vote to liberalize laws on abortion. Since then, the March has become an annual event in Poland.

[178] Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History*, 203.

Some members of the Church have taken direct action in pushing the Church's agenda, even in ways that the Church believes to be too extreme. Radio Maryja, a popular radio station created by Fr. Tadeusz Rydzyk in 1991, was the source of many Church-related controversies throughout the 1990s. The radio station has been reported as being xenophobic and authoritarian and has placed blame for many of Poland's problems on the market economy, Jewish populations, and liberals.[179] Since its founding, the Radio Maryja has built a large Catholic following, many of which consistently listen to and believe in the ideology of the messages given through the radio station, leaving long-lasting impacts on the mentality of the listeners.

The first March for Life and Family, organized by Radio Maryja, had over 40,000 participants. After the protest, the Radio encouraged protestors "to visit parliamentary deputies in their homes and offices and convince them to vote against (the proposed) amendment."[180] Comparatively, during the Great Novena, many protestors met outside of government offices to sing hymns in an effort to annoy officials who were harassing the Church. The most recent march in 2021, which drew thousands of marchers in support of recently tightened abortion laws, even had a theme, "fatherhood," just like during the Great Novena.[181] While it is unlikely that the similarities were conscious, the action that Radio Maryja has spurred highlights the notion that the tactics of the Church have been the same since Communism.

The most recent law concerning abortions has been the Constitutional Tribunals 2020 decision which passed a near-total ban on abortion. For non-viable pregnancies, the woman must

[179] Urszula Turska, "Radio Maryja – Our Lady of Contention", in The Warsaw Voice, No. 46 (17 November 1996), at http://www.warsawvoice.pl/v421/ Media00.html [no longer posted online], 3.
[180] Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History*, 206.
[181] Courtney Mares, "Poland's March for Life and the Family Draws 5,000 People," National News Agency, September 20, 2021. https://www.ncregister.com/cna/poland-s-march-for-life-and-the-family-draws-5-000-people.

carry the fetus to term. The only cases in which an abortion is permitted is if the health of the woman is threatened or if the pregnancy is the result or rape.

Another major topic of division the Church has pushed is equal marriage rights. By 2000, many citizens were calling for an expansion in legislation on equal rights, yet aggression from Catholic extremists and the Church continued. In 2003, Senator Maria Szyszkowska drafted a bill that would give homosexual partners the same legal rights as heterosexual ones, apart from the ability to adopt children. After publication of the draft, Szyszkowska received a death threat for her stance and hierarchs within the Catholic Church sent letters directly to people's homes that stated that Catholics were morally obligated to oppose any laws condoning homosexuality.[182]

Throughout the 1990s and early 2010s, protests took place throughout the country in support of gay rights. These protests would often be joined by right-winged groups who were in accordance with, and supported by, the Church, and acted with animosity towards the protestors. At these protests, clashes would occur as counter-protestors would pelt the marchers with stones and glass bottles and even throw acid at them.[183] After a particularly vicious clash in Krakow in May of 2004, the archbishop stated that the marchers had staged a "demonstration of sin" by advocating for gay rights, while he remained silent on the violence that the counter-protestors inflicted on the marchers.[184]

In 2020, incumbent president Andrzej Duda, ran his re-election campaign on the concept of "LGBT-free zones," wherein LGBT ideology would not be allowed to be publicly shown. During this campaign, he compared to the LGBT ideology to Communist Poland, stating that

[182] Ibid.
[183] Rev. Ernest Ivanovs, pastor of the Reformed Free Church of Poland, in interview with the Piaseczno, July 6, 2004.
[184] Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History*, 199.

> "The generation of my parents didn't battle for 40 years to throw communist ideology out of schools, so that it couldn't be imposed on children … for us to agree to a different ideology, and one even more dangerous to people. An ideology that hides deep intolerance under phrases of respect and tolerance,"[185]

While Duda and many right-wing supporters may see LGBT ideology as an imposition to their beliefs, many supporters of equal marriage rights claim the opposite. They state that these LGBT-free zones are creating an atmosphere comparative to what the Communist regime created, wherein they cannot openly express their beliefs due to social persecution.[186] Since Duda's re-election, LGBT activists state that homophobia is rising throughout the nation and that towns are given cash incentives by the government to declare their towns as LGBT-free.

As many of these new laws in Poland are aligned with Catholic beliefs, priests and bishops are showing their support at political rallies. During a right-wing protest in April 2020, the ABC news reporter Eric Campbell stated that, during the rally, "souvenir stands [were] selling anti-Muslim t-shirts [and there were] angry young men wearing skull masks and chanting 'faggots forbidden'… [while] priests [stood] behind them clutching rosaries" in support not only of conservatism, but the hate language.[187] By standing as a part of the protest, the presence of these few priests was an endorsement of the xenophobic and homophobic protests. Of course, this is a generalization and only a small percentage of priests were present that these protests, but their presence and the fact that they wear cassocks rather than regular clothing symbolizes it's not just the individual that supports the protests, but that the Catholic Church endorses it as well.

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[185] Jan Cienski, "Poland's Duda turns to LGBTQ attacks as election campaign falters," *Politico*, June 14, 2020. https://www.politico.eu/article/poland-presidential-election-2020-andrzej-duda-turns-to-lgbtq-attacks-as-election-campaign-falters/

[186] Ibid.

[187] Eric Campbell, "Poland's Government is Leading a Catholic Revival. It Has Minorities and Liberals Worried." *ABC News*, April 27, 2020. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-28/poland-catholic-church-revival-lgbt-rights/12180704

Just as the anti-Communist priests were national heroes, who assured that Solidarity members were on the morally upright side of the fight, the anti-secular priests today are also reassuring their followers that they are to be commended for their fight to bring God's will to earth.

In recent decades, hierarchs of the Church have even silenced some lower-level clergy if they spoke against the Church's political stance or practices going on within the Church.[188] One of the main reasons many Catholics are choosing to leave the Church is the sex abuse scandals. In February 2019, Mother Jolanta Olech, Poland's most senior nun, had been banned by the Church from posting on social media after revealing the cycle of sex abuse of nuns by both priests and bishops that occur within her order.[189] Another case, a priest (name not given) was convicted of abusing several young girls, yet he was allowed to continue working with children after a bishop stated that it was the girls' fault for who wanted "closeness to the pastor."[190] Oftentimes, the punishment that a priest or bishop receives for sexually abusing someone is either suspension or not being allowed to work with children rather than being removed from their position entirely. Polish theologian Stanislaw Obirek commented that village priests are often "equal to Christ" in the power they are able to weild, yet the fact that people are beginning to expose and fight against this abuse shows that the Church is no longer a monolith.[191] Additionally, only lower priests, rather than bishops or any high-rank members, have been silenced for speaking out against the abuse. Undoubtedly, there are bishops who are against the sex abuse, yet almost none speak out about it. As under martial law, it was the lower priests who supported Solidarity who the Church displaced or silenced when the government made threats.

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[188] Potz, *The Political Science of Religion*, 154-155.
[189] Jonathan Luxmoore, "Polish Nun 'Silenced' for Speaking Out on Abuse," *The Tablet* (London), February 19, 2019. https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/11385/polish-nun-silenced-for-speaking-out-on-abuse-
[190] Monika Sieradzka, "Polish Priests Deny Bishop Amid Scandal," *DW* (Berlin), May 30, 2020. https://www.dw.com/en/polish-priests-defy-bishop-amid-pedophilia-scandal/a-53634347
[191] Ibid.

From 2004 to 2014, the Vatican has defrocked 848 priests and has given lesser penalties to 2,572.[192] Throughout Pope Francis' pontificate since 2013, he has made a point to address the sex abuse that occurs throughout every level of the Church. Since then, the Vatican has issued statements on the definition and procedure process of prosecuting clerics who are accused of abuse.[193] Despite the Vatican's efforts to address the sexual abuse in churches, allegations continue to come forward.

A poll in 2012 showed that while 93% of Poles identify themselves as Catholic, 85% believe that the Church should not be involved in politics, especially by telling congregations whom to vote for, lobbying the government, or threatening lawmakers and congregation members with excommunication.[194] Despite the majority of Poles still being self-proclaimed Catholics, many of them respect the ideas that religion should not be forced on others, and that their country should not be led by their religious institute. The Church is comprised of members of all levels of piety and activism. The negative image that a small, militant group of people brings should not define the whole Catholic community. In the past two decades there has been a growing number of Poles have left the Church due to its position on abortion, its involvement in politics, and its slow action towards sex scandals, yet they are keeping their personal faith to God. [195] A 2020 poll taken by *Rzeczpospolita* found that only 9% of Poles 18-29 have a positive

[192] "Vatican Reveals How Many Priests Defrocked for Sex Abuse Since 2004," *CBS News*, May 7, 2014. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/vatican-reveals-how-many-priests-defrocked-for-sex-abuse-since-2004/#:~:text=The%20data%20showed%20that%20since,another%202%2C572%20to%20lesser%20penalties.

[193] "Vademecum On Certain Points of Procedure in Treating Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors Committed by Clerics," Vatican, June 5, 2022. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20200716_vademecum-casi-abuso_en.html.

[194] Ibid., 151.

[195] Andrew Higgins, "Amid Scandals and Politics, Poland's Youths Lose Faith in Catholic Church," New York Times (New York), November 28, 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/28/world/europe/poland-catholic-church-youth.html

view of the Church.[196] These figures, combined with the increase in apostacies, shows that not only is the Catholic Church no longer a monolith, but it no longer has a hold over Poland's moral sphere.

The Polish poet Czesław Miłosz stated in 1995 that "the [Catholic] Church was seeking for itself the status and authority that earlier belonged to the Communist party and that the people began to fear the priests and bishops and look at religion with disgust because of the 'sins of triumphalism' and the tendency towards established state religion."[197] From the public sphere to student education to policy making, the Catholic Church directly impacts many aspects of Polish society. While many of the Church's contemporary actions remain similar to those it took the Communist era, the Church, now in a dominant position, also unconsciously imitates many of the actions the Communist government took to stop the Church's influence decades ago. Most prominently, the Church disregards the desires of the majority of the population, which becomes problematic when the Church is heavily involved in law making. By flexing its authority over lawmakers, the Church hinders the democratic process, wherein many express a desire for a liberalization laws surrounding marriage equality and access to birth control and abortions.

If one were to compare the behavior of the Church under and after Communism, the tactics the Church has employed to ensure its survival as well as its ideals have largely stayed the same. In both eras, the Church has had a firm stance on its values. It has advocated against abortion, birth control, divorce, atheism, secularism, and the loss of its own influence on Polish

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[196] Daniel Tilles, "Only 9% of Young People in Poland View Catholic Church Positively, Finds Poll," *Notes From Poland* (Krakow), November 16, 2020. https://notesfrompoland.com/2020/11/16/only-9-of-young-people-in-poland-view-catholic-church-positively-finds-poll/

[197] Milosz Czeslaw, "Panstwo wyznaniowe" in *Metafizyczna pauza*, (Krakow: Znak, 1995). Cited from Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 222.

society and law making, just in different contexts. The most obvious reason why its unchanging values have been taken differently in contemporary politics is simply because much of society has adopted a stance of moral relativity, the view that moral judgements are dependent on the individual, rather than collectively following the teachings of a religious institution. A 2017 poll taken by Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej found that only 15% of participating Poles agreed that proper beliefs of morality stem from God, while around 70% believe that morality is subjective to individuals.[198] Combined with the Church's allowance of its priests and its lay communities to take an aggressive stance against groups that to not conform to the Catholic beliefs, it becomes evident as to why the Church's hold on Poland is not as strong as it once appeared to be.

[198] "Zasady Moralne a Religia," *Centrum Badania Ppinii Społecznej,* 2017. Cited from Potz, *Policial Science of Religion*, 151.

Discussion

Despite the Catholic Church's hegemonic position over Poland, many numbers reflect the fact that there is a divide between Polish citizens and their government. A poll taken in 2005 showed that 95% of Poles identified themselves as members of the Catholic Church. Of this overwhelming majority, only 66% claimed to have followed the teachings of the Church. In 2014, just nine years later, the same survey showed that only 39% of Polish Catholics believed in and actively followed the Church's teachings.[199] In 2016, 70% of respondents to a poll that they believed that it is up to individuals to create their own morals, rather than follow any formal teachings of a Church or any institution.[200] Considering these numbers, how has the Church maintained such authority?

First, it is important to understand the consequence of the religion acting as a civic one. In 2014, 95% of Poles considered themselves Catholics despite only 39% believing in and adhering to the Church's teachings. In part, the disparity between these numbers is because throughout Poland's history, the Catholic Church has wielded its authority to employ the faith as a civic one to accomplish its goals. The instrumentalization of the Church's narrative of Polish history began long before the Communist era. While Catholic narratives of Poland's history exist from both the founding of the state and the later middle ages, the narratives of the past two centuries have had a much more prominent effect on current thinking. In modern history, this idea of "Polish as Catholic" was employed after the Third Partition in an effort to unite "us," those who identified themselves as Poles, versus "them," the Russians and Prussians. The "us" became recognizable by the Catholic faith, despite Jews, Protestants, and other religious minorities joining the Uprising of 1863. After independence was gained, these minority groups

[199] Potz, *Political Science of Religion*, 151.
[200] Ibid.

experienced severe discrimination from the Catholic community. Referring back to the study by James Bjork, the Russian territory of Poland where the Uprising took place was the least pious of all the former territories. Similarly, during the Great Novena this tactic of civil religion was once again by the Church and non-Communists, causing secular or non-Catholics are once again being attacked because they oppose the Church as a civic representor of the nation.

This conclusion that Catholicism exists largely as a civic faith in Poland is not surprising when compared to another set of numbers. Between 1981 and 1986, when Solidarity existed underground, the number of Polish youth who proclaimed themselves to be practicing Catholics rose from 32.2% to 66.2%.[201] As Sabrina Ramet points out it is unlikely that the number of Poles practicing Catholicism increased by more than double due to people believing in God or desiring to adhere to the Church's teachings.[202] Most likely, the steep increase of church-goers was because of what the Church became to be to the people, more so than what the Church actually was. To the people, the Church acted as their defender against the oppressive regime, it offered physical aid and emotional support, parishes opened up their doors so that underground activity might continue under martial law. In 1978, the Polish Bishop Ignacy Tokarczuk stated that "only a short while ago, people viewed the Church as an abode of darkness, as a reactionary force. Today they see in the same Church ... [as] a protector of culture and human rights."[203] When the oppressor was taken away in 1989, the Church began to lose its status as the counter-cultural defender of Polish values, and people once again began to see the Church as a reactionary force.

How, then, has the Catholic Church been so influential in Poland's politics? For the most part, it has been through voter mobilization, Polish-Catholic nationalists employing the narrative

[201] Leonid Luks, *Katholizismus und Politische Macht im Kommunistischen Polen 1945–1989. Die Anatomie einer Befreiung* (Köln/Weimar/Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1993), 160.
[202] Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History*, 183.
[203] Luks, *Katholizismus und Politische Macht*, 104.

the Church re-created in the 1960s as well as the tactics (and the perception of these tactics) that the Church has employed to mobilize its lay community. When speaking about laws and political rights, the Church presents its causes as morally "correct" while others stances are not in favor with God's principles. As Maciej Potz points out, because these topics (abortion, gay rights, education etc.,) are presented as moral issues, stemming from a supernatural source, they are non-arbitrary and therefore non-negotiable.[204] Whereas compromise is essential to the democratic process, the Church and its mobilized voters would find compromise a failure because morality cannot be compromised. The idea that the congregation can either do God's will on earth or oppose His will by not fighting for it explains why much of the Catholic community in Poland fervently participates in marches, protests, and voter mobilization. In their eyes, to fight for their truth is to be in God's favor, despite what it takes to reach their goal.

While the personal faith that people experience is not under attack, it is the deployment of the faith as a civic religion that has caused an aggressive atmosphere in contemporary Poland. There is a connection of events that has caused the nationalist religion of today, but the causes cannot be celebrated while the result is vilified. Some events that created a skewed narrative of Polish Catholicism under Communism include the prisoners of martial law praying as a form of refuge, citizens finding comfort in Fr. Popiełuszko's fervent sermons, and the opposition using Church symbols to represent pluralism and autonomy. On the outside, Poland certainly would have looked like a pious nation. Yet inwardly the support the Church had was amplified because of the extreme distress citizens went through under Communism. After the Communist party left, this high of freedom subsided and the Church began pushing its agenda, support fell drastically because the needs of the people were no longer aligned with the ideals of the Church.

[204] Potz, *Political Science of Religion*, 38.

The values of the Church have largely remained constant between from the Communist period until now. During the Communist era, the Church in Poland fought for religion to stay in schools and desired to be included in government decision-making, all while mobilizing the lay community to protest laws that were not in the Church's interests. The Church has had the same agenda since the 1940s. The Church as an institution has sought self-preservation first and has presented the resistance or advocacy of certain laws as the lay community's moral responsibility. The only change has been how this agenda is perceived by society. This change was made more clear after the Communist regime left Poland and through the secularization of Polish society, wherein Poles no longer needed the Church's support. Brian Porter-Szűcs points out that the conservative group does not view the democratic capitalism today as a victory against Communism, but rather as simply slightly closer to center on the political scale.[205] This concept helps to clarify why it is the right fights so hard for their ideological views to dominate the political and moral sphere.

[205] Porter- Szűcs, "Exclusionary Egalitarianism," 91.

Conclusion

Many authors have written on the Church during Solidarity and under martial law and how it advanced the peoples' position in the movement, as well as the political dominance of the Church now, but there has been little research on the type of relationship dynamics the people have had with the Church throughout this timeline. Additionally, there exists a gap in literature that examines the similarities of the Church's actions throughout Communist Poland and after 1989. While the relationship of any people with a powerful institution is complex and multifaceted, this paper has identified several key elements that help to better define this relationship. Through reexamining the motives and decisions that both Poles and the Polish Catholic Church have made since the 1960s, a better understanding on the relationship between the people and the Church has been made.

First, in Communist Poland when there was no expressive outlet for independent political discourse and the majority of channels existed underground, the Church held the ability to be the loudest voice for the people. As the only source of pluralism in Poland's public sphere, the Church was able to take in anyone who identified as non-Communist, not just intelligentsia or workers, and it held enough social weight so that the government had to cooperate with it. These factors made the Church, as a physical and spiritual place, a key factor in not only dissent, but support for one another. Through this, the Church came to represent the people as well as the idea of a Poland that was free of Communist rule. A type of exchange began to occur through this relationship, wherein people's devotion was given to the Church in exchange for the Church to be an advocate for the people. The people gave the Church its political power. Due to this, after 1989, it was easier for the Church to use this authority it was granted by the people to dominate Polish politics rather than remain in the symbolic realm. One woman that Joanna

Mishtal interviewed on the topic stated that "the reason that people didn't mobilize was because there was an enormous trust of the [C]hurch, because the [C]hurch was helping [them] win freedom."[206] Poles felt a debt was owed to the Church for its support in Solidarity, and after 1989 the Church began to expect some sort of "repayment" for its support.[207] As predicted, during the Church's extreme pressure after 1989 to create laws to aid the Church's presence, Primate Glemp stated that the Church was "fighting before others joined, [it] deserve[s] the victory."[208] By this statement, it is clear that Glemp saw the post-1989 political field as something that was owed to the Church.

Second, under martial law a point began to emerge in how the people used the Church, which shows the nature of how the people viewed the Church, and the distinction between upper and lower clergy. The hierarchs of the Church who were stuck between supporting Solidarity and having to deal with pressure from the government to tell the people to not partake in dissension, were relatively uninvolved in the revolution and received a lot of resentment from Poles for their passive stance or comments to submit to the regime. Conversely, parish priests, who had closer connections with their communities, offered the spaces for ability for underground activity to take place and protests, as well as emotional support, became loved by the people and, in Fr. Popiełuszko's case, an embodiment of Solidarity. It also came to be that the people supported their local church, but not the Church as an institution. The people attended weekly Masses, and, when the priest was anti-regime, people organized on church grounds and supported their local priests. Yet, when the bishops or hierarchs asked something of the people that was in line with the regime's speech, such as to submit to the regime's authority and not partake in underground

[206] Mishtal, *The Politics of Morality, 18.*
[207] Ibid.
[208] Jane Curry, "Pluralism in Eastern Europe: Not Will It Last But What Is It?" *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 26, no. 4 (1993): 446–61.

activity, the people rejected and even criticized the Church. To an extent, Solidarity supporters used the faith when it benefitted their own beliefs and cause. While this is not meant to belittle the emotions or devotion that individuals have experienced, it does aid in explaining the increase in devotion Poles had to their faith under Communism, and the decline after 1989. While an increase in devotion did occur, it was for an ultimate goal to be achieved. This conclusion shows that Poles were devoted to their faith as a civic tool, rather than simply because it was their religion.

Third, there is a link between the nationalism created during Communist Poland and the nationalism that exists today in Poland. The nationalism that was reignited during the Great Novena that linked Poland with Catholicism was strengthened during Solidarity and under martial law to represent "us versus them," or, "true Poles" from those who don't belong in Poland. This concept has carried into contemporary politics wherein those who do not conform to teachings of the Catholic faith are seen by Catholics as the outsiders. Instead of the just Communists being labeled as outsiders, today the label extends to ethnicities rather than simply those belonging to a different ideology than the Church's.

The political clout the Church was given during communism had both positive and negative impacts. While it gave Poles not only a voice, but hope, during Communism, it created long-lasting negative effects post-1989. This includes Church control over equal marriage rights, women's bodily autonomy, and students' education. When historians, authors, or news sources, such as Sabrina Ramet, Jozef Tischner, Maryjane Osa, and Marian Mazgaj, create a pro-Church history of Solidarity, they are disregarding the contemporary impact of the Church overstepping its place. The position of the Church during Communism cannot be praised while the contemporary position be vilified.

In the last few decades, media coverage of the Catholic Church has been largely negative, focusing on the sex abuse scandals, exposure of clergymen who supported the Communist regime, and the ways the Church has been promoting its agenda. Poland undoubtedly still has priests who have positive influences on their communities, but their role in society is less obvious than that of the Church hierarchs and, therefore, they are of no great concern in the media's eyes. It appears that those with the loudest voices, i.e., those who wish to impose their moral views on others (across the entire political spectrum), create a reputation for their entire group. This problem extends to many different sections of Christianity today, where a negative picture of the religion prevails because of the actions of a mobilized minority. In the case of Poland, the difference is that those with this louder voice make up a large portion of the population due to the historic role of Catholicism in the country, which, combined with the aggressive tactics of the Church, has allowed the Church to dictate many laws.

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