



OXFORD JOURNALS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Industrialization and Popular Religiosity in Poland

Author(s): Wladyslaw Piwowarski

Source: *Sociological Analysis*, Winter, 1976, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Winter, 1976), pp. 315-320

Published by: Oxford University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3710020>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Oxford University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Sociological Analysis*

JSTOR

Industrialization and Popular Religiosity in Poland

Wladyslaw Piwowarski

The Catholic University of Lublin (Poland)

The extant empirical research on religiosity in Poland is used to test the hypotheses about effects of industrialization. Traditional, popular religiosity remains high, and the instances of diminished religiosity point to increased indifference rather than atheism.

A widespread opinion that Polish Catholicism is a peculiar phenomenon in Europe is based on the recognition of mass attendance at both obligatory and non-obligatory religious practices, on obedience to the church's precepts and attachment to the Hierarchy, found especially in the actions organized during the Great Novena in preparation for the millennial celebrations (Siciński, 1966). This feature of Polish Catholicism is all the more interesting because Poland belongs to the Socialist bloc. It might seem that despite the changes brought on by intense industrialization of the country and by a "secularization" program issuing from the political authorities, Polish Catholicism is maintaining its traditional position in the society and in the nation.

The opinion quoted above should of course be verified by results of the empirical research which has been conducted for nearly twenty years at different sociological centers in Poland. Unfortunately, field research in our country is often fragmentary. There is no research that would cover the country as a whole with the exception of some initiatives of the Public Opinion Research Center of the Polish Radio and TV.¹ Further, it has not been possible to conduct a survey of religious practices in all the dioceses of Poland.² The most advanced studies are some monographs which take into account religious problems in regions undergoing a process of industrialization.

In the publications about general problems by lay sociologists there are reports about the decrease of religious practices, the decline of the role of the clergy, the loosening of bonds with the Church, the decline in the importance of the patterns of religious behavior, the increase of deviant behavior in religious morality. In short, sociologists note an inverse ratio between the intensification of the industrialization processes and the lowering of the level of religiosity (Kubiak, 1972). W. Markiewicz writes: "We must, however, deal with the fact that together with the modernization of the local population, religious indiffer-

¹Spoleczeństwo polskie w badaniach ankietowych Ośrodka Badania Opinii Publicznej przy "Polskim Radio i TV" (lata 1958-1964). Przegląd zebranych materiałów pod redakcją Andrzeja Sicińskiego.

²The 122 Conference of the Polish Episcopacy forbade carrying out field research on religious practices in Poland.

ence will spread, in accordance with a certain regularity, which has been observed in all highly industrialized regions" (1962:282).

This hypothesis, however, seems to lack support. The Catholic University of Lublin has a center for research where we would look for any sort of backing. The early research there (Bigdoń, 1964) was preoccupied with the impact that early industrialization—from the middle of the nineteenth century to World War I—had on religiosity in Upper Silesia. The conclusions were that there were not the negative aspects the lay sociologists had predicted. "The pastoral care of the parish and Church institutions was appropriate." Indeed it seemed to be the principal factor counteracting the negative influence of industrialization.

Three monographic studies about Nova Huta, Plock and Pulawy were devoted to the consequences of industrialization in the sphere of Church and religious life after World War II.

Nova Huta is quite a new town. It was founded only after World War II, near the Lenin metallurgic plant. In 1970 the town's population was already about 160,000. Socio-religious research carried out in 1970-71 by S. Karsznia (1973) covered only the area of one parish with about 45,000 inhabitants, mostly Catholics. The author gathered his basic material by making a survey of 515 persons in exploring the problem of the study: "Can a parish as a territorial unit with constitutive elements of a social group continue in a modern mobile society differentiated ideologically and professionally?"

Plock is a town whose development was influenced by the construction of petrochemical works. In 1970 its population was about 72,000. The socio-religious research carried out by J. Mariański (1972) in 1969-70 covered the area of one parish with the population of about 30,000, mostly Catholics. The author gathered his basic material by making a survey of 557 persons. He examined three aspects of the social bonds within the parish: religious values, communal activity of the parish and identification with the parish.

Pulawy, like Plock, developed because of the construction of nitrogen works. In 1970 its population was about 36,000, mostly Catholics. Socio-religious research carried out in 1968-71 by W. Piwowarski (1971, 1973) covered the whole town and four country parishes situated near Pulawy. Apart from the country parishes, a survey of 941 persons of the town population was made. The religiosity of the population of the town which has recently undergone a process of industrialization was the main problem of this work.

In the examination of the influence of industrialization on the situation of religion and of the parish in the process of industrialization, we take as our starting-point and our reference system the model of popular (traditional) religiosity, examined and described by Polish culturologists and sociologists in the past.³ It is a specific model with characteristically positive and negative features. Its positive features are: a deep and emotional attachment to the "faith of the fathers," mass attendance in religious practices concerning the cult of the Saints and especially the cult of the Virgin Mary, a strong bond with the parish as the

³Cf. S. Czarnowski: *Kultura religijna wiejskiego ludu polskiego*. W:Dziela, vol. I, Warszawa 1956, pp. 88-107.

local community and with the “national” Church (“a Pole is a Catholic”) and a bond with the clergy. Its negative features are: a fideistic attitude with no adequate intellectual base and a very special morality, based on obedience to the Church’s commands concerning the observance of rites and practical morals. The model was formed in Poland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, among the gentry and the peasants. The burghers and the working class were of no importance in Poland. The model was, therefore, predominant and we can add that it has survived to our time both among the country people and middle class. For since World War II the population of Polish towns has been mostly of peasant origin. That model, therefore, can be accepted as the point of departure in the study of the changes of the religiosity of Polish society.

The studies mentioned above make it possible to verify two complementary hypotheses: 1. Traditional popular religiosity in Poland has retained its fairly high level in spite of the intense industrialization of the country, because of the simultaneous occurrence of factors which seem especially favorable to popular religiosity: the close links between Catholic religiosity and Polish national tradition; traditional pastoral methods and the Socialist system.

a) *The close links.* Since the times of the partitions Catholicism has been a symbol of national identification and national independence in Poland. A strong family, regional and national tradition favored this situation. Religion has been regarded as a cultural value inherited from one’s ancestors. This tradition finds its expression in a bond with the nation (and not with the state), and has survived to our time.

b) *Traditional pastoral methods.* In spite of a lot of hard work, the Polish clergy apply traditional methods in influencing the masses. Their pastoral work is predominantly addressed to the average Catholic and it does not take enough into account the growing differentiation of religious needs. Horizontal structures are nearly quite “overwhelmed” by the vertical structures and this favors passivity and uniformity.

c) *The Socialist system.* Poland is building Socialism. In the first stage of development of this system the main effort is to satisfy the basic needs and necessities of the population and not the more differentiated and developed individual needs. The situation does not favor the development of practical materialism and consumer attitudes, which seem to be the reasons for religious indifference in the West. Furthermore the factors that used to cause anti-clericalism in Poland before the War, such as great Church estates, no taxation of the clergy, the political influence of the bishops, have been abolished by the Socialist State. Thus Socialism is favorable in this sense for religiosity in Poland.

2. It is characteristic, however, that although symptoms of infidelity towards institutional religion occur, it is religious indifference, and not atheism, that is spreading in Poland. The phenomenon of individual religious attitudes, which in highly developed societies is connected with the formation of private (non-institutional) religiosity, is rare in Poland.

Findings

In the results of the research in the towns mentioned above, we observe a high percentage of believers in all three towns: Nova Huta 84%, 12.4% of whom are deeply religious; Plock—82.4% are believers, 22.4% of whom are deeply religious. It is characteristic, however, that among the believers and

deeply religious persons there are more women than men. In spite of the large percentage of believers it should be noted that the religious attitudes of Catholics are neither conscious nor deep. Most of them give family, education, tradition and the influence of the local community as the reasons for their religious attitude. The deeply religious persons explain their religious attitudes in the same way. Only a small number among those studied give personal choice as the reason for their relation to religion. We can, therefore, draw the conclusion that the religiosity of the examined Catholics is mostly cultural, traditional and connected with their milieu.

In all three towns the percentage of non-believers is low. In Nova Huta it is 5.3%, in Plock 5.9%, in Pulawy 4%. Some of those people are attached to religious traditions. The rest are religiously indifferent. In the three towns they amount to 10% and more. The main reason for discarding "the faith of the fathers" is practical materialism. "We do not need religion, we do not benefit from it." This attitude, resulting more from religious indifference than from atheism, seems to be growing in various social circles. This would support the hypothesis that the basic changes of religiosity in Poland find their expression in religious indifference rather than in atheism.

In all the examined towns religious ignorance is very high. Although a low level of religious knowledge has always been one of the main characteristics of Polish Catholicism, in the past it did not constitute a real danger to the religious life of Catholicism. Nowadays religious ignorance is one of the reasons for religious doubts which are becoming more and more frequent, as well as of the denial of the basic truths of religion. Those Catholics who do not possess a coherent system of religious beliefs do not identify themselves with the Church in the sphere of ideology. We may say that the less coherent the system of religious beliefs, the lower the degree of identification with the Church as an institution. It is characteristic that in the examined towns, in spite of the widespread religious ignorance, there are more people who accept certain religious truths, than people who have a real knowledge of those truths in proportion to their general education. The hypothesis according to which the higher the lay education the lower the religious education finds its verification to a certain extent, leaving aside the coefficients of the acceptance of the faith. In Nova Huta 70.9% believe in reward and punishment after death, in Plock 56.7%, in Pulawy 69.8%; in Nova Huta 81.6% believe in the divinity of Christ, in Plock 72.1%, in Pulawy 84.3%; in Nova Huta 57.8% believe in the resurrection of the dead, in Plock 44.5%, in Pulawy 50.5%. Here again we notice some differences according to the sex of the respondents, to the advantage of women. It is interesting that for instance in Plock more people believe that the Virgin Mary is the Mother of God (75.4%), than that Christ is God-Man (72.1%).

In religious practices it is observed that, just as in the past, they are the main expression of the religiosity of Catholics. Nowadays, however, we observe the diminishing of paraliturgical and non-obligatory practices as well as a decline in the participation in obligatory practices, especially Sunday mass. In Nova Huta around 35% attend Sunday mass, in Plock around 30%, in Pulawy around 30%. In Nova Huta about 70% go to Easter Holy Communion, in Plock about 60%, in Pulawy about 80%.

Apart from the intellectual element, the element of consistency remains the weakest side of the religiosity of the Catholics covered by our survey. In comparison with the traditional model, there is more questioning of the Church's requirements in the sphere of matrimonial and family morality and deviations in moral behavior (abortion, intemperance, thefts of common property, hooliganism, etc.) are becoming more common. With regard to the rule forbidding abortion, in Nova Huta 52.8% accept it without reservations, in Plock 37.2%, in Pulawy 64.2%. It seems that the influence of the Church on the morality of Catholics is declining in a considerable way. What is more, Catholics have begun to think of moral principles as something independent of religion.

As for the opinion about the clergy, it has been stated that about one-third of the Catholics treat priests in a traditional way, i.e. consider them priests in every situation; one-third treat them in a more modern way, i.e. think of them as priests only when they are fulfilling their priestly duties; and one-third treat them as "officials" who are needed by the society only when it wants to fulfill the requirements of tradition. In Nova Huta 53.8% would like to have personal contact with a priest concerning religious and moral questions; in Plock 38.6%, in Pulawy 56.1%. This shows that the authority of a priest in the surveyed circles is not high. The opinion about the Church authorities' right to interfere in matters of conscience, which has been examined in Plock, is a good example. It appears that 49.9% question the Pope's right to issue directions binding Catholics in conscience, 55.7% question the bishop's right to issue such orders, 58.7% question the parish priest's right, and 42.8% question the confessor's right. The authority of the latter remains the highest in questions of conscience.

In what concerns the parish, it has been found that the process of industrialization is conducive to the disintegration of the traditional local community, which used to be the basis of the "parish life." On the other hand, it does not contribute to the formation of a new type of parish, based on religious links, among other things, because of the lack of the small religious communities. Examining the problem of parish bonds, Mariański, Karsznia and Piwowarski have shown that in Plock 5.6% identify completely with the parish, in Nova Huta 4.5% and in Pulawy 10%. On the other hand, 16.1% do not identify with the parish at all in Plock, in Nova Huta 21% and 40% in Pulawy. The remaining groups of Catholics are "customers" or "sympathizers" of the parish, with no socially and religiously mutual links. The parish in an industrialized environment, therefore, takes on the shape of the aggregate. In Nova Huta women are more closely connected with the parish than men; older people have closer connections with the parish than young people; people with only elementary education have closer connections with the parish than people with higher education. It must be added that in Pulawy the lack of a parish Church has a considerable influence on the people's consciousness of identification with the parish. A small chapel is used as a parish church only by a small part of the parishioners.

The coefficients of religiosity which we have reported make it possible to draw the conclusion that traditional popular religiosity persists in all its main aspects in Poland, in spite of intense processes of industrialization. We can say

that it is that model which continues to prevail in Polish society. Accordingly, however, certain changes can be observed, especially in the three following parameters: religious beliefs, religious practices and the bond with the parish. There is also the decline of the Church and the clergy's authority in the society, for the circles of liberal and "disobedient" Catholics are growing. We do not observe, however, any new forms of religiosity, either an institutional but morally intensified religiosity, or private (non-institutional) religiosity. It is probable that in the future those two tendencies will appear, because in spite of pressure proceeding from the authorities, atheism gains very little ground.

REFERENCES

- Bigdoń, R. 1964. Wpływ uprzemysłowienia na kształtowanie życia religijnego. Na przykładzie parafii NMP w Bytomiu od połowy XIX wieku do pierwszej wojny światowej. Lublin: Archiwum Uniwersytetu Katolickiego.
- Czarnowski, S. 1956. Kultura religijna wiejskiego ludu polskiego. W: *Dziela*, vol. I, Warszawa.
- Karsznia, S. 1973. Przynależność do parafii katolickiej w nowym środowisku wielkomiejskim. Studium psycho-socjologiczne parafii Nowa Huta-Mogila. Lublin: Archiwum Uniwersytetu Katolickiego.
- Kubiak, H. 1972. Religijność a środowisko społeczne. Studium zmian religijności pod wpływem ruchów migracyjnych ze wsi do miasta. Kraków.
- Majka, J. 1966. "Jaki jest katolicyzm polski?" *Znak* 2:272-293.
- Mariański, J. 1972. Wież społeczna parafii miejskiej w rejonie uprzemysławianym. Studium Socjologiczne. Lublin: Archiwum Uniwersytetu Katolickiego.
- Markiewicz, W. 1962. Społeczne procesy uprzemysłowienia. Poznań.
- Piwowski, W. 1971. Religijność wiejska w warunkach urbanizacji. Studium socjologiczne. Warszawa.
1973. Religijność miejska w warunkach uprzemysłowienia (na przykładzie Puław). *Studia Warmińskie*. Vol. X:401-450.
- Siciński, A. 1966. Społeczeństwo polskie w badaniach ankietowych Ośrodka Badania Opinii Publicznej przy "Polskim Radio i TV" (lata 1958-1964). Warszawa.