

The Evolution of Migrant Mobilization in One Polish Diaspora Community: A Case Study of the Polish Catholic Society Eindhoven*

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This research concerns the transformation of one migrant community. It is based on an analysis of selected documents presenting Polish migrant associations in the Netherlands from the beginning of 1950s until the 1990s. The study offers an analysis of the minority mobilization process, with a focus on migrant organizational agency. It is a case study devoted to the Polish community in Eindhoven and its association, which was a local branch of migrant organization operating at a national level. The main sources used in the study are archival records, including organizational statute, circulars, information leaflets, press releases, official and private correspondence, bulletins, protocols, organizational reports, official declarations, and minutes from meetings. In addition, interviews and biographical data are taken into account. Most of the written sources were obtained from the archive of Franciszek Łyskawa, a Polish migrant soldier who settled in Eindhoven shortly after World War II. Over the course of the following decades, he remained an active member of the diaspora while also integrating into the host society, and he became a Dutch citizen. The study shows the evolution of this Polish migrant community from the precarious situation of the early postwar years through the development of immigrants' associations and institutions which emerged in parallel to efforts to integrate into the multicultural society in the 1960s and 1970s and eventually the gradual decline of activity among the members of this community as immigrants.

Keywords: migrants, refugees, Polish Catholic Society, Franciszek Łyskawa, the Netherlands, mobilization, immigrant community

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Introduction

Historically, Belgium was the primary destination country for Polish migrants heading to the Benelux region. This topic has been addressed in the secondary literature.¹ Therefore, in this study, the aim is to shift the focus to a case from the history of the Polish immigration center in the Netherlands. This paper highlights selected aspects of the organizational experiences of Polish migrants in the latter half of the twentieth century, a period marked by their settlement in the Low Countries which commenced in the late 1940s. According to the studies on the Polish diaspora in Belgium and Netherlands,² this wave was triggered by wartime migration, including soldiers and displaced persons (DPs). Many Poles who belonged to this cohort ventured to distant shores, predominantly seeking opportunities overseas, particularly in the United States, Canada, Australia, and Brazil. In the history of Polish immigration, they formed an important wave of migration to the region.³ Earlier, from 1908 to 1939, a significant number of Polish migrants arrived seeking employment opportunities, including indirect or intermediate Polish migration movements via Germany and France and a group of irregular immigrants. At the time, immigrants were mainly employed in the coal mines of Limburg province, and they remained focused on daily issues and were not politically active.⁴ Still, even with this movement into some areas of the Netherlands, Belgium was the main destination for Poles who were heading to this part of Europe. In the 1980s, yet another wave of Polish refugees emerged, again primarily seeking refuge in Belgium. This wave was inextricably linked with the “Solidarity” social movement and consisted of individuals who often sought only temporary sanctuary in the country against the backdrop of the tumultuous events unfolding in their homeland.⁵ Taking into consideration the migration movements described above, it should be highlighted that in the second half of the 1940s (the initial point when considering the case study), the Polish diaspora in the Netherlands was not a big one, consisting of some 5,000 to 6,000 people.⁶

Excluding the post-accession migration of the 2000s, the Polish diaspora residing in Belgium and the Netherlands until the 1990s can be described as

1 Eder, *Dzieje Polonii belgijskiej (w zarysie)*; Eder, “Polska diaspora w Belgii i Holandii”; Goddeeris, *Polonia belgijska w pierwszych latach po II wojnie światowej*.

2 Eder, “Polska diaspora w Belgii i Holandii.”

3 Ibid.

4 Kołodziejak, “Polacy w Królestwie Niderlandów – przeszłość i teraźniejszość,” 48–49.

5 Eder, “Polska diaspora w Belgii i Holandii.”

6 Gul-Rechlewicz, “Immigrants in the Netherlands: Second-class Citizens? The Polish Case,” 110.

relatively diverse in terms of its socioeconomic profile.⁷ In addition to the wartime migrants, the diaspora also included pensioners who had previously worked in coal mining and industry. As a result of this heterogeneity, there was a notable absence of firm organizational structures.⁸ Since the 1960s, the Polish diaspora had become more and more geographically dispersed, with some of its members successfully climbing the social ladder.⁹ It is worth noting that some wartime immigrants, mainly soldiers and their children, were active members of various religious and veterans' organizations.¹⁰

The history of Polish immigration to the Netherlands has not been studied extensively, resulting in limited attention to the development of Polish migrant organizations in the latter half of the twentieth century. While there have been a few exceptions, such as a brief overview by Willems and Verbeek (originally in Dutch and later translated into Polish),¹¹ there are no truly comprehensive studies on this subject.¹² Moreover, relations between Polish and Dutch miners in the interwar period were ambivalent at best, as was the situation of former Polish soldiers who migrated to the Netherlands in the immediate aftermath of the war and the postwar period. It would be fruitful to begin by analyzing a case of organized community life in this setting. In particular, it is important to consider experiences of agency in the organized community life of these immigrants,¹³ especially “the everyday ways in which their fellow countrymen and women sought to recapture, safeguard, and even reshape the national cultural identities.”¹⁴ The role of religion in these efforts also merits particular attention,¹⁵ as religion was often an integral element of Polish cultural identity in the diaspora community.

7 Kaczmarczyk et al., *Polacy przebywający czasowo w Królestwie Niderlandów – stan wiedzy, wyzwania i możliwe działania publiczne*, 21.

8 Eder, “Polska diaspora w Belgii i Holandii”; Goddeeris, *Polonia belgijska w pierwszych latach po II wojnie światowej*.

9 Eder, “Polska diaspora w Belgii i Holandii,” 203.

10 Kolodziejak, “Polacy w Królestwie Niderlandów – przeszłość i terażniejszość,” 51.

11 Willems and Verbeek, *Sto lat tęsknoty: Historia Polaków w Holandii*.

12 Gul-Rechlewicz, “Immigrants in the Netherlands: Second-class Citizens? The Polish Case,” 110.

13 Dodds, “The Question of God in Émigré Ghent: Religious Identity as Performance and Dialogue Among Migrants and Hosts During the Cold War.”

14 *Ibid.*, 1.

15 *Ibid.*, 4.

Migrants' Community Organizations, Mobilization Processes and Civic Engagement

The phenomenon of organized community life among migrants is universal, meaning that various migrant communities around the world have consistently tended to establish the necessary institutional infrastructures to ensure organized community life in the past and today.¹⁶ Several cases indicate that migrant community organizations are especially active among the first generation of immigrants. The diversity and sheer number of migrant organizations make it difficult to venture generalizations about their universal characteristics and changing patterns of functioning. Numerous studies¹⁷ have shed light on intriguing patterns observed in the evolution of migrant community organizations. One notable change is the process of institutionalization and continuing specialization. Initially, these organizations primarily served affiliative functions, helping to establish social bonds among their members (for instance, the notion of bonding social capital introduced by Putnam¹⁸). However, as time progresses, these institutions grow into more structured entities, catering to the diverse needs of their communities by offering a myriad of services. Another compelling aspect is the emergence of power struggles and succession issues within these organizations. As the organizations mature, internal dynamics come into play, resulting in the pursuit of leadership positions and potential challenges in ensuring smooth transitions of authority. Moreover, reorientation in terms of areas and methods of operation becomes apparent as these organizations broaden their scope of engagement. Beyond exclusively serving their own community, they can increasingly establish connections with members of other minority groups and seek meaningful interactions with the host society (as reflected in the conception of bridging social capital).¹⁹ Cultural issues emerge as a prominent focus for migrant community organizations. Understanding the significance of cultural identity for their group members, they actively invest in preserving and promoting their rich cultural heritage, recognizing it as a vital bond that empowers their community. Moreover, some organizations may experience marginalization, witnessing a decline in active participation among their members. Additionally, subsequent generations assimilate into

16 Moya, "Immigrants and Associations: A Global and Historical Perspective."

17 Żaliński, *Organizacje polskiej diaspory: Stan i perspektywy rozwoju*, 39–43.

18 Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*.

19 Ibid.

the host society over time, thus shaping the composition and dynamics of these organizations. A comprehensive exploration of the abovementioned processes illuminates the dynamic nature of migrant community organizations and their integral role in the lives of immigrants as the immigrants navigate the complexities of adaptation and transformation in their adopted homelands. Finally, in many contexts, the issues evolving around competition and conflict between organizations representing various waves of migrants as well as political and social stances can be observed. Survival and prosperity are dependent in part on the availability of funding for organizational activities, but they also depend on the skills and persistence of organizational leaders and other engaged members of the community.

The establishment of migrant associations is one of the first activities in the process of immigrant community building, and often the first institutions launched by immigrants are places of religious worship, such as churches and other religious organizations.²⁰ This can range from attempts to replicate practices familiar in the homeland to efforts to adapt to the patterns popular in the new place of residence, though of course in most cases, the organizational initiatives launched by migrant communities fall somewhere between these two extremes. The presence of other religious denominations and ethnic groups may introduce a heightened sense of self-awareness among immigrants based on the feeling of being minority “others.”²¹ Moreover, exposure to a predominantly irreligious society can prompt immigrants to become more aware of their religion. This could deepen attachment (and thus commitment) to some aspects of religious practice and beliefs held in the immigrant community. Still, changes in a migrant community can be observed in the shifting priorities of its members, from putting an emphasis on maintaining its ethnic and religious identity to an openness to the mainstream in the host society. Acknowledging the need to be open to other ethnic and religious groups does not mean losing or weakening an existing identity. Rather, it reflects the need to engage with people who represent diverse ethnic and religious identities. On the other hand, it can be a phase in the process of assimilation.

Concern for a notion of ethnic cultural continuity (no matter how chimerical) becomes apparent in ethnic mobilization processes, including mobilization

20 Vertovec, *Transnationalism*, 137–38.

21 *Ibid.*, 140.

among diaspora communities.²² Ethnic mobilization, as an example of social movement, can be understood as a collective action driven by interests shared by at least part of an ethnic or migrant group and organized around some features of ethnic identity, or broadly speaking, their distinctive cultural characteristics, and aimed at achieving an important group goal. Ethnic mobilization has been an increasingly salient part of cultural and political processes in the modern world, especially since the 1980s,²³ which has much to do with the development of parallel processes: globalization (including increasing international migration) and regionalization/ethnicization. Within this context, the evolution of complex relationships in civil society is crucial.²⁴ Migrant mobilization contributes significantly to these changes. It must be noted that self-help organizations play an important role in this process. In describing these processes, Però and Solomos use the term “ethnicity era,”²⁵ which followed the former “era of collective action” and marked two important developments of the organizing of social groups and immigrants in Europe in the previous century. These activities could originally be of a material justice character. Furthermore, they included securing legal status, tackling discrimination issues, and enhancing migrant participation in structures of representation, especially political ones. The cultural distinctiveness of the ethnic collective, separatist tendencies, organizational cohesion, and a sense of economic and political injustice are also significant for ethnic mobilization.²⁶ Nevertheless, mobilization processes at the level of immigrant organizations²⁷ boil down to two objectives: preserving identity and nurturing the political representation of migrant communities, thus increasing the chances of survival for these communities as distinctive groups. Migrant organizations can thus be seen as fulfilling an identity function for their members, as they create spaces for socialization as part of a small group as well as in wider society, including both the majority society and among fellow minorities.²⁸ Cohen²⁹ points to religion as

22 Cohen, *Global Diasporas. An Introduction*, 141–55; Nagel, “Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture,” 165–67; Olzak, “Contemporary Ethnic Mobilization”; Tsutsui, “Global Civil Society and Ethnic Social Movements in the Contemporary World.”

23 Tsutsui, “Global Civil Society and Ethnic Social Movements in the Contemporary World,” 63–64.

24 Van Hear, “Theories of Migration and Social Change.”

25 Però and Solomos, “Introduction: Migrant Politics and Mobilization: Exclusion, Engagements, Incorporation.”

26 Tsutsui, “Global Civil Society and Ethnic Social Movements in the Contemporary World,” 72–74.

27 Sardinha, *Immigrant Associations, Integration and Identity*, 84.

28 *Ibid.*, 68–69.

29 Cohen, *Global Diasporas. An Introduction*, 150–54.

a major mobilization factor in a diaspora. The Polish community discussed in this article investigates offers a clear example of a case in which there is a strong intersection of faith and ethnicity. As Cohen notes, “Such an overlap between faith and ethnicity is likely to enhance overlapping forms of social cohesion and to create situations where it is difficult to decide whether one is describing a faith or an ethnicity.”³⁰ The case under study supports Cohen’s contention. Religion and the protection of ethnic identity might be so intricately interlined that it would be difficult or impossible to separate them.

Migrant mobilization activities were usually understood as determined either by working class situation (violation of labor law) or the reflection of their ethnicity that is “specific cultural traits of a given ethnic group.”³¹ More recently, this understanding has been supplemented with the political opportunity structure (POS) approach,³² “the opportunities for mobilizing provided to migrants by the institutional setup of the receiving context.”³³ Però and Solomos³⁴ contend that one must also take migrants’ feelings and emotions into account “to balance the rational choice approach that underpins prevalent theories on migrant mobilizations.”³⁵ The rationale for this is sound:

In fact, migrants, like the rest of the population, may at times mobilize in partial or total disregard of the chances of success and the achievement of concrete goals and material rewards, and they can be substantially driven by their values, affection, sense of self and of group membership, need to feel well and realize themselves, and so forth, all significant elements that are overlooked in the ‘rational actor’ decision-making model.³⁶

These processes can be identified as emotional and “hot” in nature, and in many cases not instrumental but rather based on what is understood as part of ethnic identity and flowing from what could be axiological motives. Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of social capital may also help further a more subtle

30 Ibid., 153.

31 Però and Solomos, “Introduction: Migrant Politics and Mobilization: Exclusion, Engagements, Incorporation,” 8.

32 Meyer and Staggenborg, “Movements, Countermovements, and the Structure of Political Opportunity”; Meyer, “Protest and Political Opportunities”; Meyer and Minkoff, “Conceptualizing Political Opportunity.”

33 Però and Solomos, “Introduction: Migrant Politics and Mobilization: Exclusion, Engagements, Incorporation,” 9.

34 Ibid., 8.

35 Ibid., 10.

36 Ibid.

understanding of the state of a migrant community.³⁷ In particular, when considering two forms of social capital—bonding and bridging—an interplay of internal and external group processes can become clear. Bonding social capital is a form of social capital that gives the members of the community a sense of security flowing from the intensity of these relations. The concept of a bridging form of social capital could be helpful to understand the importance of migrant community actions directed outside of the group. Engagement among migrants in relations with social actors representing the wider society as well as other migrant communities helps them interact in a wider social sphere. It should be noted that in the case of ethnic and migrant communities, social capital is sometimes considered a cornerstone of political engagement among the members of the given community, as social capital is essential to the creation of social and political trust.³⁸ Some research suggests that there is a positive relation between both forms of social capital in migrant settings, which would mean that building ties within a minority group does not hinder the establishment of fruitful relations with the wider society.³⁹

From a broad perspective, civil activities can be understood as the promotion of civil rights, participation in civil society, defense of equal opportunity, and combating discrimination. However, it is worth remembering that the very involvement of migrants in the activities of organizations is indicative of grassroots activity among them and is a manifestation of the exercise of civil liberties, but also a manifestation of agency among organization members where their reach their full potential. Minority political activism can take the form of lobbying aimed primarily at initiating counter-marginalization.⁴⁰ The quality of these activities can be influenced by the availability of various resources, such as financial support and social capital.⁴¹ Mobilization and social capital could thus be used to understand civil engagement transfers, which are exchanges of practices of self-organization and engagement between migrant and host communities. Ethnic and migration studies can adopt a bottom-up approach and in this way highlight the roles of individuals and organizations and their agency

37 Putnam, “Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community”; Nannestad et al., “Bridge Over Troubled Water? Migration and Social Capital.”

38 Jacobs and Tillie, “Introduction: Social Capital and Political Integration of Migrants.”

39 Nannestad et al., “Bridge Over Troubled Water? Migration and Social Capital.”

40 Sardinha, *Immigrant Associations, Integration and Identity*, 83.

41 Van Hear and Cohen, “Diasporas and Conflict: Distance, Contiguity and Spheres of Engagement.”

in the mobilization activities of the immigrant community and participation in the construction and maintenance of a modern democratic society.

The Aim and Scope of the Current Study

The study focuses on a migrant community formed around a local branch of a national level organization which was thriving in the second part of the twentieth century in and around the Dutch city of Eindhoven. It offers insights into some of the wider processes taking place at the time in the Polish diaspora in the Netherlands and across Benelux. The main research question is explanatory in nature and points to one of the main characteristics of mobilization processes: What are the directions of actions (e.g., internal vs. external) undertaken by the migrant community to maintain its identity? An additional question concerning the research project is: Are civic engagement actions identifiable among the mobilization processes? As the source material spans approximately four decades, it makes it possible to track change occurring over time.

The sources examined in this research are drawn from the Franciszek Łyskawa archive and are publicly available at the International Institute of Social History (IISH) in Amsterdam. The source material, which consists of digitalized versions of 98 loose pages forming seven packages, was obtained from Łyskawa's daughter, Ludka. The materials were preselected by the donor from the sources deposited by her at the IISH. They include circulars, information leaflets, organizational statutes, press releases, official and private correspondence, accounting reports, and other documents (overall 109 pages). The folders were not ordered formally. In addition, the statute of the Polish Catholic Society (Polskie Towarzystwo Katolickie or PTK) is used to provide basic information about this migrant organization (10 pages; also provided by the main donor). An outline of Franciszek Łyskawa's life⁴² and some of the existing secondary literature are also used to present the story of Polish war migrants who settled in the Netherlands after postwar demobilization. Alongside the sources described above, face-to-face interviews and email communication with Ludka Łyskawa were used to clarify some of the details concerning the materials she provided.

42 "Franciszek Łyskawa – pancernym szlakiem z Gorzykowa do Holandii." Biography outline authorized by Ludka Łyskawa and written down by Mariusz Zborowski. Manuscript, in possession of the author.

*Franciszek Łyskawa – A Migrant's Life Story*⁴³

For decades, numerous Polish veterans in the Low Countries were living in the villages and towns that had been freed by them during World War II. After the war, the establishment of a Soviet satellite communist state in Poland created a new reality, one that many Polish soldiers fighting in the West were not willing to accept. Often, it was not tempting or even possible for them to return home, because they fundamentally rejected the new sociopolitical reality in postwar Poland. In some cases, the demobilization of Polish soldiers, which left them stranded in Western Europe, put them in the most difficult circumstances of their lives.⁴⁴ In addition, in the case of Franciszek Łyskawa, the decision not to return home after the war was also based on family reasons. The rationale to reintroduce his case to the wider public is based on his rich experiences as a soldier who was forced to roam around Europe and North Africa from the outset of the war and who had a chance to be an active member of his immigrant community after he settled in the Netherlands.

Franciszek Łyskawa was born on November 27, 1912 in Gorzykowo, which at the time was part of the German Empire.⁴⁵ He attended grade school in his hometown and later studied at the grammar school in Gniezno. He joined the Polish military in 1933 in Lviv (then Lwów) to become a non-commissioned officer. The army allowed him to acquire new skills and get promoted. As a result of the September 1939 campaign, Łyskawa and numerous other members of the defeated Polish armed forces pushed through to Bucharest. The invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union ended in a German-Soviet victory. The evacuation to Romania was one of the endpoints of 1939 defensive war, and for Łyskawa, it marked the beginning of a life of a soldier migrant who entered the Polish Armed Forces in the West. In January 1940, Łyskawa embarked on a trip to Paris, where he joined the formation of Polish forces. Stanisław Maczek was another Polish soldier who managed to break free to one of the Allied or neutral countries. He escaped the Soviets and found safe haven in Hungary, later moving to France, where his troops took part in the

43 This section includes parts published before in Żaliński, "Franciszek Łyskawa: A Life of a Veteran Migrant in the Netherlands" as well, as it is based on "Franciszek Łyskawa – pancernym szlakiem z Gorzykowa do Holandii."

44 Venken and Zalewski, "Powojenne losy żołnierzy 1. Dywizji Pancerniej dowodzonej przez Generała Stanisława Maczka w Polsce. Wstępna analiza porównawcza," 168.

45 Willems and Verbeek, *Sto lat tęsknoty. Historia Polaków w Holandii*, 108–9.

defense of the country.⁴⁶ In early 1940, Franciszek Łyskawa was training Polish emigrants who had joined the nascent Polish forces being assembled in France. In June 1940, around Paris near the Marne River, Łyskawa was injured while fighting against the German forces. In the aftermath of the French defeat, the only way for Łyskawa and his accompanying party of soldiers to escape was to push south to the port of Marseille and then go by sea to Oran, Algeria and further by train to Casablanca and by boat to Rabat, Morocco. From there, he traveled to Gibraltar and finally to England. Two years later, during Operation Overlord, Łyskawa landed in continental Europe and took part in the liberation of France, Belgium, and the Netherlands.⁴⁷ With the end of the war, Łyskawa became one of the Polish soldiers who decided to start a new life in one of the freed countries of Western Europe. On September 18, 1946, he married Maria Heijligers, a Breda citizen, with whom he had three daughters: Marysia, Ludka, and Lieke. Łyskawa was demobilized on March 12, 1948 in Bury St Edmunds. Shortly thereafter, he and his family moved to Eindhoven, where Łyskawa worked as a radio technician in the Philips factory.

War trauma, grim perspectives in the home country, and the challenges of living in an unfamiliar social and geographical environment created a challenging life situation, especially considering the sense of rejection felt by war veterans of Eastern European origin who found themselves in Western Europe after World War II.⁴⁸ These circumstances led to various existential conditions, including psychological crises, as well as sometimes situations in which veterans developed transnational ties and conflicting loyalties and, as migrants, felt that they had to take stands concerning the sociopolitical circumstances of the time.

One of the ways to face the challenges of cultural shock and war trauma was to take an active role in the immigrant community. This is exactly what Franciszek Łyskawa did. He acted as both initiator and leader in various postwar Polish diaspora associations in the Netherlands. Many of these organizations

46 Ibid., 110–15.

47 The Polish war effort could be channelled in United Kingdom, where the Polish forces were formed. In 1942, Franciszek Łyskawa joined the 1st Polish Armoured Division, which was under the command of Lieutenant General Stanisław Maczek. He took part in the fight for Caen, Falaise, Ypres, Baarle-Nassau, the Kusten Canal, and, in late October 1944, Breda. In early 1945, he and his military unit moved towards Germany and reached Wilhelmshaven and Lönigen, where he stayed as member of the occupying forces (ibid., 119). Later, Łyskawa was awarded numerous medals for his services in the war.

48 Palka et al., *Zołnierze generała Maczka. Doświadczenie i pamięć wojny*. For examples of ghettoization and the effects of harmful legal regulations concerning migrants see also the interviews with Zbigniew Mieczkowski (ibid., 312–13), and Stefan Jezierski (ibid., 317–21).

were Catholic in nature, a characteristic that was, and in many cases still is, a defining feature of Polish diaspora life the world over. For decades, the Łyskawa family was actively engaged in the Polish community and its organizations in the Netherlands, simultaneously trying to maintain ties with Poland on the institutional and personal level. Łyskawa was the treasurer of the PTK in the Netherlands and secretary of the branch in Eindhoven. Łyskawa also belonged to the song and dance group “Cracovia” in Eindhoven (initially affiliated with the PTK Eindhoven, later an independent organization, currently known as Zespół “Cracovia”) and supported charitable organizations, for example the Catholic Akcja Miłosierdzia (Action of Mercy). He also organized holiday camps for Polish diaspora children in the Netherlands and participated in patriotic and religious events, for example the celebration of Constitution Day, which honored the declaration of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth’s constitution on May 3, 1791. This particular event was an occasion for anti-government and anti-communist protests in the Polish diaspora, as the constitution is considered a national symbol of the Polish struggle to reform the country, as well as one of the political and social traditions disdained by the communists.

Łyskawa took part in other activities, such as annual meetings to commemorate the liberation of Breda and veteran events in Normandy, Scotland, and Poland. These efforts were noteworthy contributions to the construction of social bridges between the Polish diaspora and the wider society, as the war effort of Polish soldiers was not well known in the Netherlands, with the city of Breda being an exception. In addition to this kind of institutional activity, Łyskawa built strong personal ties with numerous migrants and was involved in various forms of charity actions. He also offered his services as a sort of consultant. He thus managed to build substantial (bonding) social capital that strengthened the immigrant community as an ethnically homogenous group of people, especially in challenging times for the diaspora. While working in the Eindhoven Philips factory, Łyskawa became fully integrated into the working team and benefited from various social programs introduced by the company. In other words, he exhibited remarkable proficiency in acclimating to an unfamiliar social environment. His marriage to a woman who was not Polish and his notable accomplishments on the local labor market exemplify the process of acquiring social capital, and he effectively forged connections between the immigrant community and the host society.

In the summer of 1961, Franciszek Łyskawa embarked on a journey to Poland accompanied by his family, his first since having fled the country

during the war. The primary intent of this expedition was to visit their Polish relatives. Grappling with the status of statelessness, Łyskawa relied on a passport specifically designated for stateless individuals. One year later, he gained Dutch citizenship, which allowed him more easily to solve the formalities associated with travelling to Poland. The abovementioned journey was described by his relatives as a stimulus for change in Łyskawa's behavior, as if he were taking on a role as an older brother of sorts among the members of the Polish family who had remained in Poland and an interpreter of the Polish language and Polish culture for his Dutch family. Over the course of the following decades, Łyskawa led a rich and ceaselessly active life as a Polish migrant and Dutch citizen. He adeptly cultivated and sustained transnational connections with his relatives and colleagues across various countries, including Poland, Belgium, Great Britain, France, Canada, and beyond.

Franciszek Łyskawa passed away on February 5, 1997 and was buried in the cemetery of Saint Theresia in Eindhoven. His death was noted in the newspapers, and a commemorative exhibition was opened in Witkowo, near his hometown of Gorzykowo in Poland. The exhibition was titled “Franciszek Łyskawa – pancernym szlakiem z Gorzykowa do Holandii” (Franciszek Łyskawa: On the armored route from Gorzykowo to the Netherlands). In the exhibition, emphasis was put on his war achievements. Łyskawa's legacy lives on thanks to his daughters and grandchildren. Archival material related to him was donated by the family and is publicly available at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. In the discussion below, I present the case of the Polish Catholic Society in Eindhoven, which was one of the organizations in the Polish diaspora in which Łyskawa was particularly active. I present the Polish Catholic Society against the backdrop of the activity of the Polish Catholic Mission (Polska Misja Katolicka or PMK).⁴⁹

The Polish Catholic Society and Its Statute

The intersection of religious⁵⁰ and ethnic activity can be traced in many Polish organizations operating in the Netherlands. As Leska-Ślęzak observes, “[n]ewly arrived emigrants from Poland began their Polish lives with a visit to the

49 Leska-Ślęzak, “Działalność i funkcjonowanie Polskiej Misji Katolickiej w Holandii.”

50 Religious organisations were very popular among various Polish migrant communities around the world, and religious devotion was in many cases a cornerstone of Polish diaspora life. These organisations are still influential today, forming a significant share among the overall number of entities available in an

Polish church in the Netherlands.”⁵¹ The profound Catholic dimension of their national identity fostered the belief among Poles that a loss of faith meant a loss of identity. Consequently, priests responsible for immigrants took on the duty of nurturing a sense of belonging to the Polish nation. The Polish pastoral ministry in the Netherlands was founded in 1910 in Rotterdam and was initially part of the Polish Catholic Mission in Belgium from 1928 to 1946. Subsequently, in 1947, a distinct rectorate was established in Breda, sealing its importance as a point on the map of the Polish diaspora. In 1973, a Polish Catholic Mission was founded for the Benelux region, encompassing the Netherlands among its areas of focus. Around 2009, the ministry in the Netherlands was organized into three districts: Limburg and Brabant, the northeastern areas, and the western areas. In addition to their pastoral duties, the priests actively engaged in social, educational, and journalistic endeavors, as well as commemorations of significant Polish national events.

One of the main organizations associated with the Polish migrant community in general and with the life of Franciszek Łyskawa in particular was the aforementioned PTK, especially its branch in Eindhoven. The PTK was established on December 28, 1946, originally for a period of 29 years (until December 27, 1975), and on September 17, 1975, it was extended for another 29 years. The main goal of the PTK was defined as “supporting the religious-spiritual, cultural, social and financial needs of the members of the Society” (article 3, point 1; PTK statute 1). The organization was non-political in nature (article 3, point 2; PTK statute 1). In article 3, point 3, a handwritten amendment by Franciszek Łyskawa was made that erased the statement, “[i]n its actions, the Society will be guided by Catholic principles” and changed it to, “[i]n addition, the Society commits itself as far as possible [to] the cooperation with the Polish pastoral workers of the Polish Catholic Mission in the Netherlands” (article 3, point 3; PTK statute 1). The reason for this change is unclear, but it may simply reflect changes in the community outlook. It could be considered an attempt to initiate or confirm changes occurring in the migrant community, such as growing inclusiveness, while still safeguarding the community’s relations with the Church.

official register (GUS, *Baza organizacji i instytucji polskich i polonijnych za granicą*). In this register, numerous religious organisations and institutions are listed. 1,286 of the 8,872 entities (around 14.5 percent) can be considered religious organisations, and if various organisations and institutions traditionally not considered migrant organisations in the secondary literature are excluded from the list, the overall share of denominational organisations and institutions is larger.

51 Leska-Ślęzak, “Działalność i funkcjonowanie Polskiej Misji Katolickiej w Holandii,” 113.

On the other hand, the status and authority of priests among the diaspora also changed over time, as further sources will reveal.

Changing Organizational Structures and Changing Community: Main Sources Analysis

Below, I present migrant community activities and their evolution in the light of the archival records. One of the oldest sources in the collection dates from 1954.⁵² It can be classified as a general annual report of the PTK Eindhoven issued by the leadership and addressed to the members. The source reveals changes in attitudes within the migrant community. According to it, repeated celebrations of national and religious holidays for about a decade caused a sense of increased reluctance to organize the community around these occasions and reduced enthusiasm for them. Moreover, the author of the report contends that some members of the Polish community were less able to take active part in the life of the migrant organizations because they were living as members of mixed marriages. Some statements concerning this issue are presented in a rather harsh manner, for instance, “[t]here are some among us who have a wife, a fiancée, or a Dutch husband and who shamefully neglect their moral duties in relation to compatriots.”⁵³ The author claims that the remedy for the revival of the immigrant community and its organizational life was a balance between private involvement (life as a member of a binational family or plans to establish one⁵⁴) and public involvement (sociopolitical actions). These comments about visible changes in the private lives of migrants coincide with the crisis faced by various organizations across the country, which manifested itself in reduced organizational activity. Acknowledgment of these difficulties was a stimulus for change in organizational activity and an occasion to modify methods of operation. This can be viewed as an important reflection from the perspective of social change and the adaptation to more settled and integrative circumstances

52 IISG archief 5, p. 1, 2. The source is a typescript with no title and no author. It offers insights into the mood of the community gathered around the PTK Eindhoven at the end of the first post-war decade. The date is handwritten in green on the upper right side of the first of two pages; another dating possibility is that the document was issued in 1953 due to the claim in the source that preparations were underway to celebrate the thirty-fifth anniversary of Poland's independence in 1928. IISG archief 5, p. 2.

53 IISG archief, 5, p. 2.

54 Assuming that many Polish soldier migrants were single, it is perhaps hardly surprising that many new binational families were formed when these men married women from the local communities. This may have led to some loosening of ties with the larger Polish community.

after nearly a decade of migrant life in the Netherlands. The PTK board was fully aware of everyday dynamics in the migrant community and tried to adjust to the new situation.

Adaptation to the new reality unfolded gradually, and with the passage of time, the community members began to have a grim view of the prevailing circumstances: “Probably no one saw this coming, and yet we are still here, with no sign of any change that this state of affairs will end any time soon.”⁵⁵ The document cited,⁵⁶ which was signed by the head of the PTK (K. W. Szczubialko), provides an interesting comment on organizational and community affairs. The author stated that there was a need to give up unrealistic hopes among the Polish migrant community. This meant that the priorities of the community were shifting from the needs of the first generation of migrants to the needs of the second. This is understood as a need to make efforts to introduce the younger generation to the culture of their parents by organizing and supporting the celebration of Polish national holidays and various cultural activities. The document pointed to the main problems of the organization’s functioning, namely a lack of sufficient financial resources and a small group of members. In terms of membership, there had been a slight increase, and a firm statement had been made that the acquisition of Dutch citizenship did not preclude PTK membership. In other words, all were welcome as members of the organization.

In general, cooperation among Polish organizations in the Benelux countries was common, albeit in some cases turbulent. In preparation for the Polish Millennium commemoration in 1966, the main Polish organizations in the Netherlands were able to find common ground, and they established the Council of the United Polish Diaspora in the Netherlands.⁵⁷ The Council was formed by the chairmen of the PTK, the Union of Catholic-Polish Societies (Zjednoczenie Katolicko-Polskich Towarzystw or ZKPT), the (noncommunist) Polish People’s Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe or PSL), the Polish Veterans’ Association (Stowarzyszenie Polskich Kombatantów or SPK), and a delegate from the Polish Catholic Mission. It was declared that the Council and its activities should be democratic, respecting the independence of each association and the apolitical nature of the union. This can be seen as an example of unity finding expression in the preparations for a symbolic occasion for the Polish migrant community.

55 IISG archief 4, p. 5, 6.

56 PTK Eindhoven document titled “Basic remarks about the work of the Board of the PTK in Eindhoven from reporting year 1957/58,” dated October 4, 1958.

57 Rada Zjednoczonej Polonii Holenderskiej was formed in Eindhoven. IISG archief 2, p. 23.

However, fruitful and long-term cooperation was often difficult to achieve. A circular issued probably around 1972 and authored by Franciszek Łyskawa dealt with the question of the younger generation of migrants.⁵⁸ The head of the PTK Eindhoven presented the issue of a proposed meeting organized for the migrants' children in Jeugdherberg, Ockenburg te 's-Gravenhage (The Hague) in the middle of October 1972. The goals of this event were as follows: “a) establishing contact between Polish youths and youths of other nationalities; b) exchange of views and discussions; c) learning about the cultures of other nationalities.” While not erasing the previous goals of maintaining attachment to and continuity with Polish cultural identity, this constituted a visible change of attitudes in relation to the aforementioned document of 1958, in which the goal of cultural unity was clearly outlined. More than two decades after the war, the orientation had shifted, and the mobilization process took another (external) goal: to represent the community outside in a multicultural environment.

The next document under scrutiny is the PTK Eindhoven Christmas circular issued in December 1979.⁵⁹ In the initial part, the author expresses the community's concern about the decreasing number of Poles in Eindhoven. This was part of the demographic process caused by the deaths of older members of the migrant community, both from the prewar migration wave and war refugees. A typical circular of the time reported the death of one or more members of the local migrant community. Other records show that the PTK meetings took place just once or twice a year in the middle of the 1980s.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the “Cracovia” song and dance ensemble, formally part of the PTK, remained more active in that period, and it had both senior and junior performers. The pessimistic conclusions were counterbalanced by the election of the Polish citizen Karol Wojtyła to the Papal throne in the Vatican in 1978. When the circular was issued (December 1979), the election still resonated in the community and inspired pride among Polish migrants, whom the PTK encouraged to call attention to the fact that a fellow citizen had become the new pope. The author used this fact to strengthen the call on fellow migrants to participate in religious events as an opportunity to preserve and maybe even revive strong ethnonational ties and identity. It should be noted that this was the only document regarding the PTK Eindhoven, apart from occasional Christmas or Easter addresses, in which religious piety was strongly and straightforwardly encouraged. It also marked a

58 IISG archief, 4, p. 7, 8.

59 IISG archief, 6, p. 2.

60 E.g. the circular of December 1986, IISG archief, 6, p. 4.

change of orientation, as it placed emphasis on issues related to factors external to the community in the home country.

Some actions undertaken by the PTK clearly correspond to the challenges and economic and sociopolitical hardships of the situation back in Poland, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. A noteworthy form of activity among the Polish migrant community in the Netherlands was the establishment of the aforementioned Action of Mercy. This was a charity organization which addressed needs and concerns in the old country. The charity work involved collecting donations, and these efforts were coordinated by the PTK. The main aim of the Action of Mercy was to provide medications to the people of Poland at a time when many medicines were not widely available in the country. The activity required mobilization in the immigrant community, as the numbers of requests for medication were significant. The extent of this need became particularly clear in times of economic collapse in Poland, when shortages in medical and other supplies soared. It is an example of a group mobilizing for two different purposes, for purposes related to the immigrant community itself and the host country, but also to the country of origin. In the Netherlands, the action helped strengthen the local immigrant community, which meant contributing to the creation of bonding social capital. Activities focused on Poland helped create a lasting transnational space where particular goods were transferred as well as personal ties involving particular people were established. One of the documents related to the mission is the official thanks from Archbishop Stefan Wyszyński, a cardinal and primate of Poland at the time (the thanks was issued on December 17, 1973).⁶¹ This expression of gratitude was addressed to Dr. Narcyz W. Komar, vice-chair of the PTK and an active member of the Polish community. The letter noted the charity's fifteenth anniversary. This means that charity work was a long-term and successful venture and met with great interest in Poland. After the death of Dr. Komar, Franciszek Łyskawa coordinated the charity. The funds to buy medications were provided by the PTK.⁶² Around 1983, the charity suffered from a lack of financial resources, which was particularly acute in the time of crisis in the early 1980s in Poland.⁶³ The very

61 IISG archief 7, p. 1.

62 More details about this initiative are found in the letter dated June 1, 1982. IISG archief 7, p. 10.

63 IISG archief, 7, p. 20, 21. See "Skrócone sprawozdanie Protokołu Zebrania Zarządu Gł. PTK w Holandii z dnia 29 stycznia br. w miejscowości Utrecht" (Summary report of the minutes of the PTK General Board Meeting in the Netherlands on January 29 of the current year in Utrecht), dated February 2, 1983.

same document offers information about internal conflicts in the wider Polish immigrant community in the Netherlands. We learn from it that the Dutch Polish Council (*Rada Polonii Holenderskiej*)⁶⁴ was dissolved, which meant the disintegration of national organizational structures among Polish migrants in the Netherlands. The immediate cause has not been revealed, with the only direct indication being the contention that “we do not yet share a common language.”⁶⁵ One may speculate that the turbulent political situation in the home country had spread to the diaspora. It was a difficult time (the Solidarity movement, the introduction of martial law) of conflicting loyalties and competing aid programs for the anticommunist opposition in Poland. This also shows that attempts to build bonding social capital were not always successful.

Another crisis related to the relationships and activities of some Polish priests working within the Polish diaspora in the Netherlands was added to the general, rather gloomy picture reflected in the files.⁶⁶ This is probably the same crisis that is described in the official correspondence from the Church authorities in Rome sent by Bishop Szczepan Wesoly (dated June 27, 1982).⁶⁷ Bishop Wesoly, “the chaplain of Polish emigres,” stated that the problems mentioned by the Polish community members were of a minor character. He also stated that personal problems related to the priestly ministry reported to him by the Polish migrants were exaggerated. In response, he contended that the activities of the PTK differed in quality from the activities of similar organizations in Belgium, France, and England, and, in general, are not sufficient.

It is worth mentioning that a Dutch priest, Rijk, who held an official position related to the pastoral care⁶⁸ of Catholic minorities, was asked to mediate in this

64 It is not clear whether this was the same entity as the one mentioned before, the Council of the United Polish Diaspora in the Netherlands. IISG archief 2, p. 23.

65 IISG archief 7, p. 20.

66 IISG archief 7, p. 14, 20. See “Protokół Zebrania Zarządu Głównego PTK w Holandii w dniu 7 lutego 1981 roku w miejscowości Utrecht” (Minutes of the Meeting of the General Board of the PTK in the Netherlands on February 7, 1981 in Utrecht; IISG archief 7, p. 14), and “Skrócone sprawozdanie Protokołu Zebrania Zarządu Gł. PTK...” (Summary report of the minutes of the PTK General Board Meeting...; IISG archief 7, p. 20). The crisis concerned the actions of young priests in particular, who allegedly were disregarding the opinions and needs of the older members of the diaspora. The sources also point to the absence of priests during important organizational meetings.

67 IISG archief 7, p. 28.

68 Broadly understood, pastoral care in this case could include leading a church service, taking part in an important commemoration among the immigrant community, sharing informing about the religious devotion of the group with the wider society, and involving local officials in various relations with the minority community (Dodds, “The Question of God in Émigré Ghent: Religious Identity as Performance

matter.⁶⁹ This situation demonstrates how the functioning within the broader structures of the host society proceeded (the local structures of the Roman Catholic Church). In cases of internal misunderstanding or dissatisfaction, there was an instance offering a positive solution. In addition, acceptance of an outsider as a mediator was a sign of good relations with Dutch society and reflected the general trust placed in the Dutch Catholic Church. It was also an example of a civic engagement procedure aimed at relieving tensions and alleviating problems inside the migrant community, especially when internal conflicts could have been detrimental to it. Unfortunately, the available documents do not provide information on the course and outcome of this mediation or on the exact formal or informal status of this attempt. It should be added that in many cases, immigrants used the local religious infrastructure of the host society, such as a church or a gathering room.

Sources from the 1980s also focus on the economic situation in Poland and the need to help fellow citizens in the home country (the PTK Eindhoven Easter circular dated April 12, 1981).⁷⁰ This attitude persisted into the early 1990s (PTK Eindhoven Easter circular dated April 8, 1990),⁷¹ when the newly elected first non-communist government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki was named as the beneficiary of the donations (Mazowiecki Fonds). Moreover, notable initiatives, such as the launch of the Polish Shipping House (Polski Dom Wysyłkowy), which specialized in the sale of a wide range of Polish books, aimed to draw attention to Polish issues at home by increasing the number of readers abroad (PTK Eindhoven Easter circular dated April 8, 1990).⁷²

Conclusions

The case presented above shows the evolution of a migrant organization in the postwar decades. The main issues raised in the documents are dilemmas surrounding integration, the issue of the cultural identity of the younger generation, cooperation among organizations, manners of dealing with crises, actions aimed at Poland, the decreasing number of members of the migrant

and Dialogue Among Migrants and Hosts During the Cold War”⁷². In general, it was supposed to “[connect] the religious and military identities of the Polish community to the wider [...] Catholic milieu.”

69 IISG archief 7, p. 20.

70 IISG archief 6, p. 6.

71 IISG archief 6, p. 5.

72 IISG archief 6, p. 5.

community, and accounts of religious life. The case also offers a clear example of the importance of the contributions made by a committed member of the migrant community to the community itself, who was both a witness to and active part of the organizational changes which took place in the postwar era. Mobilization efforts among the local Polish migrant community in Eindhoven manifested itself in various forms. First, they included activities directed towards the sense of belonging among members of the community itself (i.e. the function of the mobilization process as an internal affair). Second, they placed emphasis on the importance of creating an image of the immigrant community and presenting this image to the host society (mainly indirect evidence; actions directed to the external environment). Last, but not least, they consider the situation in the country of origin and changes taking place in it (i.e. actions targeted at the home country and fellow citizens there). Thus, the social network links were internal and uni-cultural on the one hand and external and cross-cultural on the other. They embodied two forms of social capital: bonding and bridging. The general transformation of the immigrant community led from the initial state of provisional existence in the host country to being a part of a multicultural society and gradually withdrawing from organized diaspora life, which eventually meant the cessation of community activities. Taking into consideration the importance of religion as a mobilization factor, the case of the PTK offers clear support for the notion of the vital role of religion in safeguarding ethnic identity. Many of the efforts described in the sources explicitly use religious devotion as a cornerstone for the activities of the members of the community, alongside the celebration of Polish national symbols, holidays, etc. Descriptions of internal and external affairs (e.g. the situation back in Poland) are at times expressed in terms which suggest concern about the future. Moreover, there are instances where the diaspora engages in both bottom-up and “hot” models of decision-making. These approaches, however, did not always lead to successful outcomes.

The example of the PTK demonstrates that the formation of cross-cultural bonds can prevent the tendency towards one-sided, intra-group exclusivity among immigrants. This refers to situations where members of the migrant community engage solely within their distinct, isolated diaspora group. From the perspective of mobilization and civil engagement transfers, it is useful to point out that there are circumstances in which the community was more ready to engage in this form of activity. Cooperation with a Dutch Catholic priest was only possible when the outlook of the community formed around the PTK became more cross-cultural. His role was to mediate and mitigate an internal

crisis within the migrant community. Based on the case study presented here, one can formulate a working hypothesis which would require additional evidence for validation. According to this hypothesis, the migrant community would benefit from an external orientation if it sought to facilitate successful transfers. Within the organizational sources examined here, discernible indications of civic engagement activities can be observed. This particular case serves as an illustrative example of cooperation within the immigrant community. However, an overarching perspective that emerges from these sources emphasizes the significance of engagement and agency among proactive members as the fundamental bedrock of organizational life within the immigrant community.

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