

POLISH COMMUNITY IN PARAGUAY: MAINTAINING NATIONAL IDENTITY IN EVERYDAY LIFE AND FESTIVITY¹

La comunidad polaca en Paraguay: el mantenimiento de la identidad nacional en la vida cotidiana y festiva

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ABSTRACT: The article investigates the everyday life and festivity of the Polish community living in Itapúa department in Paraguay. The research also addresses the sense of national identity of the descendants of Poles who came to Paraguay in the years 1936-1938. It firstly presents the socio-economic conditions of the districts of Itapúa, Carmen del Paraná and Fram, where fieldwork was carried out. Due to the agricultural nature of the Poles' emigration to Paraguay, the research was conducted mainly in a rural environment where agriculture and small entrepreneurship are the primary occupations. The research was based on two types of sources: induced (open interviews) and existing ones. Eighteen in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of the first and second generation born in Paraguay, giving a picture of the life of four generations. The elements of everyday life and festivity presented in the article are the most widely discussed aspects of the life of the Polish community in the context of maintaining the national identity of successive generations of Polish emigres. The key concept of the analysis is family. The research concludes that changes in family structure initiate alterations in the self-definition of members of the Polish community.

KEYWORDS: South America, Paraguay, Itapúa, national identity, European immigrants, Polish migrants.

¹ The article is based, with regards to empirical data, on the field research conducted by Gabriela Galecka for her MA thesis prepared under the supervision of prof. dr. hab. Cezary Obracht-Prondzyński at the Department of Social Anthropology of the Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Journalism at the University of Gdansk. The methodology and theoretical context applied for the empirical data analysis constitute Cezary Obracht-Prondzyński's contribution.

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RESUMEN: El artículo presenta la vida cotidiana y, a la vez, la festividad de la sociedad polaca que habita las tierras de Itapúa en Paraguay. El texto trata sobre las cuestiones relacionadas con la conciencia de la identidad nacional de los descendientes de los polacos que habían llegado a Paraguay en los años 1936-1938. Por otra parte, son presentadas las circunstancias socioeconómicas del distrito del departamento Itapúa: Carmen del Paraná y Fram en las que fueron realizadas las investigaciones de campo. Debido al carácter agrario de la emigración de los polacos en Paraguay, las investigaciones se llevaron a cabo principalmente en el ámbito rural en el que la principal ocupación es la agricultura y pequeñas empresas. Las investigaciones fueron basadas en dos tipos de fuentes: fuentes primarias (entrevista libre) y fuentes secundarias. Se realizaron 18 entrevistas en profundidad con los representantes de primera y segunda generación de los descendientes de inmigrantes polacos, en las que se consiguieron las imágenes de cuatro generaciones. Los elementos de la cotidianidad y la festividad, presentados en el artículo fueron debatidos por los encuestados en la forma más amplia, como el aspecto de la vida diaria de la comunidad polaca en el contexto del mantenimiento de la identidad nacional a través de varias generaciones de los inmigrantes polacos. En el análisis, el concepto clave es la familia. Las investigaciones muestran que las transformaciones que se producen en la estructura familiar, influyen profundamente en el cambio de manera de definirse de los miembros de la comunidad polaca.

PALABRAS CLAVE: América del Sur, Paraguay, Itapúa, identidad nacional, inmigrantes europeos, inmigrantes polacos.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to present the elements of everyday life and festivity of the Polish community living in the Itapúa department in Paraguay in the context of maintaining a Polish identity by its members. The article gives an account of the course of research and presents a part of its outcomes for the first time. It also opens a series of texts, which aim at investigating various aspects of the Polish community in Paraguay. Both comprehensive synthesis and successive research are required to cover that issue exhaustively. The article presents basic social structures the research subjects function in (family, neighborhood environment, work environment, Polish community). The elements presented in the article are the most widely discussed aspects of the life of the Polish community in the context of maintaining the national (Polish) identity of successive generations of Polish emigres. The article is based on the analysis and interpretation of materials acquired during a two-month research visit in Paraguay (field research was conducted by one of the authors between February and April 2016). The main principle of the research was to observe the socio-cultural phenomena from the perspective of the research subjects. This particular exploration was set to answer whether the Polish community in Paraguay have a sense of Polish identity and belonging to the wider Polonia community. Positive confirmation of the above allowed for a realization of the predetermined research aim: establishing which factors play a key role in the maintaining of national identity, their self-identification and in the structures, which

support a sense of connection to the land of the predecessors of Polish migrants. Though the research was conducted in three districts (Fram, Carmen del Paraná, María Auxiliadora), the article relies only on the materials collected from the members of the Polish community living in the Fram colony, which is a cradle of Polish settlement in Paraguay. Its members live in relatively traditional/stable social structures, in which the outside context is less important than the context of family, Polish community and the neighborhood structures constructed and maintained by the Polish migrants. As Polish immigration to Paraguay was mostly agricultural in character, the research focuses on the descendants of emigrants who still live in agricultural areas. Being the first publication on the Polish community in Paraguay in decades, the article begins with a historical outline of Polish migration to that region. The next section answers if and to what extent the research subjects identify themselves as Poles, whether they feel connected with Poland (as a state) or Polish culture, which elements of everyday life and festivity play key roles in the maintaining of Polish identity and how the transformations occurring in basic social structures affects the self-identification of the community members.

THE PRESENCE OF POLES IN PARAGUAY – A HISTORICAL OUTLINE

The first Poles settled in Paraguay at the end of the 19th century. Attracted by the low price of land, they had moved from Brazil and Argentina where they had already experienced life in the subtropics. The intensification of migration from Poland to Paraguay occurred between 1925-1939 and 1949-1953 (Zub Kurylowicz, 2004). The beginning of diplomatic relations between Poland and Paraguay is 1920 (*Obchody 95 rocznicy...*, 2015), however, in light of official documents relations were established in 1925, when the Polish diplomatic representatives in Buenos Aires, Argentina, received accreditation from the government of Paraguay (Szczepanik, Herman-Łukasik, Janicka, 2008: 142). Due to the difficult economic situation, especially in rural areas, during the interwar period, the Polish State conducted active foreign policy aimed at concluding settlement agreements abroad (Szczepanik, Herman-Łukasik, Janicka, 2008: 142). It is estimated that in the years 1918-1938 between 208,000 to 233,000 people migrated to South American countries². Compared to Brazil or Argentina, the emigration to Paraguay was relatively rare, but since the mid-30s it became a developing trend. In response to the great economic crisis, re-

² It should be specified that these figures refer to legal immigration. The number of illegal immigration is divergent (Smolana, 1983: 64).

restrictions on the reception of migrants by Brazil and Argentina were introduced in the 1930s³. This resulted in the search by the government of the Second Polish Republic for new states interested in accepting emigrants from Poland. Paraguay was the only country on the continent which did not introduce any immigration restrictions because the Paraguayan government was still interested in settling sparsely populated areas and considered immigration as a chance for improving the state of the country (Mazurek, 2006: 108). Paraguay's statistics show that in 1936-1938 it was the second largest Latin American country in terms of the number of immigrants admitted. The total number of Polish migrants to Paraguay reached 10,546 people. At the same time, only 58 people re-emigrated (Smolana, 1983: 52, 56, 61).

The Republic of Poland was a multi-ethnic and multicultural state, about a third its population declared a different nationality than a Polish one. That deeply influenced the ethnic structure of the emigration. Among immigrants arriving to Paraguay 85% were Ukrainians. In Asunción and in its vicinity only 10% of migrants were Poles, while the remaining 90% were Ukrainians (Mazurek, 2006: 107-109). Because of these conditions, the increased migration flows caused the emigrants from one country to form groups which differed nationally or even did not represent one ethnic community yet remained in neighboring relations. On November 16, 1936, the President of Paraguay announced a decree on Polish settlement, prepared in consultation with the representative of the government of the Second Polish Republic. Under the decree, Polish immigrants not only obtained the rights that Paraguayans had, but also received various subsidies to compensate for the initial difficulties of immigration (Zub Kurylowicz, 2004). They were exempted from land tax for five years and obtained the right to have education in the Polish language (Mazurek, 2006: 108). Since 1937, the Polish authorities were negotiating with the Paraguayan government to conclude a new immigration agreement. Due to the outbreak of World War II, the agreement was not ratified, despite the signing of the preliminary draft in 1939 (Mazurek, 2006: 110). The war completely halted migration from Poland to Paraguay. In the post-war order, Poland found itself in a group of so called countries of popular democracy. During the Cold War, diplomatic relations between Poland and Paraguay were suspended due to the policy of President Alfredo Stroessner who cut all contacts with the communist regimes. The fall of the Stroessner government in 1989 and the political transformation in Po-

³ The restrictions reduced the migration flow only partially and Polish settlements were still forming, as it happened in Misiones area in Northern Argentina. Polish migrants settled in Misiones province in years 1936-1938. Migrations to both regions were similar in character. Polish community in Misiones, unlike the one in Paraguay, has been a subject of throughout research.

land led to a renewal of diplomatic relations in 1991. According to the Central Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny), Paraguay still remains a rare choice for permanent migration. The latest figures on emigration to Paraguay date back to 2012, when the arrival of six Polish emigrants was recorded in the statistical yearbook. In the next years, i.e. 2013 and 2014 among the 1776 Europeans there were no Polish citizens (*Anuario Estadístico...*, 2014: 62). It is impossible to accurately determine the number of Poles living in contemporary Paraguay territory as there exists no statistical data on this subject. According to the report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of 2012 about 800 Poles lived in Paraguay (*Raport o sytuacji Polonii...*, 2013). In 2014, the vice-president of the Union of Poles in Paraguay estimated it at about 4,000 (*Pełny zapis przebiegu...*, 2014). Today, the largest number of Poles and their descendants reside in Itapúa (*Pełny zapis przebiegu...*, 2014).

STUDY AREA – THE ITAPÚA DEPARTMENT

The Itapúa Department is located in the south-eastern part of Paraguay. Although European settlement in the current area of the department was ongoing since the 17th century, the population was not intense. The region began to develop rapidly only at the turn of the 20th century with the arrival of immigrants from Europe and Japan. The settlers were transforming parts of the subtropical forest into agricultural land. Nowadays Itapúa is one of the three most densely populated departments. The department remains agricultural. Its population is mainly concerned with the cultivation of soybeans and the breeding of cattle. It is the second national producer of oil seeds, rice, wheat and corn. It is also one of the most important centers for cotton cultivation (*Itapúa. Atlas Censal...*, nd). Nationally and ethnically diverse flows of migration to Itapúa made it one of the most diverse regions of Paraguay. Its society remains multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious (Zub Kuryłowicz, 2004). The region is currently inhabited by the ancestors of immigrants from Europe (Germany, Austria, former Yugoslavia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Switzerland, Spain, Greece, Czechia, Ukraine, Belarus, Poland), Russia, Japan, Korea and other Latin American countries. The Itapúa department is home to indigenous people descendant from the Tupi-Guarani tribe (Zub Kuryłowicz, 2004). Overall, as many as 32 Indian communities of Mbyá-Guaranis and Maká peoples reside in the region currently. Paraguay has two official languages: Spanish and Guarani. It is estimated that 90% of the population can to some extent communicate using the latter language. Rural communities oftentimes rely solely on usage of Guarani. The 2002 census indicates that only 8% of Paraguayan socie-

ty communicates strictly in Spanish and this part is located mainly in the cities. The group communicating only in Guaraní is estimated to make up 27% of the population and resides mainly in rural areas (Kallfell, 2016: 18-20).

The most numerous clusters of people coming directly from the historical areas of Poland are located in the Itapúa department, mainly in the districts Carmen del Paraná and Fram. By 1956 they formed one administrative unit. Geographically, economically, politically and culturally, strong interrelations and relationships between them still exist (Zub Kuryłowicz, 2004).

Carmen del Paraná was founded on April 8, 1883 by then the president of Paraguay, Carlos Antonio Lopez. It was supposed to become a relocation area of an indigenous population of Encarnación who, to make advantage of its excellent location on the Paraná River, intended to transform it into a modern trade city.

1. DISTRICTS OF ITAPÚA, IN WHICH FIELDWORK WAS CARRIED OUT



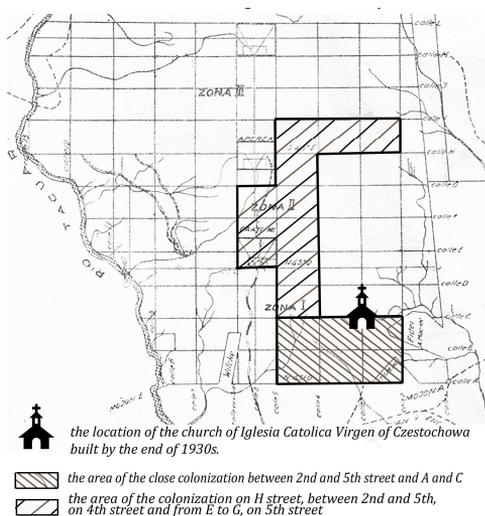
Source: Elaborated by G. Galecka.

For this purpose, Encarnación was connected by rail to the capital of the country Asunción in 1894, which gained additional importance in 1910 when it established a rail connection from Buenos Aires. Carmen del Paraná was included in the railway also in the same year⁴. It is important because thanks to

⁴ Carmen del Paraná was for the last stop after a long journey to most of the people arriving from Europe (Zub Kuryłowicz, 2004). In Carmen del Paraná there is a railway museum and the building is a reconstruction of the old railway station. There are exhibits connected with the history of railways and objects of daily use brought there by European immigrants. The collections also feature photographs showing Poles during their first years of settlement (*Inauguran museo histórico...*, 2013).

this connection, the next immigrants reached their destination in the Itapúa department. In Carmen del Paraná immigrants accounted for as much as 30% of the population. The main export product of this administrative center was wood harvested from the exploitation of forests. In the 1940s, the areas created after the forest exploitation were converted into cotton and rice fields (Zub Kurylowicz, 2004).

2. FRAM'S COLONY PLAN, 1930S (CARMEN DEL PARANÁ, REPUBLIC OF PARAGUAY)
WITH MARKED CLUSTERS OF POLISH EMIGRANTS



Source: Elaborated by G. Galecka.

The history of Fram colony dates back to 1888 when about 70,000 hectares were purchased by the inhabitants of Buenos Aires: a Norwegian immigrant Pedro Christophersen and Hugo Bunge. The land, which was mostly covered by forest, was acquired with the intention of exploiting forests and exporting wood. In 1908, when Christophersen became the sole owner of the land, he decided to divide the land and sell it. In 1920, Fram was established (Tyrakowski, 2012). Since 1928, the sale of land, primarily to European immigrants, was under the control of the Administración de la Colonia Fram. The Fram County, which included a colony of the same name, was created in 1956. The town of Fram and the colony were founded in 1927 (Zub Kurylowicz, 2004). The migration flow from the area of the Second Polish Republic was mainly present in the above-mentioned areas. In the area of the Fram colony, the Polish government purchased about 5,000 hectares from a total area of 70,000 hectares (Tyrakowski,

2012). The area was divided into quarters to be settled by roads, called “streets.” The settlers could acquire plots within the quarters on favourable terms (*Wia-
domości o Paragwaju...*, 1937: 3). The streets were marked with a number or
a capital letter of the alphabet. The Fram colony in Paraguay, and 3rd Street es-
pecially, can be regarded as the cradle of the Polish settlement. In the area of
Carmen del Paraná, about 100 Polish families settled in the years 1926-1938
(Tyrakowski, 2012). Forty families settled between streets 2-5 as well as be-
tween streets A-C. The remaining families settled on the street H, between
streets 2-5, on street 4 and between street E-G. It is estimated that there were no
more than 50 families left in 2012 out of the initial 100 (Tyrakowski, 2012).

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

The field research lasted from mid-February to the end of April 2016. It was conducted in the Itapúa department, mostly in the Fram colony. The study covered both the people living in the towns and in the scattered settlements on the farms. Some of the respondents lives under similar conditions, close to one another and they maintain regular personal contact. It is mainly a rural environment where agriculture and small-scale entrepreneurship are the primary occupations. When selecting participants for the study, it is important to define a generation that determines the chronology of emigration. Both generations of emigrants are often called first, second, third, etc., as well as the generation of direct emigrants. Alternatively, their descendants born in the country of settlement or coming with them as small children are called the first generation, their children second generation, etc. (Sękowska, 2010: 28). The second way of determining generations is used in the research. The participant interviewed belonged to the first and second generations born in Paraguay. The picture of life obtained from their statements covers four generations: two generations of respondents, the migration generation (i.e., parents of the first generation) and the third generation (grandchildren of the first generation and children of the second generation). Some interviews were conducted with representatives of two generations within the same family. The respondents are the descendants of migrants who arrived in Paraguay in 1936-1938. Their roots are mainly in the southeastern area of the Second Polish Republic. The places they mentioned include Gródek, Uściług, Tomaszów, Hrubieszów, Buczacz, Lublin. These were areas inhabited by various national-ethnic groups: mainly Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, but also Czechs and Germans. The multicultural nature of this part of Europe, the home of the parents and grandparents of the first generation born in Paraguay, was to some extent reconstructed in the southeast of Paraguay.

The research was based on two types of sources: induced (open interview) and existing ones. In most cases, the study plan included the following elements: After the first contact and prior appointment, the researcher spent two to three days in the respondent's home, during which she conducted one main open interview while also being a part-time observer of everyday life. The interviews were conducted on the basis of predetermined issues, based on the collection of the problems determined previously. The interviews were not structured to give the interlocutors a possibility to speak in a free manner. Interviews were conducted in Polish and Spanish. Most often during the conversation, the two languages were combined. Due to the researcher's nationality, the situation was often accompanied by fear and uncertainty in the use of the Polish language by the respondents resulting from the lack of language competence. These fears passed along with the passing of time. The interviews lasted from about an hour to over two hours. The initial assumption was that they would be individual interviews. Nevertheless, during the course of the study, interlocutors were more willing and able to answer questions when they were in the company of their closest family members (usually spouses). Accordingly, the interviews were normally conducted with two people (mostly married couples), and there were occasions where some other people were also present, but without active participation in the conversation. In addition to interviews, the researcher conducted observations during which regular notes were made, if it was possible. An additional aim of the research was archiving personal documents, which the respondents made available. The interviewees were asked about diaries, correspondence, photographs and official documents. Most of the material obtained was, however, family photographs. Referring to the experience of anthropological research, which largely relies on participant observation (accompanying and merging into a community while conducting research), the researcher was actively involved in household activities, including preparing meals together, helping with farm work and field work, agricultural machinery and harvesting. In order to document the course and everyday life of the respondents, photographs were taken. The researcher also participated in the life of the community, and since her stay occurred in the period preceding Easter, she attended several services at the Catholic church of the Virgen de Czestochowa and in the church of Carmen del Paraná, which allowed direct observation of the annual festivity and its family dimension.

Out of 24 in-depth interviews, 18, which were conducted with the respondents living in the ex Fram colony, were selected for analysis. When choosing the participants, the primary criterion was verbal confirmation from the re-

spondents that they were descendants of Poles or consider themselves Poles. The selection of study objects was conducted using the snowball sampling method. The previously contacted informant provided help in getting in contact with the Polish community. Later on, however, such help became unnecessary, as the respondents themselves contacted other potential interlocutors. The interviews were recorded and transcripts were made during the study. Subsequently, the material was coded and analyzed using quality assisting programs (MAXQDA and QDA Miner Lite). Fragments of the interviews used in the article were translated first into Polish (if there were inclusions in Spanish) and then into English, maintaining the original manner of speech.

NATIONAL IDENTITY

The subject matter of the research was the identity of both individual members of the Polish community and their co-created community. The testimonies of the respondents suggest that they consider their national identity within the context of heritage inherited from the previous generations, who were passing selected elements of their culture after migrating from Poland to Paraguay, defining the Polish identity of community members. Respondents compare themselves with the previous and next generations, identifying processes and transformations in relation to the migrant generation. National identity can also be considered from the perspective of differences between given national, ethnic and cultural groups. The same cultural element can be treated as something belonging to one group or individual, as something inherited, at the same time being a distinctive feature while considering the relations between groups, though it is worth stressing that none of the characteristics requires another to exist.

The article focuses on the aspect of the “inheritance” of identity, without attempting to give a comprehensive portrayal of national identity of the Polish community in Paraguay, which would require in-depth research, mainly on the issue of intercultural distance. Analysis of the testimonies demonstrate, that the inheritance aspect is vital in maintaining Polish identity. As the contrastive element of identity was present especially strongly when the respondents described their work environment, it is the subject of the second part of the article.

In response to questions considering the maintenance of Polish traditions and their sense of identity, the responders use such phrases as “Paraguayed” or “mixed already”. Their testimonies demonstrate that they consider themselves Paraguayan and at home in Paraguay, but that they also feel connected to the Motherland of their predecessors (parents, grand- and great-grandparents).

Analysis of the interviews reveal various dimensions of identity. The dominant self-identification is national (Polish) in character. It is accompanied by “migrant identity”, expressed in the usage of a term *extranjeros* (foreigners). Respondents distinguish dark-skinned Paraguayans (descendants of the first Spanish settlers and indigenous peoples or members of the Paraguayan indigenous groups) from the Paraguayan descendants of European origin born in Paraguay. In the later part of this article, Paraguayans will be understood in the first definition. The responders demonstrate their sense of otherness from Paraguayans, accompanied with a sense of superiority over them. Racial identity is closely connected to that phenomenon and also promotes a sense of superiority of the white settlers towards the locals. Similarly, the Paraguayans are believed to also treat the descendants of European migrants as a “foreign element” on the basis of racial differences. Both identities (racial and migrant) are common among the communities which migrated to the region from Europe. All dimensions are potentially insightful and their complexity makes them an interesting subject for further research, which requires applying various theoretical approaches.

The article focuses on the maintenance of national identity by consecutive generations of the descendants of Polish migrants in Paraguay, who live in an environment almost still intact by processes connected with what Zygmunt Bauman called “liquid modernity”. National identity can be identified on the basis of the respondents’ own identification while being asked about their sense of belonging and the way they believe to be perceived by the rest of the society. It can also be determined by specific cultural values, such as understanding and the usage of the Polish language in speech and writing, one’s attitude towards learning and passing the language to the further generations, participation in Polish ethnic organizations, the choice of friends and acquaintances, the degree of maintaining close family connections. Subjective and objective criteria can be used to determine national identity. A subjective dimension is based on such factors as self-identification, sense of sameness or sense of separateness. Objective criteria may be formal (place of birth, living area, predecessors background) or behavioral (usage of ethnolect, participation in ethnic organizations, participation in ethnic culture) (Synak, 1998). National identity can be defined as a process by which an individual identifies himself or herself with a given nation, or the similarities between the individual and the national community are noted. An individual possesses characteristics or qualities of a given nation, shared and recognized as important by other members of the national community (Waszczyńska, 2014: 86-87). The identification of members of the community resulting from migration movements with a particular nation relates i.a., to

the historical and cultural heritage of the country, family relations, private relations, ideological relationships, political relations between the native country and the country of settlement, and relations with the native country in general (Paleczny, 2000: 158). Factors influencing the sense of national identity include: period of stay after emigration, generational origin, family traditions, personality traits, ideological influences, assimilation rate, frequency of communication with country of origin (Paleczny, 2000: 157). One of the external factors influencing the shape of individual and group identity is functioning in a multicultural environment. At the unitary level, in the situation of multiculturalism, there are different types of cultural identities of individuals, and personality and attitudes are influenced by many factors. (Paleczny, 2007: 25-26). As a result of cultural contact, processes related to the ordering of the social world are started with the help of the categories: Us-Them, Ours-Strangers. For the first generation, immigration is a great change, both geographically and culturally. This is accompanied by a multiplicity of stimuli and new situations. The amount of these stimuli depends on the cultural and geographical distance between the country of origin and the country of immigration (Malewska-Peyre, 1992: 15-19). What is crucial for the individual is the culture passed down between the generations in the process of socialization (Malewska-Peyre, 1992: 28). The national identity of Polish communities in the Americas is subject to change due to historical processes and socio-cultural changes in the macro-structural dimension affecting the microstructures, cultural processes (i.a. assimilation, acculturation, integration), attitudes and personalities of individuals (Paleczny, 2000: 157-159).

POLISH COMMUNITY IN PARAGUAY: EVERYDAY LIFE AND FESTIVITY

In response to the question of identity, respondents referred to various elements of life and culture. They compared and pointed to changes in subsequent generations, resulting not only from the internal transformations of the community, but also from macro-structural reasons. When analyzing their responses, the key terms were: everyday life and the festivity. Referring to the definitions of these concepts (after Janusz Mucha, 1996), the world of work, family, close friends, the world of associations contains the everyday life. These are elements that are not subject to the constant reflection of members of a given community. It is ordinary, basic, normal, ordered, but constantly undergoing transformation, intersubjective but unconscious and unquestioned reality. Everyday life of an individual is shared with other members of the community.

Everyday life can be described as an intuitive know-how (Mucha, 1996: 19-21). Celebration is sometimes called as:

[Knowledge that] the ethnic world of life has its local space and its local calendar. It has its everyday activities and its uncommon activities, its festivity. Festivity, clearly visible against the background of everyday life, manifest itself in the contact with that reality which is particularly important for the culture of the group, with the sphere of sacrum. Festivity means a temporary breaking with the routine with the unconscious, unreflexive being (Mucha, 1996: 19-21).

The life of the Polish community is upheld to a great extent by individuals, through internal and external relations, and by the activities of various organizations. Some of the activities are severely stratified, others are actively reproduced. The community and its elements are slowly transformed, i.a. by the processes of adaptation, integration, assimilation or acculturation. The process of adaptation is especially noticeable in political and legal context, while integrational processes occur in form of intercultural marriages or taking part in intercultural practices, both secular and religious. Examples of acculturation include the adoption of elements of Polish culture, like practicing observances by those members of local community who never had Polish predecessors. When discussing their self-identification, the respondents emphasize the process of assimilation and transformations of customs and observances compared to the life of the previous generations.

FAMILY LIFE

Members of the immigrant generation left the borders of the Second Polish Republic as young people; sometimes they took their parents with them. Their stories indicate that sometimes entire families came to Paraguay. The immigrants were associated with the country of origin primarily by memories. World War II in Europe resulted in the displacement and migration of the population. The change of state borders after the end of the war and later the political situation, when Central Eastern Europe formed the block of communist states, weakened or broke the contacts between the immigrants and their families. Cultivating the common memory of the past and reminiscence about the country of origin took place within the immigrant community. Only one of the first-generation respondents was born in Poland, others were already born in Paraguay. As a fact, until the late 1970s there were no mixed marriages, so the first generation is characterized by a relatively large number of marriages within the Polish community. Most interviews with members of the first generation were conducted with non-mixed couples. Second generation's respondents mainly

married in the community of European immigrants. It was common to marry between the descendants of Poles and Ukrainians, but also Germans, Czechs and other nations. Marriages with Paraguayans were widespread only after 2000, and in the third generation have become more common.

3. PORTRAIT OF A FAMILY OF EMIGRANTS. UNDATED



Sources: Private collections provided by the owners.

This situation makes families become a conglomerate of several cultures. However, the fact that mixed marriages were concluded only from the second generation influenced the reinforcement of Polish customs, traditions and cultural practices. Among other things, it contributed to a very good knowledge of spoken Polish by the first generation. The emigrant generation was mostly monolingual. The descendants of emigrants use their Polish roots in peasant character. Occasionally participants declared their ability to read with comprehension and to write in Polish. Respondents from the first generation emphasize that the persistence of the Polish language outside the family, was consolidated by contact with Polish-speaking peers. The process of growing up, which included the expansion of contacts, meant that the Polish language gradually ceased to be the basic language used by the first generation. This generation, is therefore, already at least bilingual (as it is able to use the Polish language and one of the official languages; Spanish or Guarani). At present, Polish is spoken by the first generation in family situations. If the spouses come from families with Polish roots, they speak Polish amongst themselves, although even in this case they switch from the native language as a language of daily communication between spouses: “Now, more in Spanish. In Polish if we need to. Somehow,

we are better in Spanish, already accustomed” (W, Carmen del, Paraná, 23rd of April)⁵.

For subsequent Polish generations, Polish is at best a second language, and often, despite the fact that the first generation tried to maintain this skill among their children, due to various external factors, their ability to speak in Polish is considerably lower. First-generation respondents comment on the departure of communication practice in the Polish language by the second generation in the following way:

Out of our sons, the older ones speak a little Polish, but they have forgotten a lot. When they were with us all three talked, spoke well in Polish, and later they moved out to study, everything in Spanish, that made it difficult for them (W, Fram, 13th of April, 2016)⁶.

It is clear from the statements and observations that the cultivation of traditions depends on the older generation, and the dominant role is played by women. On women depends the way of functioning of family customs and emotional climate during celebrations and family holidays. The person from whom knowledge was learned was primarily mother or mother-in-law: “La tradición as mamá yo continuo, sigo. Just as my mother taught me. Is what Mom said they were saying. They say, so we say” (Carmen del Paraná/Fram, March, 2016)⁷.

NEIGHBORHOOD RELATIONS

The respondents often refer to the times when 3rd Street (“the third”) was the center of life for groups of emigrants leaving the Second Polish Republic. The immigrants who settled in Itapúa in the first period lived in a compact neighborhood. Poles as a nationality were then the minority in relation to other national or ethnic groups. They lived separately, in a compact cluster, but close (in the neighborhood) with other groups. As a result of the forest clearing and the establishment of new holdings, the population moved within the area surrounding the Fram, outside of the compacted area. A breakthrough in the structure of the population of 3rd Street occurred in the early 1960’s. Firstly, because the government sought to populate the still uninhabited territories in Paraguay (this included Tomás Romero Pereira in the north of Itapúa and Alto Paraná), the population began to move within the state. Secondly, these were years of an

⁵ Teraz już więcej po hiszpańsku, po polsku jak trzeba to rozmawiamy. Jakoś tak nam lepiej po hiszpańsku, już przyzwyczajone.

⁶ Z synów, starszy trochę mówi po polsku, ale pozapominali, póki byli z nami wszystkie trzy rozmawiali, dobrze rozmawiali po polsku, a później jak poszli na nauki, wyjechali, to tak wszystko po hiszpańsku, już im się zrobiło trudno.

⁷ La tradición tak jak mama yo continuo, sigo. Tak jak mama mnie nauczyła.

unfavorable economic climate agriculture. Consequently, the population also decided to migrate beyond the borders of the country:

Later everyone was going to seek a better life. They went to Argentina a lot (...). One thing that was nothing to plant, so most people went to Buenos Aires most. There was so much that they left their fields that could not be sold because there was no one to buy. So much that they were leaving about [19]54, 55. Before the 60s more or less. They were doing the work; the work and the lighter life was like here. Because here was poverty (M, Carmen del Paraná a, 13th of March, 2016)⁸.

Another reason for the change of population structure in the Fram area was the arrival of Alfredo Stroessner in 1954 and his anti-communist policy. In that period, information about political changes in the Soviet Union began to arrive in Paraguay. Brochures were distributed informing about the possibility of re-emigration to the USSR, and as a result, some Ukrainians decided to return to their native land. This contributed to the exchange of the population, because the farms sold or left by European migrants were settled by the Paraguayans:

As these Ukrainians fled, they left it left all the dishes, everything, no one bought. Horses left, carriages left, because there was no one to buy (...). And then as it has been since the 60's, Paraguayans started coming in from the camps, coming because these lands after migrants they were empty. They learned that there was land and here they were coming, the huts were empty and so they lived (M, Carmen del Paraná, 17th of March, 2016)⁹.

This process, however, was slow, and the respondents point out that until the 1970s there were few Paraguayan neighbors. Normally, Paraguayans and European migrants lived far apart, not only in cultural but also in spatial terms. The changes presented by the participants mentioned in the interviews were an important part of the history of the emigrant generation and the first generation. Members of the Polish community emphasize the loosening of neighboring ties (ties within the local community). They recall the world of childhood when spontaneous neighborhood visits were much more frequent: joint games where they were played, sung and also danced, but also neighborhood assistance. It is difficult to point out any obvious cause of these changes.

Parents told me that when they did not even have a mandioca [cassava], then the neighbor gave what he could and they were happy to go help him, work out mandioca, or liter of milk

⁸ *Później to kaźden jechał szukać lepsze życie. Bardzo duźo wyjechali do Argentyny. (...) Jedne, że to nie było co sadzić, to ludźie wybrali się najwięcej do Buenos Aires. Było duźo, że zostawiali tak swoje pola, nie można było sprzedać, bo nie było komu kupować. Tak duźo, że wyjeźdźzali mniej więcej to pięćdziesiąt cztery, pięćdziesiąt pięć lat. Przed sześćdziesiątym tak mniej więcej. (...) Dostawali robote, prace i lżejsze życie było jak tutaj. Bo tutaj to było bieda.*

⁹ *Jak te Ukraińcy uciekali, wyjeźdźzali to zostawiali wszystko naczynia, wszystko, nikt nie kupował. Konie zostawiali, wozy zostawiali, bo nie było komu sprzedać. (...) A wtedy jak już się zaczęło od 60 roku, to Paragwajce zaczęli najeźdźzać z campów, przyjeźdźzać, bo te ziemie co byli migranty to zostały się pustki. Dowiedzieli się, że jest ziemia i tutaj jechali, chaty puste i tak byli.*

give him. And now it's not enough. (...) such greed, jealousy – this one is better than me. Even in my days, as I had to put up a barn or what, as it was said these posts, were sewed and announced one, the third one should have five or six people, they came to help, raise, put it up. Now there is no, pay, pay yourself. The same people, but pay the worker as you want to get something. Previously, it was very helpful. Or harvest potatoes as they were also helping. I am here with my brother and brother-in-law, we are still with our own. We help one another with no difficulty (M, Carmen del Paraná, 13th of March, 2016)¹⁰.

4. WEDDING GUESTS, COLLECTIVE PHOTOGRAPHY. UNDATED



Source: Private collections provided by the owners.

According to the respondents, these processes do not occur only within the neighborhood group or ethnic group, they refer to changes in relations resulting from the progressive individualization processes.

WORK TIME

The participants were mostly residents of the settlement colony, and only one respondent mentions that her family lived from the very beginning in the village. Nowadays, the farm remains the basis for the maintenance of the respondents of the first generation (regardless of whether they live in the city or in the countryside), and they only differ to some extent within the social functions served currently or in the past in the Polish, as well as local communities. Later

¹⁰ *Rodzice opowiadali, że jak nie mieli nawet mandioki, to sąsiad dał później ten sąsiad potrzebywał, to oni z chęcią szli pomagać jemu, odrabiać te mandioki, czy litre mleka tam dostać. A teraz już mało. Taka zachłanność, zazdrość – ten ma to ja kupię lepsze (...) Jeszcze w moich czasach już jak trzeba było postawić jakąś stodołę czy co, jak to mówio te posito, się przyszykowało i zawiadomił jednego, drugiego, trzeciego Trzeba było pięć czy sześć osób, to przyszli pomóc, podnieść, to postawić. Teraz już nie ma, płac, zapłacić sobie. Te same ludzie, ale płac robotnika jak chcesz coś postawić. Dawniej bardzo się pomagało. Albo zbiory ziemiaków jak były to też pomagały. Ja tutaj z bratem i ze szwagrem, to jeszcze my ze swoimi tak. Trzeba coś to jeden drugiemu pomoże bez żadnej trudności.*

generations of Polish community are better educated in comparison to the first generation or even second. Acquiring education by successive generations is associated with the departure of young people to cities, from which only some people return. Members of successive generations leave the rural environment also to change their profession, mainly migrating to Encarnación, Ciudad del Este and Asunción. Both the generation of immigrants and the first generation were not well educated, but due to the specificity of Paraguay, their social position was higher than the people of Paraguay. European settlers had a sense of superiority to the Paraguayans, although they were mostly uneducated farmers, coming from poor, numerous, peasant families, who possessed only small farms and low social status back in Poland. A sense of superiority resulted from perceived greater skills and a better knowledge of soil cultivation and organizational skills. Also, the Paraguayan government saw the European settlers this way. The autostereotype of a certain superiority of descendants of European emigrants is still functioning today, which also shows the sense of the civilization distance of the descendants of Poles to the Paraguayans. “We are different from them. We are *extranjeros* (foreigners), and they are Paraguayan. We are different, because ours, we were cultural people, and they are wild” (M, Carmen del Paraná, 17th of March, 2016)¹¹. As an “inherited” feature, respondents point out the thriftiness, distinguishing them from the people of Paraguay:

Poles are thrifty, they think thrifty and more about labor. I have that cause I am Polish (...). I think about the work. I do this: this and this road is broken, you have to go to the machine – the road you have to fill it. These Paraguayans, what are they here, do not care. It is what it is, if there isn't – who cares (M, Carmen del Paraná, 14th of March, 2016)¹².

Besides a different system of work organization, as a different form of expressing the economy of the Polish community and its attachment to the land, respondents indicate the cultivation of home gardens, which, according to them, are not popular among Paraguayans. The immigrants, unaware of the conditions under which they would live, would bring from Poland the tools they thought they needed to start a new life. These included: carriages (called *carro polaco*) and sewing machines. In Carmen del Paraná a museum was opened to exhibit objects brought by European immigrants.

¹¹ *My się różnimy od nich. My jesteśmy extranjery, a one są Paragwajce. My się różnimy, bo nasze, my byli kulturalne ludzie, a oni dzikie.*

¹² *Polak jest hadziąj, myśli po hadziąjsku [po gospodarsku] i o robocie więcej. To ja mam, że ja jestem Polak. (...) Myślę o robocie. Ja robię tak o: ta i ta droga jest popsuta, trzeba maszyną pojechać – drogę trzeba naładować. Te Paragwajce, co one są tutaj, ich nie obchodzi to. Je - je, nie ma – nie ma.*

5. FIRST GENERATION OF THE POLISH COMMUNITY. UNDATED



Sources: Private collections provided by the owners.

Trading under the conditions of a farm and the need to settle official matters were one of the main motivations for emigrants to learn Spanish. When asked about the knowledge of Spanish by parents, one of the interlocutors says:

Very little. Only my dad spoke a bit of a *castellano* [Spanish] because he had to. Sometimes he was going to sell some cattle or something, and the ones who came to buy were all from here. They could not speak Polish, nor Ukrainian nor nothing. So, dad had to speak some *castellano*, to arrange things, and sometimes he needed to go, or to court, or somewhere, to register the child, it had to be in Polish and Spanish. And daddy got it sooner than mom, she could not. Oh, how my mother could not (W, Carmen del Paraná, 20th of March, 2016)¹³.

Similar factors are causing respondents from the first and second generations to learn the Guaraní language (members of the third generation are learning this language at school). This skill is especially valuable in rural areas, where many Paraguayans speak exclusively in the Guaraní language. Guaraní language proficiency is primarily attributed to men who need to communicate with Paraguayans working with them or for them.

ORGANIZATION OF THE POLISH COMMUNITY

An event that was symbolic for the Polish community, which was extremely important for the integration of the community and the rebuilding of the sense of Polish identity among the members of the community, was the visit of

¹³ *Bardzo mało. Tato to jeszcze troche kaliczu po kastyżu, bo i trzeba było. Czasem miał sprzedąć jakiegoś bydłaka czy coś, no i te co przychodzili kupować, to oni wszystkie byli tutejsze. Oni nie umieli po polsku, ni po ukraińsku, ni jak. No to już tata musiał po kastyżu, by zgodę robić i czasem gdzieś trzeba było, czy do sądu, czy coś jak trzeba było dziecko zapisać, to musowo było po polsku po kastyżu. I tata prędzej pojął a mama nie mogła. Aj mama tak nie mogła.*

Pope John Paul II. Until now, it is considered one of the most important events. During his apostolic journey to Uruguay, Bolivia, Peru and Paraguay, he visited the city of Encarnación. One of the participant said: “After the pope came, then after the pope it all begin, it started very Polish. (...) We feel that Juan Pablo Secundo did it so that we were feeling like Poles here. He renewed it” (M, Carmen del Parana 17th of March)¹⁴. The preparations before the Pope’s visit took about two months to integrate the Polish community, and during this period a chorus lead by Maria Stankiewicz was formed. The rehearsal at Encarnación attracted people not only from the area, but also from Itapúa, and even from the Polish community in Posadas, Argentina: It was shortly after the visit that a Polish Salon, located on 3rd Street, was built. John Paul II became a symbolic figure and in this dimension was mentioned several times by the interlocutors:

Very beautiful that the pope was a Pole. The Pope was very much praised, liked. It was so nice, it helped us a lot in our faith. A kind of person, he was not sitting there in Rome, but he was traveling around the world, where things were tough. There were many dictators. He was liked by the people, by the countries. He came to Paraguay and this year he came; the dictatorship was over. They praised the president and started democracy. Many say that where the pope went, he started a great change later (M, Fram, 13th of April, 2016)¹⁵.

Among Poles, John Paul II was the most frequently quoted by the respondents and this statement, among other things, shows the sense of pride of the Poles, especially in the way in which they celebrated this pontificate. The figure of John Paul II and his visit to Paraguay changed not only the perception of themselves by the members of the Polish community, but as the respondents emphasized, the attitude of the Paraguayans to Poland and Poles also changed. The Pope’s visit contributed to group advancement in the hierarchy of social prestige.

Only when Pope John Paul II was chosen, Karol Wojtyła was elected Pope, then only: Poles are not communist because the Pope is Catholic, right? That the communist government was [in Poland] – it was, but not all the people. When they were leaving, they were leaving a free Poland (M, Carmen del Paraná, 14th of March, 2016)¹⁶.

¹⁴ *Ja nie powiem, jak przyjechał papież, to po papieżu przyszło, zaczęło się bardzo polskość. (...) My czuję, że Juan Pablo Secundo jakby to zrobił, że my się czuli Polakami. Odnowił to.*

¹⁵ *Bardzo pięknie, że papież był Polak. Papież bardzo był chwalony, lubiony. Nam to tak bardzo miło, bardzo nam wspomagało w naszej wierze. Bardzo taki człowiek, że nie siedział tam w Rzymie, tylko jeździł po świecie, gdzie byli trudne sprawy. Było dużo dyktatorów. Dał się lubić, przez ludzi, przez państwa. Przyjechał do Paragwaju i w tym roku co on przyjechał, to dyktatura się skończyła. I chwalili prezydenta i zaczęła demokracja. Dużo tak mówią, że gdzie papież pojechał, było takie nie ten, to wielka zmiana później.*

¹⁶ *Dopiero jak był wybrany papież Jan Paweł II, Karol Wojtyła został wybrany jako papież, wtenczas dopiero: “Polacy nie są komunistyczny, bo papież je katolik, nie?”. Że rząd komunistyczny był [w Polsce] – to był, ale nie, że wszystkie ludzie. Wtedy co wyjeżdżali to wyjeżdżali z Polski wolnej.*

Another informant, referring to the earlier attitude of the Paraguayan authorities to people of Polish descent, says:

The priest said that it was difficult to get some documents, they asked “What nationality?” – “Pole”. – “A, communist”. And he goes on: After the Pope visited they asked: – “From what country?” – “From Poland”. – “Like the pope”. (...) has changed, turned a hundred percent. Before that we were here like these mice (M, Carmen del Paraná, 13th of March, 2016)¹⁷.

At the beginning of the settlement, the central point and meeting place of the Polish community in the area of the Fram colony was the Catholic church of the Virgen de Czestochowa, founded on August 26, 1939. This place has special significance to this day: “Our sons were all baptized in this church, my mother married my dad here, we were married here, and all our boys. We also met in the chapel, at the party” (W, Carmen del Parana 13th of March)¹⁸, and the nearby school (no detailed information about the history of the school was obtained during the research and the information from the interviews is unclear). Both objects were created with participation of the members of the Union of Poles in Paraguay, established on March 10, 1936, operating until today¹⁹. In 1989 the Polish Salon was built. It is a central place for group integration and the strengthening of environmental ties. Not only Polish community meetings held there, but also the social life of the members of the local community takes place there. There are family celebrations and other occasional events. The respondents stress the fact that since the foundation of the Polish Salon, the social life and life of the Polish community, and now also the local community, has moved from family homes to this place. The Salon is not only a place where events of Polish character are organized, but also private events take place there: weddings, birthdays etc. In the Polish Salon there are four main meetings of the Polish community: May 3, *Día de la Constitución* (Constitution Day of May 3rd), August 25 *Celebración de la Virgen de Czestochowa* (Day of Our Lady of Czestochowa), November 11, *Día de la Independencia de la República de Polonia* (Independence Day of the Republic of Poland) and January or February of the year is held at the *Fiesta del Acordeón* (Festival of Accordion)²⁰. These meetings attract the Polish community of Paraguay, as well as members

¹⁷ *Ksiądz powiadał, że było trudno załatwić jakieś dokumenty, pytali: – “Z jakiej nacji?” – “Polaków”. – „A, komunistycznej”. Jak wyszedł papież stamtąd, pytają się – “Z jakiej nacji?”. – “Z Polski”. – “A stamtąd jak papież”. (...) się zmieniło, obróciło sto procentowo. Przedtem my tutaj byli jak te myszy.*

¹⁸ *Nasze syny wszystkie w tym kościele chrzczone, moja mama ślub wzięła tutaj z tatą, żenili się tutaj my i wszystkie nasze chłopcy. My poznaliśmy się też w tej kaplicy, na zabawie.*

¹⁹ Information about this institution is not available in the database concerning the organization of Polish institutions abroad, maintained by the Central Statistical Office.

²⁰ Information about these celebrations were gathered during the interviews and video recordings of it, named *Fiesta del Acordeón* were analysed as source material.

of other Polish communities coming mostly from near Encarnación – Posadas. Apart from the Polish community, local community members take part in the celebrations, belonging to different ethnic groups. In relation to the previous generation, the participation of successive generations of emigrants in these gatherings is not only about building ethnic ties, but also strengthening local and territorial ties and crossing ethnic boundaries. Respondents also participate in events of a similar nature organized by other associations. Despite the fact that these four events are of a different character (one national, the other religious, and the festival of accordion relates to folklore), in the Polish community their celebrations look very similar. All the celebrations begin with a mass in the Catholic church of the Virgen de la Czesochowa, celebrated in Polish by a Polish priest, who comes from Asunción especially for this occasion. Then the ceremony is moved to the Polish Salon. There is a repast where traditional Polish dishes are served: dumplings (*pierogi*), *gotąbki* and smoked meat. Part of the preparation is shared by representatives of different generations and ethnic groups. Men in a special room prepare a barbecue (*asado*), related to the tradition of South American cuisine. Meanwhile, women are busy preparing i.a. side dishes and making dumplings. The dance is accompanied by Polish music, usually performed by the Los Ziomek band (the musicians represent three generations of the Polish community). The band is releasing albums and played an important role in making Krakowiak the most famous Polish dance in this part of Paraguay. Los Ziomek is one of the originators of the accordion feast. During the stay, the researcher participated as a guest at various family events, including a birthday celebration for the President of the Union of Poles in Paraguay, held in the district of Tomas Romero Pereira. It was a meeting that merged elements of the family and an integration ceremony for the Polish community. A family from Buenos Aires, neighbors and members of the Polish Union in Paraguay, who lived in the area of the former colony of Fram, came to the jubilee. During the interviews, the respondents mentioned that apart from regular participation in meetings in the Polish Salon they sometimes participate in other Polish events. The participants named *Fiesta Nacional del Inmigrante* in Obera (Argentina), and several people participated in one of the conventions of the Union of Associations and Organizations of Latin America held in Montevideo.

FESTIVITY

All the respondents declared to follow the Roman Catholic Church, and in one case the participant mentioned the change of confession by a family member, which he could not understand. Although Catholicism is the dominant reli-

gion in whole Paraguayan society (about 90%), it has a dimension supporting the national identity of the Polish community. The Polish settlers were a minority among the followers of other religions (Orthodox and Protestant) and they strongly bind the Catholic religion and the Catholic Church with Polishness. The study revealed an opinion (not necessarily straightforward) that the way of conducting pastoral activity is of great importance for the preservation of the religious-national community. Interlocutors often spoke about the pastors of the Roman Catholic Church coming from Poland. Polish priests were present in Paraguay from the very beginning of the settlement. Respondents emphasize that they understand the specific needs of the Polish community and that priests of other nationalities need to be encouraged to take into account their particular pastoral traditions, such as caroling, blessing food on Holy Saturday, a way of celebrating holidays and a day celebrated exclusively by Poles and the Polish community: May 3rd, the Day of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Poland, established at the request of the Polish Bishops in 1920. The respondents observe the dissemination and disintegration of the Polish community and the progressive secularization of subsequent generations and as one of the participants notice:

Long, long ago it was a real May celebration, and for all of May we were coming. Every day we came, and we lived 3.5 km away and we came on foot in the evening and if mother was coming, we came by carriage, but normally did we go with father on foot, it was not far, today half a kilometer and it is far away already (M, Carmen del Paraná, 13th of March)²¹.

The respondents who live away from 3rd Street, usually come to the church of the Virgen de Czestochowa only two or three times a year on the occasion of Polish gatherings.

Despite the fact that in Paraguay there are Polish priests, as mentioned by one of the respondents, there is currently no Polish priest to hold a permanent ministry in the former colony of Fram. He arrives only for Polish community meetings organized by the Poles Union in Paraguay several times a year. Both parishes: in Fram and Carmen del Paraná and the church dedicated to Our Lady of Czestochowa, are served by one priest. Masses in the "Polish" church are celebrated once a month. These factors caused the Polish community to work out some religious practices aimed at preserving Polish customs, maintaining Polish identity and integrating the community. Due to the decrease in the number of services on 3rd Street every Sunday the parishioners meet in the church

²¹ *Dawniej, jeszcze dawniej, dawniej, to jeszcze była majówka, cały maj przychodzili. Każdy dzień przychodzili, i my mieszkali 3, 5 kilometra i na piechote przychodzili z tatem wieczorem, jak mama też szła, to już jechali wozem, ale jak tak to my z tatem na piechote chodzili, nie było to daleko, dziś pół kilometra i to już jest daleko.*

themselves for a common prayer. Depending on the nationality of the participants, the prayer is said in Spanish or Polish. There are elements of prayer that are spoken in Polish by the Paraguayans themselves. The observation shows that in such meetings part the residents of the nearest neighborhood take part, about ten people in total. Church watchers seem to be leading the meetings. It is extremely important for the respondents to celebrate Christmas and Easter. The most important habits include caroling (meaning: singing carols). Carols are sung in the church and at home, but one of the most important customs is singing carols by the carolers walking around the houses:

(...) we sing mostly during mass, it is in the church, and then the carolers visit homes, but like that at home, little. And carolers are listening, how we sing from the book, and they listen and learn. (...) Miserable silent we don't sing, mama as she lived she sang it. Then we forgot. Let us go to the little barn – I know, God is born – too (W, Carmen del Paraná, 20th of March)²².

In the area of research, the old Polish custom of caroling was combined with a “carol”, a pastoral visit. Two groups of carols are formed, one from Fram and the other from 3rd Street. These groups go with the priests around the houses. This custom was introduced at a time when there were still priests from Poland in the colony. Later the custom was taken over by Paraguayan priests at the request of the local community. The custom of caroling has also been preserved by the Ukrainian community, which, however, does not combine it with a pastoral visit. Another distinctive custom of the Polish community is the blessing of Easter food, which takes place on Holy Saturday. The custom of food blessing is specific to the descendants of Central East Europeans. In the area of Paraguay, they are descendants of Poles and Ukrainians. One of the respondents said “They carry blessed food. Just like our sons are also already, Poles married with Ukrainians, Ukrainians with Poles. Whenever there is a change of priests, so we tell that our tradition is always to bless food for Passover” (M, Fram, 13th of April)²³. The blessing of food, apart from caroling, is an example of cultural diffusion. It is difficult to say whether or not it will disappear with the next generations, because this custom, supported by the Polish community, is taken over by Paraguayans who have no Slavic roots. During the interviews, subjects related to domestic religious practices were also discussed. Attention was drawn pri-

²² (...) się śpiewa przeważnie jak jest w kościele msza, to w kościele, a potem po domach kolędniki chodzą, w domu tak, to mało. A kolędniki to tak, tak mniej więcej my z książeczki śpiewamy, a oni posłuchają i uczą się. (...) Mizerna cicha nie śpiewamy, mama jak żyła to śpiewała. Potem jej zapomnieli. Pójdziem wszyscy do stajenki – to znam, Bóg się rodzi – też (...).

²³ Święconkę noszą. Tak jak nasze syny to też już, Polacy z Ukrainkami pożenione, Ukraince z Polakami. Zawsze co nieraz jest zmiana księży, to my rozmawiamy, że nasza tradycja jest zawsze na Paschę święcić.

marily to two things: the function of a family in preserving Polish identity and the diversity of these practices held in individual homes. It is within the family that the habits remain the most persistent, including those of a religious nature. The respondents point out these habits as elements of culture that distinguish them from the culture of Paraguay. Domestic religious practices illustrate the processes of adaptation. One example may be the habit of breaking a wafer during a Christmas Eve, which has been replaced by the sharing of wheat:

Before we had a wafer, a Polish priest, and now a Paraguayan. One day my mother had a wafer but now the priests do not bring it. They ran out. My mom told me that in Poland they cooked wheat for Christmas Eve, which had to be cooked with honey or sugar, and it looks nice when put away... and so the wheat in a bowl, we give such cups we have, the table is nicely made. We sit down at the table and we pray. We pray to God for good health and prosperity. Thank him for what we have. At this time the mother takes, takes the wheat and gives it to the children. And then we quietly eat, you do not need to talk (W, Carmen del Paraná, 15th of March, 2016)²⁴.

Another example of adaptation is the use of unblessed communion wafer instead of the usual wafer:

(...) I remember one priest saying: "What will the pope say?", And Pope already John Paul the Second, ours already, Pole. They were afraid of what we want. I say "The Pope knows a lot better what it means, he is a Pole, this is our Polish tradition". And he said to it – Well, take it (W, Fram, 13th of April)²⁵.

Some participants generally resigned from the habit of sharing the wafer. The main reason pointed out by the respondents is the lack of such a tradition in the culture of Paraguay. This is an example of ongoing assimilation processes of the Polish community. The practice that has been preserved in some homes is the custom of praying before a meal. Respondents emphasize that this is happening in important moments, or on holidays. The habits cultivated by the respondents differ in terms of the extent to which their religious dimension has been preserved and their form passed on from generation to generation. These habits include fasting preceding important church holidays and the way of celebrating holidays. Some interlocutors say they no longer fast on Christmas Eve: "(...) Cold meats, beef in different ways. *Asado* (grill) no longer" (M, Carmen

²⁴ *Kiedyś był opłatek, byli księża polskie, a teraz paragwajskie. Kiedyś moja mama mieli opłatek, ale teraz nam księża nie przywożą. Skończył się. Moja mama opowiadała, że w Polsce gotowali pszenicę na wigilię trzeba było gotować, z miodem albo z cukrem, i jak ona tak ładnie nakipi to odstawić... i tak te pszeniczkę w miseczkę, dajemy takie filiżanki mamy, stół się ładnie zaścieli. Siada się za stół i się modlimy. Prosimy Pana Boga o zdrowie, powodzenie. Dziękujemy za to co mamy. W ten czas matka bierze, nabiera pszeniczkę i podaje dzieciom. I później cichutko jeść, nie trzeba rozmawia (...).*

²⁵ (...) *Pamiętam był jeden ksiądz, co mówił: "A co papież powie?", a papież już był Paweł II, nasz już, Polak. Oni się obawiali na co my to chcemy. Ja mówię "Papież wie dużo lepiej jak co to oznacza, on Polak, to jest nasza tradycja polska" a no to "Dobrze, weź" (...).*

del Parana, 24th of March)²⁶. When describing Christmas, another interlocutor says: “And on Christmas Eve, everything can be but no meat. Here we have *sopa paraguaya*, such a *maíz* (corn) flour, can be cabbage. I have porridge, rice, various kinds. And the other day it’s meat, sausage fried, smoked meat. There is beer, wine. We rest two days, one if there is much work” (W, Carmen del Paraná, 15th of March)²⁷. Respondents talk about customs related to the holiday season, point out the differences between the culture of Paraguay and Polish culture while emphasizing their attachment to the traditions of the fathers.

CONCLUSIONS

The article presents the contemporary Polish community in Paraguay. The socio-cultural phenomena discussed in the study was analyzed from the point of view of the examined people, according to the assumptions of humanistic sociology. The elements of everyday life and festivity are the most popular and widely discussed aspects of life of the Polish community in the context of maintaining the national identity of successive generations of descendants of Polish immigrants arriving in Paraguay in 1936-1938. The respondents were asked during the interviews about the preservation of Polish traditions and identified themselves in comparison with their successive generations using the following formulas: “mixture already”, “Paraguayed”, “We are intermixed”, thus expressing the process of progressive assimilation. At the same time, the members of the community feel very different from the Paraguayans, both physically and culturally. Respondents point out that this perception is not only theirs, as the people of Paraguay in some sense still treat them as foreigners. The respondents often point out that cultural differences are most perceptible in the way of celebrating religious holidays. The nature of secular celebrations is on the other hand, the result of mixing elements of different traditions. Members of the Polish community who live in the former colonies of Fram, live in a multicultural environment where ethnic groups emphasize their diversity, which fosters the cultural elements of their ancestors. Thus, although the members of successive generations of descendants of Polish emigrants have succumbed fully to the processes of state assimilation, the process of cultural assimilation can be regarded as still insignificant and slow. Family is a place of protected identity, in

²⁶ (...) *wędlina, wołowina na różne sposoby jest. Asado (grill) już nie (...)*.

²⁷ *A na wigilię, wszystko może być, ale mięsa nie. Tutaj pieką sopa paraguaya, takie z maizowej [kukurydzianej] mąki, może być kapusta. Ja tu mam porota, ryż, kluski rozmaite takie. A na drugi dzień to już jest mięso, kielbasa podsmażona, wędzonka. Jest piwo, wino. Świętuję dwa dni, ale jak jest dużo pracy, to jeden dzień.*

the narratives of respondents the family is now playing the most important role in shaping national and cultural identity. Traditions and customs are transmitted from generation to generation, which are important elements of the cultural system. Many of the habits formerly commonly practiced outside of the family of a local or regional community are maintained only within the family. The research shows that changes in the family structure most profoundly alter the way of self-definition of the members of the Polish community. Families transform and change their way of functioning due to various external factors, which modify the image of the entire Polish community. Figures that are unequivocally considered to be key in maintaining the tradition are mothers or mothers-in-law, as their position and origin affects the following generations of mixed marriages.

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