Migration in an 'Age of Uncertainty': The Creation of a Polish Community in the Vaal Triangle, South Africa (1980-1989)

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For my oupa, Billy Ives (1939-2021), my ouma, Martie Ives (1943-2021), and my uncle and godfather, Raymond Ives (1964-2021)

Abstract

This thesis analyses Polish migration to South Africa, specifically the wave of migrants who came to South Africa during the 1980s. Everett Lee's theory of migration is used as a framework to analyse this phenomenon. This thesis analyses the context of 1980s Poland and highlights the circumstances which would constitute the "push" factors for Poles. Similarly, the South African context of the 1980s is analysed to discover the "pull" factors for Poles to South Africa. It may seem counterintuitive that South Africa would have any pull factors for Poles wanting to escape the tumultuous reality of Poland, as the South African situation was even more turbulent. However, a very specific set of circumstances in South Africa made the country, and especially the Vaal Triangle, attractive for Poles. These circumstances were those surrounding the South African industrial sector. There was a severe skilled labour shortage due to the black workforce being mostly unskilled or semiskilled, a direct result of Bantu education. South Africa needed white skilled workers, to both supplement the industrial workforce and to increase the number of the ruling white minority. This thesis examines the Polish expatriate community which sprung up in the Vaal Triangle due to these circumstances and discusses the role of religion in consolidating this community, as well as the impact of this community on the surrounding area, and their personal experiences of South Africa during the 1980s.

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Introduction

The Polish community made headlines in South Africa with Janusz Waluś being released on parole on 22 December 2022. Waluś assassinated Chris Hani on 10 April 1993. Hani was the secretary-general of the South African Communist Party.[1] Waluś was born in Zakopane in 1953 and emigrated to South Africa in 1981 to work in a glass factory which had previously been established by his father and brother who had come to South Africa in the 1970s. A few years after arriving, the glass factory went bankrupt.[2] Shortly after, Waluś got involved in far-right politics, becoming a member of both the National Party and the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* (the Afrikaner Resistance Movement)- a white supremacist neo-Nazi political party that terrorised and killed black South Africans. It is unclear what drove Waluś to right-wing extremism, but it is clear that he was an exception to the rule, and does not reflect the experiences of the overwhelming majority of Poles who came to South Africa during the 1980s. While the events surrounding Hani's death and Waluś' subsequent sentencing and release are in no doubt noteworthy, it is unfortunate that to most South Africans this event encompasses all that they know of the Polish community in South Africa and the long and multifaceted relationship that Poland and South Africa has had for centuries. This thesis aims to help remedy this.

It may seem as though Poland and South Africa have not had much contact or influence on each other historically. However, according to the Polish political scientist, Arkadiusz Żukowski, the Polish presence in South Africa can be traced back to the time of the Portuguese explorers.[3] Mariusz Kowalski, a political, population and historical geographer from the Stanisław Leszczycki Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization, supports this argument by stating that, while not commonly known, Poland played an under-acknowledged role in colonising the Cape. Therefore, not surprisingly, approximately 1% of contemporary Afrikaans South Africans have Polish ancestors.[4] Contact and influence between South Africa and Poland have

[1] Sascha-Dominik Bachmann and Sasha-Lee Stephanie Afrika, "Janusz Walus parole: Constitutional Court was right - but failed the sensitivity test". *News24*.12 December 2022.
[2] John Pomfret, "Alleged South African Assassin is Called Anti-Communist," *The Washington Post.* 13 April 1993.
[3] Arkadiusz Żukowski, "Polish Relations with and Settlement in South Africa (circa. 1500-1835)," *Historia* 37 (no.1) (May 1992): 1.
[4] Mariusz Kowalski, "Poles in the Dutch Cape Colony 1652-1814". *Werkwinkel* 10, no. 1 (2015): 65.

endured into the present. For example, according to the United Nations Comtrade database on international trade, South African exports to Poland in 2021 came to a total value of US$243.36 Million.[5]

Overall, the links between South African and Polish history is under-researched, and the aim of this thesis is to help fill in the historical gaps, particularly regarding Polish migration to South Africa during the 1980s. During the 1980s, almost a million Poles left their homeland and migrated across the world, the majority taking up residence in Western Europe, Scandinavia, and the United States. However, some Poles travelled to South Africa.[6] While the migration out of Poland and into the previously mentioned nations is quite well-documented, the migration of Poles to South Africa is a significantly understudied area. In addition to analysing the migration patterns of Poles to South Africa, this study specifically looks at the formation of a Polish community in the Vaal Triangle, South Africa, and the importance of religion in consolidating this community. Therefore, the focus of this study is on the creation of a specific Polish community in South Africa, and does not aim to discuss every aspect of the Polish community's interaction with South African society more broadly.

This research intends to combine this understudied area of research with another, that of the Vaal industries in the Vaal Triangle in South Africa. It will do this by specifically investigating the Polish migration patterns to the Vaal Triangle in South Africa during the 1980s, an area that attracted a proportionally higher number of Polish immigrants than other parts of the country. This research therefore aims to analyse Polish migration to South Africa in the 1980s, and the reasons for it in the broader context of the Vaal industries, particularly the *Suid-Afrikaanse Steenkool, Olie en Gas maatskappy* (South African Coal, Oil and Gas Company) (Sasol), as well as the Iron and Steel Corporation (ISCOR). The research will aim to contextualise Polish migration in the broader context of the 1980s, namely the states of emergency in apartheid South Africa, the implementation of martial law in Poland, and the global context of the late Cold War.

[5] Anon, "South African Exports to Poland." N.d. Accessed: 15 December 2022. https://tradingeconomics.com/south-africa/exports/poland
[6] Patryk Pleskot, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges", *Polish American Studies*, vol. 72, no. 2, (2015): 50.

The aim of this study is to analyse the relationship between South Africa and Poland during the 1980s, specifically in relation to the wave of Polish migrants to South Africa during this time. To do this, however, one must contextualise the 1980s. It was an incredibly turbulent moment in Poland, South Africa, and the world. In Poland, this was the peak of anti-communist sentiment, expressed in the spontaneous and organic formation of the trade union *Solidarność* (hereafter, 'Solidarity') in early 1980, the subsequent implementation of martial law and a wave of mass emigration out of Poland, ending eventually in 1989 with the negotiated end of communist rule in Poland. In South Africa, in the 1980s the apartheid government implemented successive states of emergency in response to popular resistance, an increase in sanctions against South Africa, as well as an increase in violence and global anti-apartheid sentiment.[7] The Polish and South African contexts acted as push (out of Poland) and pull (into South Africa) factors according to Everett Lee's theory of migration[8], which is discussed in further detail below.

Globally, the world experienced a surge of revolutions due to the end of the Cold War, while still recovering from the oil crisis of 1973 and the energy crisis of 1979. The context of 1980s Poland and South Africa, the oil (1973) and energy (1979) crises (which subsequently contributed to the economic upswing of Sasol), as well as general migration patterns are key components of this research, and as such, the literature discussed below is paramount to this study.

Revolution, war, and economic nationalism in the Middle East acted as a catalyst in the disruption of the global oil supply, resulting in a spike in oil prices in 1973-74 and then again in 1978-80. During this time, the Soviet Union overtook the United States as the world's leading oil producer.[9] As a result of the sudden influx of money from oil, the Soviet Union could exert additional military and economic power in the Third World. This resulted in concern from the West, as it seemed that the ability to ensure oil from the Middle East was uncertain, meaning that there would be a greater dependence on

[7] Padraic Kenney, *1989: Democratic revolutions at the Cold War's end: a brief history with documents* (Boston: Macmillan Learning, 2010): 101.
[8] Everett S. Lee, "A Theory of Migration." *Demography,* Vol. 3, No. 1 (1966): 48.
[9] David Painter, "Oil and Geopolitics: The Oil Crises of the 1970s and the Cold War". *Historical Social Research: Special Issue: The Energy Crises of the 1970s: Anticipations and Reactions in the Industrialized World*. (2014): 204.

resources from the Third World. This fed into fears of the Soviet Union winning the Cold War.[10]

As previously stated, the 1980s was a very turbulent time in Poland's history. There was a great amount of popular displeasure with the communist regime, which resulted in unrest. In 1980, increased food prices triggered a wave of strikes. It was during this time that Solidarity, as an independent self-governing trade union, emerged. After being forced to negotiate, the authorities agreed to the demands of the protestors, mainly to legalise Solidarity. This was not to last, as in December 1981 the authorities implemented martial law, and sought to destroy Solidarity by force after the government was put under pressure from the Soviet Union to clamp down on internal protest. There was a brutal suppression of protests and strikes, thousands of people who represented the opposition were imprisoned, and the brief civil liberties that had been enjoyed were abruptly ended. By the end of the decade, the communist party was forced to negotiate and make concessions. Due to the Round Table talks in 1989, the country saw its first partially democratic election, resulting in a landslide victory for Solidarity.[11] Tadeusz Mazowiecki and his government then proceeded to change Poland's economy into a free-market economy. [12]

The primary research question is how the broader context of the Cold War, apartheid-era South Africa, and communist-era Poland precipitated Polish migration to the Vaal Triangle in South Africa in the 1980s and facilitated the constitution of an émigré Polish community within South African society during late apartheid. Furthermore, by combining the area of Polish migration to South Africa in the 1980s with the history of the Vaal industries, this research hopes to make a valuable contribution to the history of late apartheid and the late Cold War.

The subsidiary research questions which emerge from the primary research question above are as follows. What were the push factors out of Poland, and what were the pull factors to South Africa, and the Vaal Triangle more specifically? What were the experiences of Poles in South Africa during the 1980s? How did the Polish community position itself in the country?

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[10] Painter, "Oil and Geopolitics: The Oil Crises of the 1970s and the Cold War." 204.
[11] Elżbieta Matynia, *Performative Democracy.* London: Routledge, 2016: 23.
[12] Anon, "Brief History of Poland". N.d Accessed: 8 November 2021. https://ipn.gov.pl/en/brief-history-of-poland#1945 .

Literature Review

In 1966, Professor of Sociology, Everett Spurgeon Lee, proposed a theory which was subsequently considered fundamental to the study of migration. In his paper, Lee highlighted what he called "push" and "pull" factors: push factors out of a certain area and pull factors towards another area. He categorised these factors by relating them to the establishment of stream and counter-stream migration, the characteristics of migrants, and the volume of migration.[13] This theory has also been key to the approach of this research.

Dutch sociologists Christof Van Mol and Helga de Valk note that there were three distinct periods of contemporary European migration. The first period started in the 1950s and extended up to the Oil Crisis in 1973–1974, the second began with the Oil Crisis and ended with the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, and the third stage extended from the time of the fall of the Iron Curtain, to the present. During the second stage, which will be analysed in this thesis (1973-1989), North-Western governments in Europe increasingly restricted migration, however, there was a notable increase in asylum applications to these countries from migrants from around the world and particularly Eastern Europe after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Van Mol and de Valk place a strong emphasis on the Oil Crisis and how this "had [a] considerable impact on the economic landscape of Europe",[14] thereby drastically impacting migration patterns in Europe in the form of labour migration.

In a report written for the European Commission, Dutch sociologist Hein de Haas discusses the impact that the Oil Crisis of the 1970s had on migration patterns, as well as the eventual economic growth which resumed in the mid-1980s. Again, this report emphasised the impact that the Oil Crisis had on migration patterns in Europe.[15] In another report, written by the National Intelligence Council and the European Union Institute for Security Studies, the authors refer to "migration in the age of uncertainty",

[13] Everett S. Lee, "A Theory of Migration." *Demography,* Vol. 3, No. 1 (1966): 48.
[14] Christof Van Mol and Helga de Valk, "Migration and Immigrants in Europe: A Historical and Demographic Perspective," in *Integration Policies and Processes in Europe* edited by Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas and Rinus Penninx. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016: 35.
[15] Hein De Haas, "European Migrations: Dynamics, Drivers, and the Role of Policies". *Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union* (2018): 7.

the same period identified by Van Mol and de Valk, and de Haas. In this section they discuss global trends in migration that occurred during the latter half of the 20th century. They note how there was a gradual increase in the number of migrants throughout the latter half of the 20th century, however, this fell in the 1970s and 1980s, before climbing again in the 1990s.[16] It is perhaps important to note that this period where the number of migrants fell, coincides with the Oil Crisis during which stricter immigration policies were put in place.[17]

The time referred to as the "Age of Uncertainty" in the report coincides, as already noted, with an era of tremendous political and social upheaval in Poland. Jean Woodall, a researcher in Human Resource Management at Kingston Business School, examined this period and the outcomes resulting from a state-socialist society, paying specific attention to the barriers of economic growth and their political consequences. Her research used Poland (1958-1980) as a case study.[18] The British historian Timothy Garton Ash's *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity 1980-1982*[19] also studied the years directly after the period that Woodall's research addressed. He did this by focussing on the Polish Revolution, with a specific focus on the growth of Solidarity. Garton Ash's work provided the context for this research, and gave important insights into the Solidarity movement and the rise of Lech Wałęsa as Solidarity's leader, and the ensuing chaos which resulted in the declaration of martial law in Poland.[20]

In *Seeing through the eyes of the Polish Revolution: Solidarity and the Struggle Against Communism in Poland*, American sociologist Jack Bloom discusses the main participants in the struggle against communism in Poland, and what eventually led to the communist regime's demise. Bloom states that it was the working class, *Komitet Obrony Robotnikó* (KOR), Solidarity, and the Catholic Church and its clergy that ultimately ensured the success of the revolution in Poland. He even goes so far as to say that the revolution in Poland helped end the empire of the Soviet Union in its

[16] Anon, "Migration in the Age of Uncertainty", 2010. Accessed: 5 August 2021. http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep03557.15.
[17] Van Mol and de Valk, "Migration and Immigrants in Europe: A Historical and Demographic Perspective",36.
[18] Jean Woodall, *The Socialist Corporation and Technocratic Power*: *The Polish United Workers' Party, Industrial Organisation and Workforce Control, 1958-80* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 10.
[19] Timothy Garton Ash. *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*. Scribner, 1984.
[20] Magdalena Kubow, "The Solidarity Movement in Poland: Its History and Meaning in Collective Memory," *The Polish Review* 58, no. 2 (2013): 7, 8.

totality. He emphasises that these different players had different roles to play in the revolution. KOR had connections with the press, which helped both smuggle information about the situation in Poland out of Poland, and helped keep Poles in Poland informed about what was going on in the rest of the world. The Catholic church in Poland served as a meeting place during the years of martial law and provided aid for those who suffered under the regime. Solidarity was a conglomerate of workers, farmers, students, intelligentsia and clergy who opposed the communist regime.[21]

In *The Collapse of State Socialism: The Case of Poland*, Polish economist and political analyst Bartłomiej Kamiński argues that the reason for the eventual demise of socialism in eastern Europe was not due to poor leadership decisions and indominable resistance movements, but rather because state socialism is an inherently defective idea, and would eventually have collapsed regardless of external pressures. Instead, Kamiński wonders how the socialist states in eastern Europe managed to endure for as long as they did. Kamiński explores these questions by using Poland as a case study.[22]

British historian Anthony Kemp-Welch examines the context of Poland from the end of the Second World War until the fall of communism in his book *Poland Under Communism: A Cold War History*. He contextualises the situation in Poland by making use of the broader context of the Cold War. He does this by using extensive, previously unseen primary documents pertaining to the relations between Moscow and Washington. He concludes that the civic courage of the Polish people in the form and the rise of Solidarity, was truly an impressive feat considering the global context and challenges of the Cold War. [23]

Senior CIA officer Douglas MacEachin's *US Intelligence and Confrontation in Poland 1980-81* looks at the major events in Poland of the last decades of communist rule through the lens of American intelligence. Western powers, specifically America and Britain, kept a close eye on the developments in Poland (price hikes, strikes, the

[21]Jack M Bloom, *Seeing Through the Eyes of the Polish Revolution: Solidarity and the Struggle Against Communism in Poland*. Netherlands: Brill, 2013
[22] Bartłomiej. Kamiński, T*he Collapse of the State Socialism: the Case of Poland.* United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, 1991.
[23]Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under communism: a Cold War History*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

formation of Solidarity and civil unrest), but refrained from actively intervening. American president Jimmy Carter, in a letter to British prime minister Margaret Thatcher stated that "the matter is for the Poles themselves to resolve, without any foreign interference […] we must of course be concerned about possible Soviet reaction."[24] Carter did, however, recommend that financial aid be sent to the resistance movements in Poland to help aid them in their fight against the communist regime.[25]

Polish historian and journalist Adam Michnik's book *Letters from Freedom: Post-Cold War Realities and Perspectives* begins with his writings in prison, where he was held as a prisoner of the regime in the late Cold War for his outspoken opposition to the communist regime. Through this collection of his letters, essays, and interviews, one gets a deeply personal experience of the last years of the Cold War in Poland.[26]

The 13 authors of *Reassessing Communism: Concepts, Culture, and Society in Poland 1944-1989* made use of an interdisciplinary method when approaching the topic of communism in Poland and applied the tools of intellectual history, political history, political philosophy, anthropology, cultural studies, literature, and gender studies to provide a nuanced view of the communist regimes in Poland. The authors do not take a simplistic approach to the subject matter, and reject many contemporary views of the communist regime. They do not equate communism with fascism, totalitarianism, or absolute evil. They also do not see the Soviet Union's control of Poland as Soviet colonisation. This dissertation is not in agreement with many of the stances of this publication, but this book does provide a valuable view of communism in Poland.[27]

In "State Tribunal and Paradoxes of Socialist Legality in 1980s Poland", Polish historian Jakub Szumski discusses the State Tribunal in the Polish Peoples' Republic during the 1980s. The reason that the State Tribunal was deemed necessary by the Polish authorities was to determine the accountability of the leadership in the 1970s.

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[24] Douglas MacEachin, *U. S. Intelligence and the Confrontation in Poland, 1980-1981*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010.
[25] Douglas MacEachin, *U. S. Intelligence and the Confrontation in Poland, 1980-1981*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010.
[26] Adam Michnik, *Letters From freedom: Post-Cold War Realities and Perspectives.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
[27] Katarzyna Chmielewska, Agnieszka Mrozik,, and Grzegorz Wołowiec, *Reassessing Communism: Concepts, Culture, and Society in Poland 1944–1989*. Hungary: Central European University Press, 2021

Ultimately the Tribunal failed to satisfy public demands for justice amid the ongoing economic crisis and political instability. Szumski states that "socialist constitutional state-building started before martial law and significantly predated the turn to liberal democracy and market capitalism in 1989."[28]

In the book, *Solidarity: The Analysis of a Social Movement: Poland, 1980-81*, French sociologist Alain Touraine delivers a deep analysis of the Solidarity movement by defining it in the terms of those involved in the movement itself. He uses a sociological approach to study the Solidarity movement in Poland and relates the role of Solidarity to the broader social structures of eastern Europe.[29]

Poland was not the only country experiencing political turmoil during this time, and certainly was not alone in its struggles in the Soviet Bloc. *The Longman Companion to the Cold War and Détente 1941-91* is a reference book for the study of the history of the Cold War, compiled by John Young, a Professor of Politics at the University of Leicester. This book discusses all the major conflicts, characters, conferences, and crises over this 50-year period. This concise work was invaluable to the study of the Cold War, and by extension, communist Poland, and apartheid South Africa. This thesis complements Young's book as it unpacks aspects of the Cold War only briefly mentioned in the book; namely the situation in Poland during the 1980s, and the context and consequences of the Arab-Israeli War of 1973.[30]

In "A Country with No Exit? International Migrations from Poland, 1949-1989", Polish historian Dariusz Stola looks at international migration out of Poland during the communist era. He examines the progression of migrations and relevant policies of the country from the inception of communist rule in the 1940s and early 1950s when migrations all but ceased, up until the 1980s when there was a boom in migration and millions of Poles travelled abroad for trade and work, hundreds of thousands leaving indefinitely.[31] He discusses the phenomenon where Polish emigration was almost

[28] Jakub Szumski, "The state tribunal and the paradoxes of socialist legality in 1980s Poland". *Journal of Modern European History*, 18, no. 3 (June 2020): 297–311.
[29] Alain Touraine,*Solidarity: The Analysis of a Social Movement: Poland 1980-1981.* United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
[30] John Young, *The Longman Companion to Cold War and Detente, 1941-91*. Harlow: Longman, 1993.
[31] Dariusz Stola, "A Country with No Exit? International Migrations from Poland, 1949-1989". *Commission for the prosecution of crimes against the Polish nation institute of political studies.* (September 2012): 473, 474.

static, and then changed drastically to a point where there was movement on a massive scale. So much so, that by 1989, 2 million people had emigrated from Poland. The wave of emigrants out of Poland was the largest of the Soviet Bloc.[32]

Krissy Juergensmeyer further observes how "the most recent wave of mass emigration occurred during the years of Solidarity, the years surrounding martial law, and Poland's last years under Communism."[33] Her article analyses the push factors for Poles during this time, emphasising that life under communism, martial law, and the subsequent resistance and protests of Solidarity was strenuous. Poles had to contend with censorship, constant surveillance, and arbitrary restrictions as well as being cut-off from the rest of the world, and controlled by the communist and military authorities. Thus, Poles sought a better life for themselves and for their children abroad. She concludes that despite the unique circumstances in Poland creating a unique kind of emigrant, "the wave of emigration ultimately resulted from a traditional emigration push, a lack of sufficient opportunities." [34]

Anna Mazurkiewicz states that while the migrations out of East Central Europe during World War II can be described as "coerced", the migration out of this region during the late Cold War era is far more difficult to define. The reason for this is because it is difficult to distinguish between political and economic migrants. She states, however, that the decision to leave home and stay abroad was usually both a political and an economic decision, or at the very least, both factors were considered. She states that such decision-making factors were common for all those considering emigration in the Soviet-dominated East Central Europe, and goes as far as to state that the political and economic factors combined could be considered "an element of coercion" itself.[35] In the absence of dangers such as loss of life or imprisonment, which was more of a factor in earlier waves of migration out of East Central Europe, the new concerns would be that returning home would mean a loss of civil rights and personal liberties. These motivations were particularly prominent for members of national, ethnic, and religious minorities. She states that "a clear-cut distinction between political and economic or

[32] Stola, "A Country with No Exit? International Migrations from Poland, 1949-1989", 475.
[33] Krissy Juergensmeyer, "Polish Emigration During the 1980s: The Influence of Martial Law and Solidarity", *Polish American Studies* no. 2 (Autumn 2015): 50, 51.
[34] Juergensmeyer "Polish Emigration During the 1980s: The Influence of Martial Law and Solidarity," 64.
[35] Anna Mazurkiewicz, "Political Emigration from East Central Europe During the Cold War", *Polish American Studies* Vol. 72, No. 2 (Autumn 2015): 70.

voluntary and coerced migrations during the Cold War seems impossible to draw".[36] She states that her research on this topic demonstrates challenging and interesting questions for those who are interested in the migrations out of East Central Europe during the Cold War era. She concluded her survey by asking the following questions to those who seek to study Cold War era migrations out of East Central Europe: "Did the one-way Cold War migrations contribute to the loss of vital human potential, or—conversely—to preservation of the national heritage in exile? Was this legacy given new strength after freedom was regained by the nations of East Central Europe?"[37] According to her research, it would seem that the exploration and study of migrations out of this region during this time will "constitute an original and vital contribution to the study of the Cold War."[38] By exploring Polish migration to South Africa during the 1980s, this thesis aims to address the questions that she has posed, and to contribute to the study of the Cold War as a whole.

Becky Taylor, a professor of Modern History at the University of East Anglia, and Martyna Śliwa, a researcher at the University of Essex, discuss contemporary and historical waves of migration from Poland. Their main aim is to put migration in pre-socialist, socialist and post-socialist Poland in its historical context as well as focusing on individual experiences using oral testimonies. They state that, during Poland's socialist era, "Poland was characterized by restrictions on international travel, [however], it is vital not to equate this with complete stasis."[39] In their article they explore the nature of migrations of individuals in Poland under socialism, to that of migrations in pre-socialist Poland. They argue that "far from migration being absent under socialism, in many ways it was engrained within the system: forced resettlement, free education, strongly promoted industrialization, state work and holidays moved people between rural and urban areas and across regional and national boundaries".[40] In addition to this, while travel bans and restrictions were common place during the socialist era of Poland's history, "Poland was far from being separated from the rest of the world".[41] Taylor and Śliwa challenge the concept of

[36] Mazurkiewicz, "Political Emigration from East Central Europe During the Cold War", 66.
[37] Mazurkiewicz, "Political Emigration from East Central Europe During the Cold War", 70.
[38] Mazurkiewicz, "Political Emigration from East Central Europe During the Cold War", 67.
[39] Becky Taylor and Martyna Śliwa, "Polish Migration: Moving Beyond the Iron Curtain", *History Workshop Journal* (February 2011): 2.
[40] Taylor and S'liwa, "Polish Migration: Moving Beyond the Iron Curtain" ,5.
[41] Taylor and S'liwa, "Polish Migration: Moving Beyond the Iron Curtain", 10.

stasis in the Eastern Bloc during the socialist era and demonstrate that "people's ability to travel both in Poland and beyond its borders might […] in fact have been greater than that of their counterparts in the 'West' at the time."[42] A common denominator in these oral histories is that the need for work was a major driving force behind their migration.[43]

The Polish historian and political scientist Patryk Pleskot further discusses the challenges of analysing Polish emigration during the 1980s, noting that it cannot be "easily categorized as either political or economic."[44] He goes on to say that while most people emigrating from Poland during the 1980s did so for economic reasons, many migrants left Poland for political reasons, the majority of these being influential Solidarity activists.[45] This research has found that when analysing Polish migration to South Africa in the 1980s specifically, there were two distinct waves of migrants. The first wave of migrants who came to South Africa in the early and mid-1980s were political migrants, whereas those who came in the late 1980s were economic migrants.

Some Solidarity activists who left developed a 'deserter complex' due to leaving Poland during this tumultuous time. As a result, they often engaged in relief activities which supported the now underground trade union, Solidarity. Often the exiled Solidarity activists formed associations, committees, and periodicals with the aim of supporting the Polish underground, soon after arriving in in their destination country. The main activities were to spread information about the situation in Poland, as well as raising money for those interned and their families. Local trade unions in destination countries often supported these efforts, and as such, the *Biuro Koordynacyjne NSZZ Solidarność za Granicą* (Solidarity Abroad Coordinating Office) was created in Brussels at the end of July 1982. Despite this one unifying organisation, many organisations still operated independently and parallel to one another, as the Solidarity emigrants were diverse in thought, which led to political disagreements. Pleskot says that despite the various organisations' efforts, it is difficult to conclude what impact

[42] Taylor and S'liwa, "Polish Migration: Moving Beyond the Iron Curtain",12.
[43] Taylor and S'liwa. "Polish Migration: Moving Beyond the Iron Curtain", 19.
[44] Pleskot, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges", 50.
[45] Pleskot, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges", 52.

their lobbying had on the situation in Poland.[46] Pleskot states that while Polish migration prior to the 1980s has been relatively well documented and analysed by historians, the migration of Poles during the 1980s has almost exclusively been covered by demographers and sociologists, whose main focus has been the "broad scale of the phenomenon, without differentiating between political and economic migration".[47] This has meant that "comprehensive analysis of the Solidarity emigration in the context of its political activity still remains to be researched."[48] More specific topics related to particular expatriate Polish communities have been documented rather extensively, but not for the decade of the 1980s. However, it is important to note that the publications that do discuss Polish communities which were formed during the 1980s, very rarely differentiate between political and other emigration. Pleskot notes that the socio-demographic aspect of the 1980s Polish migration has been studied, most notably by Marek Okólski and Katarzyna Slany.[49] Other researchers in the area are Barbara Sakson, Marcin Kula, Zdzisław Łempiński, Aleksandra Trzcielińska-Polus, and Dariusz Stola.

A common aspect to their research is the insight that it is very difficult to distinguish between political (Solidarity) emigration, and other reasons for migration, namely economic.[50] Pleskot states that while Lee's model of push and pull factors helps create a "detailed reconstruction of individual cases, it does not facilitate any attempt at differentiating between political and economic migrants".[51] There are usually several push and pull factors which motivate an individual to migrate, and it is difficult to always rank these in order of importance. Leaving Poland was an indicator that those who left did not have faith that the quality of life for themselves and their family would improve, and constituted a sign of dissent against the economic and political reality of communist Poland. It was the dominating political context of the time which makes it difficult to differentiate between the motivations for those that left, as the political

[46] Pleskot, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges", 53.
[47] Pleskot, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges", 55.
[48] Pleskot, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges", 56.
[49]Okólski, Marek, "Modernising impacts of emigration." *Studia Socjologiczne*. (2012): 49-79.
[50] Pleskot, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges", 58.
[51] Pleskot, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges", 59.

situation overshadowed everything. It is important to note, however, that being critical towards and disillusioned with the communist regime and therefore leaving the country, is not enough to classify someone as a political emigrant, according to Pleskot.[52]

Professor of Contemporary Transnational History at the Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History, Machteld Venken states that historically there has been a substantial research effort to document and analyse the correspondence between emigrants and their countries of birth. This, however, has not been the case for Poles who left Poland during the country's communist era. He states that research on correspondence between those who left the Communist Bloc and those who remained is severely lacking. [53] His paper aims to remedy this by investigating a Polish organisation dedicated to helping expatriates stay in contact with their home country through letter writing. After decades of success, the Communist 'Polonia' Society was still widely used in 1980. However, after the declaration of martial law in Poland by the authorities in 1981 "it lost all credibility in the Atlantic World"[54] due to its perceived communist influence. After this, other, anti-communist organizations sprang up all over the world and became the biggest link between Poland and Polish emigrants. After the collapse of communism, the Communist 'Polonia' Society was completely dissolved.

The American historian Padraic Kenney's book *1989: Democratic Revolutions at the Cold War's End* provides a broader context through his focus on the global transformations that took place at the end of the Cold War, and how these political transformations have shaped contemporary society. This book focuses on six revolutionary movements, namely in China, South Africa, Chile, Poland, the Philippines, and Ukraine. This research discusses commonalities in political change on four continents, as well as their differences. The book also contains primary documents pertaining to the various revolutions, such as letters, meeting transcripts, and posters.[55]

[52] Pleskot, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges", 61.
[53] Machteld Venken, "The Communist 'Polonia' Society and Polish Immigrants in Belgium, 1956-90" *Inter-Culture Studies.* Volume 7 (2007): 25.
[54]Venken, "The Communist 'Polonia' Society and Polish Immigrants in Belgium, 1956-90", 27.
[55] Padraic Kenney, *1989: Democratic revolutions at the Cold War's end: a brief history with documents* (Boston: Macmillan Learning, 2010): 102.

In terms of comparative work, a collection of essays entitled *South Africa and Poland in Transition: A Comparative Perspective*, edited by the political scientist Ursula van Beek, juxtaposes South Africa's and Poland's roads to democracy. The book is divided into various sections which look at these respective nations in terms of their civil society, mechanics of political transition, and the economy. The book consists of subsections on various topics, with two complementary papers on each topic presented on South Africa and Poland respectively.[56] Van Beek's application of Thomas Khun's paradigm shift theory to political revolutions, using South Africa and Poland as case studies, greatly informed this study. Van Beek's assessment that despite South Africa and Poland seeming to be worlds apart, they both underwent this Khunian paradigm shift due to the anomalies which appeared in both the system of communism and apartheid was a crucial insight. The core dilemma was the "inability of the two ideologies to offer solutions to the mounting problems in the socio-economic and political arena."[57] It was this mostly unknown, fundamental similarity between the two regimes which served as inspiration for this study.

In *Migrants and Religion: Paths, Issues, and Lenses: A Multidisciplinary and Multi-Sited Study on the Role of Religious Belongings in Migratory and Integration Processes*, Laura Zafrini, professor of political and social sciences at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan, states that the premise of the book is based on two hypotheses. The first being that "the denial of religious rights –in its overall meaning– is one of the main drivers of contemporary (forced) migration, usually in interconnection with other social, political and economic factors."[58] The second hypothesis is that "religious institutions, religious affiliations and religious values are crucial factors not only in structuring migration patterns and practices, but also in supporting the adaptation of newcomers –particularly in the case of (forced) migrants and asylum seekers."[59] She goes on to state that faith-based organisations positively impact social cohesion and the common good of the migrant community. This thesis confirms this argument with respect to the migration of Poles to South Africa during

[56] Ursula van Beek, *South Africa and Poland in Transition: A Comparative Perspective*. HSRC Publishers, 1995.
[57] Van Beek, "The Emergence of Democracy in South Africa and Poland." 274.
[58] Laura Zafrini, ed. *Migrants and Religion: Paths, Issues, and Lenses: A Multidisciplinary and Multi-Sited Study on the Role of Religious Belongings in Migratory and Integration Processes* (Leiden: Brill, 2020): 9.
[59] Zanfrini. *Migrants and Religion: Paths, Issues, and Lenses: A Multidisciplinary and Multi-Sited Study on the Role of Religious Belongings in Migratory and Integration Processes.*10.

the 1980s and the crucial role played by the Roman Catholic Church in the consolidation of the Polish community in the Vaal Triangle.

A comparison is drawn between the United States of America and Europe with regards to how they view immigrants who are religious. Zafrini states that while in America religion is seen as “bridging”, in Europe it is seen as “bonding”. What is meant by this distinction is that in America religion aids in assimilation with Americans who are outside of the migratory group, while in Europe, religion helps bond the migratory group to one another, and not with broader society. In fact, being part of a religious expatriate group in Europe may even result in isolation from a mostly secular society. This study argues that the predominantly Catholic Polish community in the Vaal Triangle experienced both bonding and bridging, as the church formed the foundation upon which the Polish Association of the Vaal Triangle was built, and consolidated the Polish community as a whole. It also bridged the Polish community with the South African Catholic community, as the church of Saint Francis in Vanderbijlpark served both Polish and South African communities, therefore facilitating assimilation.[60]

To cover the second vital topic of the thesis, the broader economic context and energy crises, according to Dean Goodermote and Richard Mancke, “national oil companies emerged during the 1970s as an important force within both oil-exporting and oil-importing countries”.[61] By the 1980s, these national companies were producing more than half of the world market’s crude oil. As they observe:

> …these oil companies prospered within oil-exporting countries as events increasingly confirmed that the principal source of economic power in the oil business was sovereign control over oil reserves rather than private control over technical, managerial, and capital re- sources.[62]

Painter observes that even though Henry Kissinger wrote in his memoirs that the energy crisis “altered irrevocably the world as it has grown up in the post-war period,"[63], neither his memoirs nor his studies of the 1970s examined this link between the Cold War and the oil crisis. Painter also notes how in Raymond Garthoff’s work

[60] Zanfrini, *Migrants and Religion: Paths, Issues, and Lenses: A Multidisciplinary and Multi-Sited Study on the Role of Religious Belongings in Migratory and Integration Processes.* 11.
[61] Dean Goodermote and Richard Mancke, “Nationalizing Oil in the 1970s.” *The Energy Journal,* Vol. 4, No. 4(October 1983): 68.
[62] Goodermote and Mancke, “Nationalizing Oil in the 1970s.” 70.
[63] David Painter, “Oil and Geopolitics: The Oil Crises of the 1970s and the Cold War.” *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (2014): 186.

"Detente and Confrontation" there is little mention of these connections despite his work focussing on the Cold War and its effects on the Third World.[64] In addition to this, Painter writes how more recently edited works on Richard Nixon's foreign policy lack essays on the oil crises, as do the *Cambridge History of the Cold War*. Regarding works focussing primarily on the oil crises themselves, Painter contends there is surprisingly little detail on the geopolitical context. Examples of such works include the works of Raymond Vernon, Steven A. Schneider and Fiona Venn, and while these are often hailed as excellent writings on the oil crises, none of them place the crises in the context of the Cold War.[65] David Painter tries to remedy this lack of examination between these two events which shaped the late 20th century in his work entitled "Oil and Geopolitics: The Oil Crises of the 1970s and the Cold War".

South African historian Saul Dubow's *Apartheid 1948-1994* deals with a topic which has been written about extensively, but does so with a unique approach to the subject matter. Dubow discusses the key figures and movements during the age of apartheid, both in the regime and the opposition. He situates apartheid in both its global and local context. Dubow avoids the fallacy of teleology as he neither presumes the implementation of apartheid, nor its demise.[66]

Much like Saul Dubow, in his book *The Last Afrikaner Leaders*, South African historian Hermann Giliomee challenges commonly held teleological fallacies regarding the rise and fall of apartheid. Instead of assuming that the victory of the African National Congress (ANC) was inevitable, and that it was purely the resourcefulness of the resistance movements which caused the end of nationalist Afrikaner rule in South Africa, he makes use of thorough case studies of the last Afrikaner leaders (from Verwoerd to de Klerk) and questions why these leaders' policies resulted in the collapse of their regime. By discussing each leader's background, reasonings, and personal faults, Giliomee provides an intimate look into the lives of the men that caused the rise, as well as the eventual fall, of apartheid in South Africa.[67]

[64] Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation.* Brookings Institution Press, 1 March 2011.
[65] Painter, "Oil and Geopolitics: The Oil Crises of the 1970s and the Cold War", 188.
[66]Saul Dubow, *Apartheid, 1948-1994*. United Kingdom: Oxford, 2014.

[67] Hermann Giliomee, *The Last Afrikaner Leaders: A Supreme Test of Power*. South Africa: University of Virginia Press, 2013.

Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Policies of the National Party 1948-1994 by Dan O'Meara discusses the political context of South Africa beginning with the National Party coming to power and ending with the NP's loss in the 1994 election. The author delves into the political role of major corporations, the functioning and nature of the apartheid economy and foreign governments, military strategy, the evolution of Afrikaner literature and the National Party's changing relationship with the Afrikaner Broederbond.[68]

As mentioned, the specific focus of this study is the migration of Poles to the Vaal Triangle and it will therefore explore their employment and involvement in the Sasol and Iscor industries. The South African Coal, Oil and Gas Corporation (Sasol) was established in 1950, due to the South African government's priority for the country to be self-sufficient in energy, and to be industrialised. Since South Africa had no oil reserves of its own, the government deemed this venture as necessary for both economic and political reasons, even though producing oil from coal was and is an incredibly expensive process.[69] As South African economists Simon Roberts and Zavareh Rustomjee state, "Sasol and Iscor were nurtured as state-owned enterprises by the apartheid state".[70] This was because the products that these industries produced, specifically steel and liquid fuels, were needed to ensure that "the apartheid state could ensure its prolonged life through military and other means".[71] There are two main arguments for why the apartheid government pushed to be independent of internationally-sourced oil.[72] According to the South African historian, Stephen Sparks, the first argument is ideological and centres around the need to ensure the survival of Afrikaner nationalism.[73] The second argument is economic, but supports the previous ideological argument. This argument is that cheaply paid black labour, which was a cornerstone of the Sasol company, was crucial in maintaining the apartheid state in South Africa. Essentially what this meant was that Sasol was heavily reliant on the

[68] Dan O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: the Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994.* Athens: Ravan Press, 1996.
[69]. *International Directory of Company Histories*, Vol. 47. St. James Press, 2002
[70] Simon Roberts and Zavareh Rustomjee, "Industrial Policy Under Democracy: Apartheid's Grown-up Infant Industries? Sasol and Iscor," *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa.* (2010): 60.
[71] Roberts and Rustomjee, "Industrial Policy Under Democracy: Apartheid's Grown-up Infant Industries? Sasol and Iscor", 62.
[72] Stephen Sparks, "Between 'Artificial Economics' and the 'Discipline of the Market': Sasol from Parastatal to Privatisation," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 42, no. 4. (2016): 712.
[73] Sparks, "Between 'Artificial Economics' and the 'Discipline of the Market': Sasol from Parastatal to Privatisation", 723.

exploitation of black workers. Sasol helped the Afrikaner nationalist government maintain its independence through providing an alternative to importing oil, and the policies regarding the treatment of black workers in South Africa put in place by the nationalist government helped Sasol achieve its goals. The Afrikaner nationalist government and Sasol had a symbiotic relationship which was to the detriment of black South African workers.[74]

At first, it was shale to oil that was considered, and not coal to oil. [75] However, shale only produced small amounts of oil, which made the coal to liquid process more attractive.[76] By 1950, two Fischer-Tropsch units were erected and began operation in Coalbrook (which would later become Sasolburg). The Fischer-Tropsch unit was invented in 1925 by Franz Fischer and Hans Tropsch, at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Coal Research at Mulheim as a means of converting coal to oil.[77] After many years of experimentation, a new technique of using coal to create oil came about at the Sasolburg plant, called the Sasol-Synthol process.[78] This was a new technique of using coal to extract oil. The new plant resulted in peace of mind for the South African government, as it meant that South Africa was more economically independent as it could now supply the country with oil. This was crucial for the South African government as fewer and fewer countries were willing to trade with South Africa as a form of protest against the apartheid regime.

It is important to note that Sasol "was guided by the government's objectives of the apartheid state and not strict profit-making imperatives."[79] These objectives came in the form of trying to make South Africa independent of internationally sourced oil, after the Sharpeville massacre led to an oil embargo being imposed on South Africa.[80] In

[74] Sparks, "Between 'Artificial Economics' and the 'Discipline of the Market': Sasol from Parastatal to Privatisation", 724.
[75] Sparks, "Between 'Artificial Economics' and the 'Discipline of the Market': Sasol from Parastatal to Privatisation", 724
[76] Sparks, "Between 'Artificial Economics' and the 'Discipline of the Market': Sasol from Parastatal to Privatisation", 724.
[77] Sparks, "Between 'Artificial Economics' and the 'Discipline of the Market': Sasol from Parastatal to Privatisation", 724.
[78] M. E Dry and H.B Erasmus, "Update of the Sasol Synfuels Process," *Annual Energy Review,* Vol. 12 (1987): 2.

[79] Roberts and Rustomjee, "Industrial Policy Under Democracy: Apartheid's Grown-up Infant Industries? Sasol and Iscor", 70.
[80] John Burns, "South Africa, Plunged Into Oil Crisis, Seeks Ways to Cope," *The New York Times,* 13 July 1979.

addition to the Sharpeville massacre, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) also placed an embargo on exporting oil to South Africa due to South Africa's support of Israel in the Arab-Israeli War.[81]

As a result of the oil crises of 1973 and 1979, it was possible for Sasol to raise its oil price due to the price of oil increasing globally, while also lowering the cost of production. It achieved this by embarking "on a two-fold, massive oil-from-coal expansion in the name of securing the apartheid state's strategic interests, which aimed to exploit the fact that the oil price had skyrocketed after both the 1973 oil shock and the Iranian revolution".[82] Sasol saw an increase in profits during this time, despite the turbulence that South Africa faced in the 1980s. The biggest source of concern for the company during this time was African trade unions which were putting pressure on the company to secure better housing, pay, and working conditions for African workers. However, despite this pressure, Sasol managed to resist trade unionists' demands. Apart from trade unions, the company was also a frequent target of *Umkhonto weSizwe* (MK) operatives who put pressure on the apartheid government by attacking South African infrastructure. In June 1980, two bombs were planted in the Sasolburg plant, which although diffused shortly before detonating, underlined the threat to Sasol.[83]

The significance of Sasol becomes apparent when one considers the migration patterns of Poles within South Africa. According to the Polish political scientist Arkadiusz Żukowski, most of the Polish community living in South Africa live primarily in metropolitan and industrial areas, such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, Pretoria, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, and Port Elizabeth. However, due to the emigration that occurred during the 1980s, immigrants created new Polish communities in the Vaal Triangle industrial district (Vanderbijlpark, Vereeniging, Sasolburg) and in cities situated east-south of Johannesburg and west-south of Johannesburg.[84] This research seeks to provide a more intimate sense of the history of this community in the Vaal Triangle industrial district.

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[81] Anon. "Oil Embargo, 1973-1974," N.d. Accessed: 10 May 2023.https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/oil-embargo
[82] Sparks, "Between 'Artificial Economics' and the 'Discipline of the Market': Sasol from Parastatal to Privatisation", 724.
[83] *International Directory of Company Histories*, Vol. 47. St. James Press, 2002
[84] Arkadiusz Żukowski, "Contemporary Polish Diaspora in the Republic of South Africa and its Attitudes Towards Politics," *Polish Political Science* 39 (2010): 193.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach based on archival sources, newspapers, and interviews. The archive which was used for this research was the archives of the Polish Heritage Foundation of South Africa in Linksfield which is housed at the Mary Immaculate Convent in Lyndhurst, Johannesburg. This thesis made use of oral interviews which were conducted by the researcher. These oral testimonies were used as specific case studies to better understand the migration to, and the settlement of, Polish nationals in the Vaal Triangle, South Africa during the 1980s. The intention of these interviews was to act as an anchor for the broader theoretical literature surrounding Polish emigration during the 1980s. In addition to oral interviews, this research made use of primary sources in the form of newspaper articles taken primarily from the digitised Newsbank collection, as well as the *Rand Daily Mail* collection, and therefore made use of textual analysis, or more specifically, critical discourse analysis.

As the research used an oral history methodology, a letter of informed consent was given to every individual who was interviewed. Each interviewee was asked approximately the same set of open-ended interview questions. The interviews were entirely voluntary, and the interviewees were given the option of remaining anonymous, two of whom chose this option. Six individuals were interviewed for this thesis. The way in which the data was collected was by approaching people within my community whom I knew personally and who fell within the parameters of this study, specifically individuals who migrated to the Vaal Triangle during the 1980s from Poland. From there, the snowball method was used to contact other members of the Polish community of South Africa, and the Vaal Triangle more specifically.[85] The interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder and handwritten notes were taken. Three of the individuals interviewed were quite representative of their community in terms of how and why they migrated to South Africa, whereas the other three people interviewed had slightly more unique circumstances surrounding their

[85] Stephen Belcher, *Oral Traditions as Sources.* USA: Oxford University Press, 2019.

leaving Poland and arriving in South Africa. However, the primary push and pull factors which are discussed in this study was applicable to all who were interviewed.

Oral history and the oral tradition both predates and postdates literacy. It is also incorrect to assume that a society discarded the oral tradition once it became literate. An example of this would be Thucydides, who used eyewitness oral testimonies to construct his history of the Peloponnesian War.[86] Despite it arguably being the oldest form of historiography, it has only recently enjoyed a revival, after the Second World War.[87] The acknowledgment of its uses and importance are varied amongst academic fields, however, it is an accepted methodology within the field of history, where its innumerable variations in methods and analysis is relied upon.

Considering the geographical context within which this research will be conducted, it is important to discuss the history of oral history as well as the oral tradition in Africa more specifically. Belcher states that in Africa, the notion of oral tradition (*oralité*) has acquired a great importance: it represents an affirmation of African cultural value. For contemporary researchers, the use of oral tradition is a principal tool in reconstructing precolonial history and culture.[88] In South Africa, there are two categories of the oral tradition, namely oral history, and folklore and folktales. Both forms of the oral tradition are of equal importance to the tradition, as oral history helps inform our understanding of actual events, people and places, and folklore and folktales helps us to understand the psychology of the community.

There are multiple advantages in making use of the oral tradition. According to Seldon and Papworth, these advantages can be grouped under three headings. The first being “facts not recorded in documents” which includes details regarding personal and organisational relationships and personalities. The second group is “interpretation of personalities and events” which could aid a researcher in finding a balance between objective fact and personal observations. And the third is “interpretation of documents”, this advantage is particularly useful when there is missing information in written documentation.[89] Overall, making use of the methodology of the oral tradition as a researcher can be incredibly beneficial and enlightening, especially when dealing

[86]Anthony Seldon and Joanna Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth.* Routledge: New York, 1983: 7.
[87]Anthony Seldon and Joanna Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth.* Routledge: New York, 1983: 6
[88] Stephen Belcher “Oral Traditions as Sources”, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History.* 26 February 2018: 1.
[89] Anthony Seldon and Joanna Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth.* Routledge: New York, 1983: 45.

with an area of research where little has been documented, and which focuses heavily on personal motivations- such as this research.

It would, however, be erroneous to only look at the advantages of oral history while not discussing the pitfalls of this methodology. Seldon and Pappworth group the disadvantages of oral history into two categories: the limitations of the interviewee (such as unreliability of memory, deliberate falsification, unfairness through vindictiveness, oversimplification, distortion of the interviewee's role, lack of perspective, distortion due to personal feelings, self-consciousness, unrepresentative sampling, biased questioning, deference and bias towards interviewees, interview as a replacement for reading documents) , and the limitations inherent in the nature of interviewing (such as time expenditure, financial expenditure, influence of variable factors, some people not communicating well in interviews, misrepresentation of what the interviewee has said, oral evidence not being verified by others, interview transcripts missing the essence of an interview, impossibility of true communication, dependence on survivors and those who agree to be interviewed). To expand on the list set forth by Seldon and Pappworth, I would like to briefly mention the two main criticisms discussed by Grele, that there may be an uncritical acceptance of results, and that the quality of both the interview itself and the storing and documentation of these interviews varies too widely.[90] These limitations were kept in mind when conducting my own interviews in order to avoid its pitfalls.

Belcher states "the collector of oral traditions is positioned between two communities: the one where the collection took place, and the wider audience for whom the collection and dissemination is intended. A measure of trust and responsibility in both directions is essential to the effort"[91]. The importance of trust and responsibility has been taken into consideration throughout the research process.

The oral researcher has an added responsibility to their sources and their collection of data, as they are dealing with people. It can be argued that the most vital aspect of conducting oral research, is respect. The researcher must be respectful of the interviewee as well as their beliefs and wider community. A way in which this respect

[90]Ronald Grele,"Movement without aim: methodological and theoretical problems I oral history", chapter in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral Reader.* Routledge: London and New York, (1998): 40.
[91]Stephen Belcher "Oral Traditions as Sources", *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History.* 26 February 2018: 9.

can be achieved is through understanding. Understanding the importance of this history being communicated, the importance it holds to the interviewee as well as their community, and having insight into the context and history of this oral tradition and the significance it holds. Building a sense of trust between yourself as the interviewer and the interviewee is imperative, but this can also be very time consuming. This can be accomplished by the researcher gradually integrating themselves into a community, or it can mean that prior research and communication was done before meeting the interviewee. It is a commitment on the researcher's part and something that should be taken into consideration before commencing on an oral project. Both the time as well as the emotional and mental energy spent on this endeavor makes oral history a potentially very taxing form of historical research.

To quote Belcher:

> …technological and social changes are transforming our understanding and presentation of the oral tradition. There are no doubt opportunities for the classic collection moment: sitting in the deep shade of a mango tree listening to elders or co-wives or hunters. For history, the time of oral tradition may be passing, as literacy effaces communal memories. For literature and the social sciences, opportunities remain rich and innumerable… worldwide.[92]

It is with this quote as its foundation that the rest of this study is built on, to better understand the history of the Polish diaspora in the Vaal Triangle through the means of the oral tradition.

A few specific considerations need to be made for this study. Firstly, the history of the Polish community in the Vaal Triangle has not been studied, and apart from primary sources in the form of contracts, minutes of meetings, and informal pamphlets, it has not been documented. No secondary sources exist for this area of historically inquiry, and as such this study is original work. As such, primary sources have been used extensively, as there are no secondary sources available. To validate these sources, they have been compared to one another. For example, information received during interviews were compared to newspaper articles and legal documentation. The researcher also bore in mind that the interviewees being interviewed were no doubt biased and felt the need to justify their choice to leave Poland and come to South Africa.

[92] Stephen Belcher "Oral Traditions as Sources", *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*. 26 February 2018: 14.

Chapter Outline

In the first chapter Everette Lee's theory of migration is used to analyse the Polish context of the 1980s, and what factors emerged from this context as "push" factors for those who decided to leave the country at this time.

The second chapter discusses the context of 1980s South Africa and the fact that despite the country being even more turbulent than Poland, it was still seen as an attractive option for emigrating Poles due to several pull factors. These pull factors mainly revolved around the country's industrial sector's need for skilled labour.

The third chapter notes that South Africa is home to the largest Polish diaspora on the African continent and seeks to explain how this came to be by analysing historical and contemporary waves of migration of Poles to South Africa. This chapter pays especially close attention to the wave of Polish migrants who came to South Africa, and the Vaal Triangle in particular, during the 1980s.

The final chapter investigates the creation and impact of the Polish diaspora in the Vaal Triangle, which sprung up around the Vaal industries. It discusses both the individual stories of those of Polish decent who found themselves to be in the Vaal Triangle, as well as the Polish Association of the Vaal Triangle's impact on the community as a whole.

Chapter 1

Repression, Resistance, and Religion: Revolution in the People's Republic of Poland (1970s and 1980s)

As already alluded to, Professor of Sociology at the University of Georgia, Everett Spurgeon Lee, is perhaps best known for his ground-breaking theory of migration, which is known as the Push and Pull Theory, or "Lee's Theory". In 1966, Lee proposed a comprehensive theory of migration, which would later become known as "Lee's Push and Pull theory".[93] This theory suggested that every geographic location had both positive and negative characteristics. If a location had many positive characteristics, an individual would be more likely to emigrate to this region, which he described as a pull factor. Conversely, if a location had mostly negative characteristics, it might encourage one to leave, hence "pushing" the individual away. In most cases of migration, the migrant experiences both pull factors towards a new region, as well as push factors out of their current region.

This theory can be applied effectively when studying Polish migration of the 1980s to South Africa. This chapter seeks to provide context surrounding the Polish situation of the 1980s, and as such, analyse what the "push" factors were that encouraged emigration from Poland. This chapter will also include reflections about the Polish situation of the 1980s taken from interviews with those who left Poland and migrated to the Vaal Triangle, South Africa during this time. The social, political, and economic conditions of Poland during the 1980s resulted in multiple "push" factors for those residing in the country. These push factors can mostly be classified under the headings of economic and political factors and are in agreement with Anna Mazurkiewicz who observes that the decision to leave home and stay abroad was usually both a political and an economic decision.[94]

The political factors consisted of Soviet-backed communist rule and the resulting oppressive communist regime, as well as the opposition mainly in the form of Solidarity which resulted in heightened tensions in the country. The economic factors manifested in the form of the collapsing economy and the resulting price hikes and decreased

[93] Lee, "A Theory of Migration", 48.
[94] Mazurkiewicz, ""Political Emigration from East Central Europe During the Cold War", 70.

standard of living. Poor economic conditions and oppressive political regimes are classed as the two main factors which may cause an individual to emigrate, two factors that Poland had in an abundance in the 1980s.

The Impact of Migration

In the article "Migration in the Age of Uncertainty" the authors state that migration "touches the lives of people more directly than any other facet of globalization".[95] Migration of people is a transnational phenomenon. It impacts not just those who have left, but also those who have been left behind. For example, a country which is experiencing a so-called 'Brain Drain', described as "the departure of educated or professional people from one country, economic sector, or field for another- usually for better pay or living conditions",[96] experiences a loss of skills at an unsustainable rate. This impacts not only the economy of that country, but the country's culture as well, if many of its most-skilled citizens have left.[97]

Migration can therefore cause mass change. At best, it is envisaged that migration can "help harmonize the different economic and demographic conditions that will be experienced by countries as the world moves toward peak population."[98] At its worst, "migration could be driven primarily by economic failure, not success; [which] emerges as a destabilizing factor before or after conflict within and between nations".[99] This phenomenon of migration driven primarily by economic failure and conflict was a common occurrence in the late 20th century. An example of this would be Polish migration to other parts of the world during the 1980s, when Poland was experiencing harsh economic and social conditions and Poles sought a better quality of life elsewhere, some of whom came to South Africa.

[95] Anon, "Migration in the Age of Uncertainty". 61.
[96] *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*. "Brain Drain," accessed August 15, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/brain%20drain.
[97] Anon, "Migration in the Age of Uncertainty". 62.
[98] Anon, "Migration in the Age of Uncertainty". 63.
[99] Anon, "Migration in the Age of Uncertainty". 64.

The Catholic Church in Poland and the Rise of Communism

Poland's Duke Mieszko I of the Piast dynasty was baptized in 966, and as a result the Holy Roman Empire officially considered Poland to be part of Europe. While religious persecution was rampant, Poland was an exception, and was tolerant of different religions. Many persecuted religious groups fled to Poland, and two thirds of the world's contemporary Jewish population can trace their ancestry to Poland.[100] After the reformation, Calvinism boomed in Poland, with 10 percent of the population adopting it, although most reverted back to Catholicism due to the efforts of the Jesuits. By 1596, 40% of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was Roman Catholic.[101] In 1683 at the Siege of Vienna, Polish King John III Sobieski and his Polish army of hussars stormed the city and defeated the Ottomans, thereby ensuring the continuation of a Christian Europe, as the spread of the religion of the Ottoman Empire (Islam) could not cross over into Europe. By 1795, Prussia, Russia, and Austria had partitioned Poland, and the nation ceased to exist. However, despite Poland not officially being recognised as a nation, the Polish language and culture continued to thrive, with the Catholic Church's support. The Second Polish Republic came into existence in 1918, after the defeated nations of the First World War had to relinquish their colonies. The reinstated Polish nation faced many hardships during the 20th century, the most notable being the Second World War. On 1 September 1939 the Nazis invaded Poland, and 16 days later the Soviets followed suit. Despite lacking both the manpower and the equipment, the Poles fought bravely against the invaders for five weeks, and never surrendered to, or collaborated with, their aggressors. Poland suffered more than any other nation under the Nazi-Soviet occupation, and six million Polish citizens were murdered by the Nazis. Nearly 90% of Poland's Jews were also murdered, and made up half the total number of Poles who were killed during the Second World War. In addition to the Nazis specifically targeting Polish Jews, the clergy of the Catholic Church was also brutalised. Half of the clergy of the Catholic church in Poland were sent to concentration camps, with some dioceses having all

[100] Filip Mazurczak,"Poland's History is a Story of Resilient Catholic Faith." *The Catholic World Report.* 28 June, 2016.
[101] Filip Mazurczak,"Poland's History is a Story of Resilient Catholic Faith." *The Catholic World Report.* 28 June, 2016.

their priests murdered. At the end of the war in 1945, the Red Army took over a devastated Poland. Poland became a satellite state in the Soviet Union's sphere of influence, but was never consider to be part of the Soviet Union. The Polish United Worker's Party came to power as the ruling party, officially making Poland a socialist state. During this time, Poland was a *de facto* one-party state, however, it did enjoy more freedoms compared to other Soviet satellite states, such as Hungary, Romania, Albania, Bulgaria, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia. The reason why Poland enjoyed more freedom than the other satellite states was largely due to the influence of the Catholic Church in the country.[102]

Stalin said that "imposing communism on Poland was like saddling a cow"[103], and this was largely due to the strength and influence of the Catholic Church in Poland. This was the result of 95% of the Polish population being Catholic after 90% of the Jewish population were murdered during the Holocaust, and the redrawing of Polish borders.[104] Poland became a satellite state of the Soviet Union, but unlike other satellite states, the Soviet policy towards the Catholic Church was largely cautionary at first. This may appear strange, as the Catholic Church was the Communist regime's direct rival as it held a competing ideology to that of the Soviet Union and competed with the regime for the "heart and soul of the population"[105]. However, the regime was cautious regarding opposing the Catholic Church due to the Church's massive influence in the country. Before the war, the Catholic Church was an integral part of national life, and managed an extensive religious organisation of schools, charities, and a sizeable press. The Soviets knew that outright objection to the church would be detrimental, as the Catholic Church was integral to the average Catholic Pole's life, which now consisted of 95% of the population. Instead, the communist regime turned to propaganda to delegitimize its rival. These attacks came in the form of press campaigns and political trials to undermine the people's trust in the clergy.[106] Despite

[102] Filip Mazurczak,"Poland's History is a Story of Resilient Catholic Faith." *The Catholic World Report.* 28 June, 2016.
[103] Filip Mazurczak,"Poland's History is a Story of Resilient Catholic Faith." *The Catholic World Report.* 28 June, 2016.
[104] Filip Mazurczak,"Poland's History is a Story of Resilient Catholic Faith." *The Catholic World Report.* 28 June, 2016.
[105] Filip Mazurczak,"Poland's History is a Story of Resilient Catholic Faith." *The Catholic World Report.* 28 June, 2016.
[106] Elizabeth Valkenier, "The Catholic Church in Communist Poland, 1945-1955," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (July 1956): 305.

this, the Catholic Church remained integral to the Polish people and continued to be seen as the communist regime's rival. While the communist regime discouraged religion of any kind, it was not forbidden, making Poland one of the Soviet Union's satellite states with the most religious rights.

The "Polish Months"

While this thesis focuses on the 1980s, it is important in terms of the Polish context to first look at the 1970s in Poland, as the events of this decade would act as a catalyst for what was to ensue. The term "Polish months" was introduced and popularised by Jerzy Eisler in his book *The "Polish Months": Communist-ruled Poland in Crisis.* He discussed times of great political significance in Poland, calling these eras "the Polish months". These "months" represent moments of great political breakthrough and crisis in communist Poland. The intention behind the book was not only to investigate specific political crises, but also to examine the overarching mechanisms of the communist system.[107] The first "Polish month" Eisler discusses is June 1956. This was when the first general strike in communist Poland broke out. The protest was quickly and brutally suppressed by the army. The impact of the protest was that it accelerated changes in the internal policy of the ruling communist party, which in turn contributed to a deepening de-Stalinization of the political system. This became known as the Polish October.[108] The political system underwent some minor changes, which resulted in Władysław Gomułka being appointed as the new leader in October 1956. Prior to this, he was the *de facto* leader of post-war Poland from 1947 until 1948, and he then became leader again from 1956 to 1970 following the Polish October.[109]

Unfortunately, according to Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, Gomułka did not improve the situation in Poland, as he spearheaded a crusade against the Catholic Church, as well as later targeting representatives of the intelligentsia and the cultural milieu in Poland.[110] He also allowed outbursts of anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic political

[107] Jerzy Eisler, *The "Polish Months": Communist-ruled Poland in Crisis* (Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance, 2020).
[108] Adam Bromke, "Background of the Polish October Revolution." *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 3 (1958): 44.
[109] Anon, "Rebellions Compromiser." *Time*. 10 December 1956.
[110] Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001: 387.

campaigns which began in 1967. These campaigns were carried out following the USSR's withdrawal of diplomatic relations with Israel after the Six Day War. During this time approximately 13 000 Jewish Poles left Poland due to being removed from their places of work and other various forms of anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist harassment.[111] The next Polish 'month' occurred in December 1970, sparked by the drastic increase of food prices. The suppression of the protests which took place across the country, but which were concentrated in the coastal cities, was bloody, and dozens of people were killed and hundreds injured. This laid the foundation for the next Polish 'month' on 25 June 1976. Strikers marched through the cities of Warsaw, Radom, Gdynia, Gdańsk, Płock, Grudziądz, Gryfino, Szczecin, Łódź, Elbląg, Poznań, Radomsko, Starachowice, and Wrocław in protest of the proposed price hikes. The PZPR sent in security forces to repress the strikes. The security forces made arrests, used water cannons, and beat strikers using truncheons. Fortunately, there were no fatalities, and the authorities withdrew the prices which had caused the protests.[112]

Eisler states that in comparison to the Hungarian uprising of 1956 (beginning on 23 of October and ending on 11 November 1956), and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia (which took place 20 – 21 August 1968), there was no single event in Soviet-era Poland that moved world public opinion to one of shock and sympathy due to the incredible violence to the same degree. However, in comparison to the other countries situated in the Eastern Bloc, Poland had the most frequent political and social protests, and when in August 1980 the world turned its eye to Poland, Solidarity became an international symbol of opposition to the communist regime, reaching far beyond the borders of central East Europe.[113]

[111] Anat Plocker, *The Expulsion of Jews from Communist Poland: Memory Wars and Homeland Anxieties*. Indiana: Indiana University Press. 2022.
[112] Nick Palazzolo, "Polish Workers Strike, Stop Price Increases, 1976." Accessed:29 April. https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/polish-workers-strike-stop-price-increases-1976
[113] Jerzy Eisler, *The "Polish Months": Communist-ruled Poland in Crisis*. Institute of National Remembrance.

The Polish Context of the 1970s and 1980s

In December 1970, the crumbling Polish economy led to price hikes and subsequent protests across the country. Gomułka, who was aided by his right-hand man Zenon Kliszko, ordered the army to open fire on the striking workers in Gdynia and Gdańsk. Officially, 41 shipyard workers were killed in the ensuing police-state violence, and more than a thousand people were wounded. However, newer research suggests that the death toll was closer to 7 000, and that doctors treating the victims of the violence were forced to sign the death certificates as having died of natural causes.[114] The events forced Gomułka's resignation as head of state, and retirement from politics, to be replaced by Edward Gierek. Due to the price hikes in Poland, strikes broke out across the country again in January 1971, and a general strike in Szczecin crippled the port city. Gierek, who was the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party and the leader of Poland from 1970 until 1980, managed to ease the situation by giving in to certain demands and making concessions. He freed detained workers and made promises to improve the workers' standard of living. This combination of concessions along with promises to make changes at the top party level managed to appease the striking workers in Gdańsk and Szczecin. However, it was only with further strikes breaking out in Łódź that the price hikes were revoked on 15 February 1971. Though the Party remained confident after the strikers were appeased, they did not want to give in to any demands to give the trade unions greater autonomy or influence, as it was now evident that these trade unions could inflict significant damage on the country.

Though still tense, the removal of the nationalist-communist Mieczysław Moczar as interior minister improved relations with the Catholic Church. Despite peace being somewhat restored in the country, the state of the economy was deteriorating. It was run ineffectively and still revolved primarily around heavy industry, which had received no structural reform. Investments were wasted and manufactured exports were of poor quality. External factors such as the Arab-Israeli War of 1973[115] and the resulting

[114] Nick Palazzolo, "Polish Workers Strike, Stop Price Increases, 1976." Accessed:29 April. https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/polish-workers-strike-stop-price-increases-1976
[115] Ira Eaker, "The Fourth Arab-Israeli War." *The Military Engineer* 66, no. 431 (1974): 156–60.

price oil rise in 1974[116] (which was also of great significance to apartheid South Africa's industrial sector, as will be discussed in the following chapter), in addition to heighted western interest rates, aggravated the already existing economic problems that the country faced.[117] 1974 once again saw growing inflation, food shortages, and the rationing of sugar. The strikes that broke out across the country again in 1976 was a result of growing inflation being announced because of the ever-increasing foreign debts. The strikes resulted in the authorities relenting slightly, but the workers were still met with open repression when striking. The authorities did not make use of firearms, as they had during the strikes of 1956 and 1970, but the strikers were met with "brutal punishments", such as the use of water cannons.[118]

Komitet Obrony Robotnikó (KOR) or the Committee for the Defence of Workers was formed in September 1976.[119] This organisation assisted those facing oppression. The members of KOR were of diverse backgrounds. Its most notable members were Jacek Kuroń, Adam Michnik, and Jan Józef Lipski. KOR acted as an intermediary between the workers and the intellectual opposition, something which had previously not existed. 1977 saw KOR activists cement their commitment to the defence of human and citizen rights. KOR began publicising the illegal acts of the government and were instrumental in the creation of an independent and illegal trade union in Gdańsk in 1978, despite ongoing police harassment aimed at the organisation. With the formation of the illegal trade union and the continued efforts of KOR, more dissident groups appeared across Poland at this time.

Due to the nature of the political climate in Poland at this time as the least repressed state in the Soviet Bloc, there was a blooming culture of unofficial publications, which managed to elude the authorities' attempts at censorship. The works of George Orwell as well as the writings of exiled writers Witold Gombrowicz and Czesław Miłosz were circulated throughout Poland. Tadeusz Konwicki's *A Minor Apocalypse*, which was banned in Poland despite its author still residing in the country, was one of the titles which was circulated. What would come to be known as the 'flying university' also

[116] David Painter, "Oil and Geopolitics: The Oil Crises of the 1970s and the Cold War". *Historical Social Research: Special Issue: The Energy Crises of the 1970s: Anticipations and Reactions in the Industrialized World*. (2014): 186-208.
[117] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 394.
[118] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 394.
[119] Jörg K Hoensch, *International Review of Social History* 39, no. 2 (1994): 287–90.

emerged. This was not Poland's first 'flying university'. A similar organisation had existed between 1885 and 1905 in Warsaw where those who could not attend formal university, specifically women, could continue their education informally. Notable members of Poland's first flying university were physicist and chemist Marie Salomea Skłodowska–Curie, physician Bronisława Dłuska, and writer Zofia Nałkowska. This organisation was revived in 1977 and lasted until 1981.[120] This 'flying university' made use of the services of various publicists and academics, and organised lectures in private homes to teach forbidden historical and political subjects. The Paris-based publication *Kultura,* along with radio stations in other European countries also broadcasted in Polish, and contributed to ideas being discussed in Poland. This, in addition to comparatively light travel regulations in Poland, led to an "increased popular awareness of the ever-widening gulf between Polish and Western living conditions".[121] It was under these conditions that dissent spread across the country to a degree that the Polish government could not suppress it.

The Catholic Church made a significant contribution to the broad-based movement which defended human rights by embracing both Catholic and secular intellectuals who were active in the country's political opposition. Having already been strengthened by Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński firmly rooting the church in the national tradition, the prestige of the church and its influence reached new heights when the Archbishop of Kraków, Karol Wojtyła, was elected as Pope John Paul II in 1978. He was "committed to four basic goals: the protection of the autonomy of the church, respect for human dignity, religious engagement and reconciliation with numerous states, and a concern for social, economic and political justice."[122] Formicola states that John Paul II's political ideology was informed by his theological beliefs. The religious notion of "*imago Dei*," "the belief that each individual was made in the image and likeness of God and therefore, worthy of dignity and respect",[123] was central to the new pope's political views. As a result, he was committed to advancing economic

[120] Tibi Puiu, "The story of Poland's secret 'Flying Universities' that gave men and women equal chance, Marie Curie among them." Last modified: 5 May 2020. https://www.zmescience.com/science/flying-universities-poland/
[121] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 395.
[122] Renee Jo Formicola, "The Political Legacy of Pope John Paul II." *Journal of Church and State,* Vol. 47, No. 2 (Spring 2005): 237.
[123] Renee Jo Formicola, "The Political Legacy of Pope John Paul II." *Journal of Church and State,* Vol. 47, No. 2 (Spring 2005): 239.

development, human rights, and social justice not just in his home country of Poland, but around the world.[124]

For the Polish authorities, the election of Karol Wojtyła as pope came as a shock, and Gierek is quoted as saying "by God's wounds, what are we going to do now?" when he heard the news.[125] Through the pope's pilgrimage to Poland from 2 -10 June 1979, it became evident that most of Poland's population was still very much devoted to Catholicism, rather than the secular communism which the government aimed to encourage. Hundreds of thousands of Poles went to greet their new Polish pope. In addition to this demonstration of faith, it was also indicative of the Polish people's enormous ability for self-organisation. This, in addition to the pope's "frequent references to human and national rights, and his appeal for courage and for change",[126] greatly concerned those in command in Poland. The pope's visit to his homeland had a "powerful liberating impact on the national psyche" according to Lukowski and Zawadzki.[127]

Despite the authorities' best attempts at propaganda to disguise the fact, it was evident that the economy was suffering. The most glaring example of this was in 1980, when over four fifths of the income garnered by exports went to service foreign debts. The government added fuel to the fire when they increased the price of meat in factory canteens, resulting in nation-wide strikes in July 1980, which caught the government off- guard. It is important to note that unlike the strikes of 1970 and 1976, these strikes occurred in factories where strike committees were formed, and they did not attack local government headquarters or pour out onto the streets as had occurred with the strikes of the 1970s. There were attempts to appease the strikers through extra food supplies and pay rises, but to no avail. Instead, these factory strikes led to the creation of an inter-factory committee led by the 37-year-old electrician Lech Wałęsa in the city of Gdańsk situated on the Baltic coast of northern Poland (which boasts Poland's largest port and is therefore crucial to the Polish economy)[128] on 16 August 1980.

[124] Renee Jo Formicola, "The Political Legacy of Pope John Paul II." *Journal of Church and State,* Vol. 47, No. 2 (Spring 2005): 240.
[125] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 396.
[126] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 397.
[127] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 398.
[128] Ruth Strachan, 1 "Gdańsk: The amber city making a big logistics play." October 2021. Accessed: 6 May 2023. https://www.investmentmonitor.ai/features/gdansk-poland-port-logistics-amber/#:~:text=Gda%C5%84sk%20boasts%20Poland's%20largest%20port&text=Top%20priorities%20include%20expanding%20cargo,deep%20seaports%20in%20western%20Europe.

Wałęsa's committee provided a model for others, and soon other coastal cities had similar committees. This was a turning point for the country. Wałęsa's committee issued 21 demands to the government on 17 August 1980. These demands included "the right to organize independent trade unions, the right to strike, and the right to freedom of expression".[129] Wałęsa was supported by Bronisław Geremek, a mediaeval historian as well as an indomitable negotiator, and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a Catholic journalist. Wałęsa's demands spurred on the Polish working class, and the strikes spread to the coal mines of Silesia. The fact that Silesia was Poland's industrial heartland meant that the government had little choice but to negotiate. On 30 August 1980 in Szczecin, and on 31 August 1980 in Gdańsk, the authorities gave in to the central demand for independent trade unions- this was to be known as the Gdańsk Agreement.[130]

On 17 September 1980 the separate trade unions voted to create a single nation-wide union, which they called Solidarity. Solidarity thrived under the leadership of Wałęsa, who "displayed a shrewd political instinct, combined with dynamism and a sense of mission"[131] and by mid-November of the same year, a third of Poland's adult population had joined the trade union, roughly 8 million people. One year later, Solidarity had over 10 million members. The events in Poland combined with Miłosz winning the Noble Prize for Literature in December 1980, resulted in Poland making headlines around the world. The West was becoming increasingly sympathetic towards Solidarity, as was the pope. [132]

Although the Soviets did not want to invade Poland to supress the unrest, they prepared for the possibility. According to Tomasz Kozłowski, "in the worst-case scenario, the Soviet army was to appoint an additional 100,000 reservists and prepare 15,000 machines."[133] Kozłowski also states that the White House feared that the

[129]Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 397.
[130] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 400.
[131] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 401.
[132] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 402.
[133] Tomasz Kozłowski, "December 1980: the Soviet Invasion of Poland- was Moscow Really Planning to Invade Poland?" Accessed: 1 May 2023. https://polishhistory.pl/december-1980-the-soviet-invasion-of-poland/

Soviets would enter Poland under the pretext of exercising and would break-up Solidarity.

In contrast to the newfound hope being experienced in Poland, Moscow and East Berlin were greatly alarmed at President Carter's threat of sanctions against the USSR, the threat being delivered at midnight on 3-4 December 1980. Agriculture was the USSR's greatest weakness since the 1960s. This, in combination with the previous years' poor growing conditions, the underfunded agricultural sector (as all available funds went to heavy industry), as well as the population boom that occurred between 1959 and 1979 (2 to 3 million babies being born every year) meant that Carter's Soviet grain embargo was disastrous for an already starving population.[134]

President Carter decided to use the United States' 'food power' as a punishment for the Soviets, when on 4 January 1980 he suspended delivery of all U.S. grain sales to the USSR. The purpose of this embargo was to punish the Soviet Union for its military occupation of Afghanistan, which had begun towards the end of December 1979. Robert Paarlberg notes that "never before had U.S. food exports to the USSR been suspended in pursuit of a non-commercial, foreign policy objective".[135] The circumstances surrounding January 1980 seemed to be ideal for such a decision by Carter. The Soviet Union had experienced incredibly dry weather early in 1979, the result of which was that the Soviet grain harvest fell 48 million tons (21 percent) short of production targets.

To avoid a drastic decrease in the size of its livestock herds, the Soviet Union in October 1979 set plans in motion to import a record quantity of grain, a total of 35 million tons in the following 12 months. Nearly three-quarters of this total was to be supplied by the United States, which had just completed a bountiful harvest. In addition to this, due to the record demand for grain, a poor harvest, and transport bottlenecks throughout much of the rest of the world's grain trading system, major suppliers (apart from the United States) were not prepared to assist the Soviet Union. All these factors meant that "if the Soviet Union would ever be vulnerable to U.S. food power, this seemed the time"[136]. Carter knew this and took full advantage of it. The Soviets were

[134] Robert Donnelly, "Jimmy Carter's lasting Cold War legacy." Published: 2 May 2019. https://theconversation.com/jimmy-carters-lasting-cold-war-legacy-113994
[135] Robert L Paarlberg, "Lessons of the Grain Embargo." *Foreign Affairs* 59, no. 1 (1980): 150.
[136] Paarlberg, "Lessons of the Grain Embargo", 151.

overwhelmed in trying to feed the population, and it is reasoned by Robert Paarlberg, political science professor at Harvard Kennedy School, that it was this action by the American president that dissuaded the Soviets from invading a newly hopeful Poland. However, despite not actually invading the country, Moscow still "remained unyielding in hostility" [137] and ordered the authorities in Poland to crack down on Solidarity.

Solidarity was no longer merely a trade union but had become a mass social movement, which was dedicated to the ideals of democracy and dissembling the command economy. Solidarity's leaders were realistic and restrained in their ambitions, however, and did not seek to take over political power in the country. There was a sense of 'dual power' coming about, which represented a contestation of communist political monopoly not only in Poland, but the entire Soviet-controlled Eastern Bloc.[138] This notion of realistic and restrained ambitions is exemplified in the sociologist, activist, and political scientist, Jadwiga Staniszkis', idea of "Poland's self-limiting revolution".[139] Michael Kennedy states that while "the very idea of a "self-limiting revolution" is certainly a bold one, it is not Staniszkis' alone. Every Pole understood that unbridled revolution would spell defeat for any chance of substantial change, given the power and intolerance of their Eastern neighbour."[140] Therefore, the Polish workers channelled their radicalism into a trade union, which would have no pre-text to be crushed by the ruling communist party. Although it eventually came to be known as the communist regime's opposition, the fact that Solidarity was a trade union and not an outright political rival, which would have otherwise immediately been crushed by the communists, led to its growth and influence in Poland and the Eastern Bloc as a whole. As the South African newspaper, *The Star* reported "Poland has avoided the immediate threat of Soviet military intervention, but its allies now obviously expect the Polish Communist Party to show a harder line towards dissidence and to take the situation firmly in hand".[141]

The government made several attempts to infiltrate the trade union, but under Wałęsa's leadership Solidarity withstood the authorities' attempts to promote division

[137] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 403.
[138] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 404.
[139] Staniszkis, Jadwiga, *Poland's Self-Limiting Revolution*. Edited by Jan T. Gross. Princeton University Press, 1984.
[140] Michael D Kennedy, *Social Forces* 64, no. 3 (1986): 804.
[141] Anon, "Threat of Soviet Intervention in Poland Fades", *The Star,* 16 December 1988.

within its ranks. Solidarity's strength and unity was most vividly demonstrated during the nation-wide strike held on 27 March 1981, as a show of strength against the government's crackdown of the trade union. As Solidarity gained popularity and numbers, the strength of the governing party in Poland declined. Prior to the emergence of Solidarity, the Communist party had 3 million members, but by 1981 about 1 million members left, with 700 000 of these ex-members joining Solidarity. The more reformist wing of the governing party encouraged flexibility and compromise within the Party, while the traditionalists wanted to take harder action against Solidarity and its 'counter-revolution'. This line of thought was supported by Moscow.

The Church's Declining Influence as Mediator with the Regime, and the Implementation of Martial Law

On 13 May 1981 in Vatican Square in front of hundreds of people Mehmet Ali Ağca shot Pope John Paul II four times in the abdomen. After five hours of surgery, the pope miraculously recovered from the attempted assassination.[142] A year later, there was another assassination attempt on the pope. Up until this point, the Church had acted as a mediator between Solidarity and the government. This, however, came to an end when in May of 1982 there was another attempted assassination of the pope, which was suspected to have been initiated by the KGB. The death of Cardinal Wyszynski and the appointment of Cardinal Józef Glemp, who did not have the prestige and did not command the same respect as his predecessor, did not help matters either. Regardless of the Church's influence as mediator declining, the "day of reckoning" as Lukowski and Zawadzki call it[143], was fast approaching. The political and social situation in Poland was strained and unsustainable. An early indicator of the Party bracing itself for the impending conflict, was the appointment of defence minister General Wojciech Jaruzelski. During the spring and summer months of 1981, the communist leaders in Poland frequently reassured the Soviets that the crisis in Poland would be resolved.[144]

[142] Raymond J. Faunt, "The Assassination Attempt on Pope John Paul II: Foreign Denial and Deception?" *American Intelligence Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2015): 87.
[143] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 405.
[144] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 406.

With Stanisław Kania being elected, some order was restored within the Party. According to journalist Dennis Hevesi, Kania "steered a delicate course for his country, avoiding both open confrontation with Solidarity, the rising independent labour movement, and military intervention by the Soviet Union". [145] It was, however, with the appointment of General Czesław Jan Kiszczak, who was previously the head of military intelligence, as the new interior minister, that put previously only discussed plans regarding martial law into motion. Shortly after his appointment, there was a severe deterioration of food supplies, which resulted in the radicalisation of some Solidarity members, as the Polish population was already weary prior to the food shortages. When Solidarity held its national conference in Gdańsk, it was decided unanimously to endorse "an appeal of fraternity to the workers of eastern Europe and the USSR".[146] This appeal only added fuel to the fire for the Soviets, and on 18 October, the party replaced Kania with Jaruzelski as first secretary, meaning that the country's armed forces were in one man's hands. The Soviets as well as the majority of the Polish United Worker's Party (104 to 79 votes)[147] felt that Kania was too consolatory towards Solidarity, and felt that they needed a leader who would take "a tougher line against ''antisocialists'' in Solidarity."[148] Jaruzelski's appointment marked the first time since the inter-war dictatorship of Marshal Jozef Pilsudski that a military official headed a political party in Poland.

On 4 November, Wałęsa, Cardinal Glemp, and Jaruzelski had a meeting, but failed to come to any sort of compromise. This, in addition to the announcement of a proposed demonstration by Solidarity members in Warsaw on 17 December 1981, where Wałęsa called for "an immediate general strike in the whole country" in response "to the attack on the union aimed at its liquidation"[149], as well as mounting pressure from Moscow for the Polish United Worker's Party to subdue the unrest which was bubbling to the surface in Poland, resulted in Jaruzelski declaring martial law. Jaruzelski claimed that he implemented martial law in Poland to prevent the Soviets from

[145] Dennis Hevesi, "Stanislaw Kania, 92, Polish Leader During Solidarity's Rise, Dies." *The New York Times.* 3 March 2020.

[146] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 407.
[147] Dennis Hevesi, "Stanislaw Kania, 92, Polish Leader During Solidarity's Rise, Dies." *The New York Times.* 3 March 2020.
[148] Dennis Hevesi, "Stanislaw Kania, 92, Polish Leader During Solidarity's Rise, Dies." *The New York Times.* 3 March 2020.
[149] Hella Pick "Poland Imposes Martial Law 'to Avert Anarchy'." *The Guardian*. 14 December 1981.

invading the country. British Conservative politician Geoffrey Howe agreed with Jaruzelski's claim, and states in his memoirs *Conflict of Loyalty* that Jaruzelski was not only one of the most impressive statesmen he had ever encountered, but that he was a patriot who protected Poland from Soviet aggression.[150] This dissertation disagrees with the claim that Jaruzelski declared martial law to prevent the Soviets from invading Poland, and instead ascertains that that he did so to crush Solidarity and win favour with the Soviets.

In a well-co-ordinated operation, which was overseen by Soviet Marshall Victor Kulikov, martial law was enforced across Poland over the night of 12-13 December 1981. An appeal smuggled out of Poland via a ferry shortly after martial law was declared, asked the world to show "solidarity with Solidarity" and asked for "massive support and moral help" in opposing the regime which imposed martial law.[151] Jola Chmela, who was in Spain at this time and elected not to return to Poland, said that when speaking to family and friends who were in Poland when martial law was declared, described the country as "tightly controlled" and "very restrictive" for those left behind in Poland.[152] 5 000 Solidarity members were arrested by the end of the first week of martial law.[153]

Many Poles who were outside Poland when martial law was declared elected not to return. An example of this would be the Polish sailors who jumped ship in December 1981 at Walvis Bay in South West Africa, today Namibia.[154] A total of 79 sailors from six fishing vessels, five trawlers and the mothership, Zulawy,[155] were eventually granted asylum in South Africa. While waiting for the authorities to decide their fate, the sailors who were part of Solidarity and also devout Catholics, attended a mass prepared for them by the parish priest of Walvis Bay, Priest Alfons Quirrenbach. When speaking to one of the men who was granted asylum, he stated that eventually all the men were taken inland, and were offered jobs in one of three divisions: mining, Eskom, or Iscor. Iscor in particular offered jobs to 29 of the men, as part of their large-scale

[150] Geoffrey Howe, *Conflict of loyalty.* London: Macmillan, 1994: 433

[151] "Appeal for 'massive' Foreign Help", *The Citizen*, 17 December 1981.
[152] Jola Chmela, interview with author. Sasolburg, Vaal Triangle.12 May 2022.
[153]Benedek Pál, "All the Telephone Lines are Disconnected." Accessed: 5 May 2023. https://osaarchivum.org/blog/%E2%80%9Call-the-telephone-and-telex-lines-are-disconnected%E2%80%9D-%E2%80%93-rfe-and-the-1981-martial-law-in-poland
[154] Peter Kenny, "Now 75 Polish seamen seek SA asylum." *Rand Daily Mail*. 24 December 1981.
[155] Peter Kenny, "It's a waiting game for defectors." *Rand Daily Mail*. 28 December 1981.

recruitment strategy.[156] At this time, there were approximately 500 Poles working in the mining sector, or for Eskom, Iscor, or Sasol.[157] The man interviewed for the purpose of this study, who elected to remain anonymous, decided to work in the mining sector in Randfontein.[158] He still resides in South Africa.

A military council headed by Jaruzelski known as the "military council of nation salvation" seized complete control of the country and its citizens. 6 000 Solidarity activists were arrested, including Wałęsa. The individuals arrested were taken to internment camps. Social organisations were immediately suspended, and force was used to suppress the strikes that broke out across the country, resulting in the death of nine miners in Katowice. *Volkstem,* an Afrikaans newspaper which was originally edited by historian, writer and journalist, Gustav Preller, stated without any sense of irony, that "Once again, the iron fist has tightened its grip on Poland to crush any movement towards freedom." The article went on to describe the events as "a grim record of the ruthlessness of communist control".[159]

May 1982 saw the strongest show of public defiance since martial law was declared the previous December, and there were protests in Gdańsk, Szczecin, and Warsaw, which were met with water jets and tear gas. *Newsweek* reported on the strikes saying that the clash between protestors and militiamen was "the ugliest burst of violence since martial law".[160] *The Star* reported on the events of May 1982 stating that protesters were being met with tear-gas and phosphorus flares in the streets, while the deputy prime minister delivered a much-applauded speech advocating for a "social dialogue".[161] While reporting on the same outbreak of violence in May 1982, the *Natal Witness* commented that "the violence provided a forceful reminder to the military rulers that enforcing martial law restrictions while the economic screw was tightened on most households could only be a short-term solution to Poland's problems."[162] It is strikingly ironic that that the papers adopted this tone regarding the crisis in Poland, but failed to make draw comparisons with what was happening in South Africa at the same time.

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[156] Anon, "Poles apart- in Vanderbijl". *Rand Daily Mail.* 28 January 1982.
[157] Anon, "Poles apart- in Vanderbijl". *Rand Daily Mail.* 28 January 1982.
[158] Anon, interview with author. Norwood, Johannesburg. 13 November 2022.
[159] Anon, 'The Polish Crisis." *Volkstem.* 31 January 1982.
[160] Fay Willey, "Defiant Solidarity Hits the Streets", *Newsweek.* 17 May 1982.
[161] Anon, "the social dialogue' with gas and batons", *The Star*. 8 May 1982.
[162] David Storey, "Polish Peace now even more urgent", *The Natal Witness.* 10 May 1982

Apart from the outbreak of violence in May 1982, the implementation of martial law resulted in some semblance of order in the country, and eventually forced strikers to return to work. It did not, however, as quoted above, solve the country's massive economic and political problems. The Solidarity leaders who had not been arrested were forced underground, where they rebuilt the trade union in secret. The now underground trade union launched a propaganda campaign against the government, aided by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) via an American trade union, which smuggled communication and printing equipment into the country. By winning the Noble Peace Prize in 1983 "for non-violent struggle for free trade unions and human rights in Poland",[163] Wałęsa heightened Solidarity's international profile, enhancing its moral backing. South African media was sympathetic towards the Poles and their struggles against the communist regime. *The Citizen*, an English, pro-apartheid government newspaper[164], stated that "the spirit of solidarity lives on."[165] Ironically, this same level of sympathy was not given to South Africans who were opposing their own oppressive regime.

Despite Jaruzelski's best attempts, the Communist Party's reputation was in a shambles in the view of the public. To try and mend their public image, amnesties were granted, freeing some of the Solidarity members who had been arrested or interned. Wałęsa was one of these individuals who was released in November 1982. The pope was allowed to visit Poland in June 1983, and despite being asked to not speak of the banned trade union Solidarity, he advocated for the right of association, and sympathised with the people of Poland. *The Star* reported that "the pope's analysis of workers' rights was based on what he called a combination of social justice and social love".[166] By July 1983, martial law in Poland was revoked. Under the new government of 1983-1984, Solidarity was still banned. However, a new government-approved trade union called Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych, (OPZZ), or The All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions in English, was introduced, and it was hoped to draw attention away from Solidarity. The new trade union relied on the general public's patriotism and focused on the restoration of festive commemorations

[163] Anon. "Lech Walesa – Facts." 15 August 2022. Accessed: 24 August 2022. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1983/walesa/facts/>
[164]Anton Harber, "Lies, truth, and good citizenship". 13 September 2006. Accessed: 3 August 2022.
[165] Anon, "The Spirit of Solidarity Lives On." *The Citizen.* 11 February 1982.
[166] Anon, "Defiant Pope in defence of unions." *The Star*. 21 June 1983.

and feast days which were common in pre-war Poland. These gestures had minimal effect on the public.[167]

With most organisations banned, the Church became the only "publicly active autonomous focus of national life [which] expanded in a manner highly reminiscent of earlier troubled periods in Polish history".[168] When the *Daily Dispatch* asked a French student, who had visited Poland during this period, what he found most impressive about the country, he answered "the churches, they are always full."[169] Despite Solidarity being outlawed, millions of Poles attended church services with Solidarity banners. While the Church itself was not directly involved in the political opposition, it often interceded on behalf of those who faced subjugation under the authorities. While visiting his home country for the second time in June 1983, John Paul II said to the 10 million Poles who came to greet him that he hoped for the relegalisation of Solidarity. This, in addition to the murder of Priest Jerzy Popiełuszko who was a "vocal critic of the regime"[170] in October 1984 by agents of the interior minister, resulted in even more anger directed towards the government. By murdering Popiełuszko the authorities hoped to smother the flames of rebellion, but they only added fuel to the fire. Several hundred thousand Poles attended Popiełuszko's funeral, and his "grave became a shrine".[171] *The Daily News* reported that even 24 hours after his funeral, there were still thousands paying tribute at his grave. [172] Wałęsa appealed for "calm and talks"[173] between the communist government and the Catholic Church after of the murder of Popiełuszko.

By the mid-1980s the country had reached a political stalemate. Jaruzelski had managed to dissuade the authorities from using violent police methods to keep the population in check, but he did not manage to solve the country's massive economic problems. The Polish foreign debt sat at 40 billion dollars in 1988, and the sanctions from the United States compounded the situation. The standard of living in Poland fell along with industrial production, while prices rose. It was during this time of seeming hopelessness that half a million Poles, mostly young people, left the country in search

[167] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 408.
[168] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 409.
[169] Anon, "Religious revival which is the marvel of Poland", *Daily Dispatch*. 5 December 1984
[170] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 410.
[171] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 411.
[172] Anon, "Poles flock to funeral of anti-Red Priest", *The Daily News*. 5 November 1984.
[173] Anon, "Walesa calls for calm after killing", *The Daily News*. 31 October 1984.

of better opportunities and a higher standard of living elsewhere. The state released all political prisoners in 1986, but the leaders of Solidarity refused to consult with the government. Wałęsa continued to insist on the restoration of political pluralism to solve the grave state of the economy.

The authorities, led by Jaruzelski, continued to explore other options to resolve the crisis, as they did not want to give up the monopoly of power. An attempt at a referendum was made by the authorities on 29 November 1987, but it failed spectacularly. American journalist Charles Powers reported that "the banned trade union Solidarity urged Polish voters Monday to boycott the government's planned referendum on economic and political reform, characterizing its purpose as 'solely propaganda'."[174] It is evident that Solidarity had far more control and commanded much greater respect than the government, as the majority of the public boycotted the referendum.

Solidarity members went on strike once again in April and May 1988, and while the government did not reintroduce martial law, they did not give into the trade union's demands either. *The Sunday Star* stated that "nothing has been solved by the Polish regime's decision to end the strikes by force and is one thing which everyone -even the pugnacious government spokesman- agrees".[175] The USSR was of little help at this time, as they had their own crisis with the USA to resolve. This left the Polish authorities with only two options, to either attempt to regain control of the country and its citizens through force, or to come to a compromise with the opposition and hopefully retain some power and influence in Poland. Incidentally, across the world in South Africa, the ruling National Party had a similar choice to make.[176]

On 26 August 1988 during a televised broadcast General Kiszczak announced his intentions for what would become known as the 'round-table talks', and invited the opposition to an open discussion. In response to this openness to negotiation, Wałęsa called off the nation-wide strikes and met Kiszczak privately on 31 August. Extremists on both sides were unhappy about this meeting, and it took months of manoeuvring to finally start the talks on 6 February 1989. The talks concluded on 5 April with the

[174] Charles Powers, "Solidarity Urges Boycott of Referendum: Restructuring 'Propaganda,' Banned Polish Trade Union Says." Published: 27 October 1987. https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987-10-27-mn-16889-story.html
[175] Anon, "In Poland, Force is Futile." *The Sunday Star*. 15 May 1988.
[176] Robert Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa.* 123.

following outcomes. Firstly, Solidarity and Rural Solidarity were relegalised. The offices of the Senate and the president were restored (they were previously abolished in 1946 and 1952 respectively). On 4 June 1989, semi-free elections took place. These elections were the culmination of the "round table" talks which began 6 February and ended 5 April, and were between the government and the opposition, the most prominent of which was Solidarity, headed by Wałęsa. These talks resulted in "political reform, trade union pluralism (including the legalization of Solidarity), and economic and social policy. Among the political reforms was the introduction of a new bicameral Parliament".[177] These elections turned out to be disastrous for the Party, and Lukowski and Zawadski state they "proved to be the first key move in the dismantling of the communist system in east-central Europe".[178] The Solidarity-backed Citizen's Committee won 99 of the 100 seats in the Senate. South African journalist Patrick Worsnip reported that the communist rulers experienced a "crushing defeat" [179] in the elections. On 3 July 1989, Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Union's last leader (1985-1991), made the announcement that Poland was allowed to determine the fate of its own government. A member of the Polish communist politburo was quoted by the *Sunday Argus* as saying that "[the communist party] took a gamble, and lost." [180]

Migration Under Martial Law

While emigration was not a possibility during the years of martial law, it was very much an option before and after. On paper it seemed that emigration for Poles out of Poland was quite difficult, but in practice it was not. Officially emigration out of Poland required multiple regulations, evidentiary proof, and papers in order to qualify.[181] But in practice, during the non-martial law years, emigration officials were quite lenient. Often permission only required proof that the individual or individuals wanting to emigrate

[177] Anon, "Poland Parliamentary Chamber: Sejn.' N.D. Accessed: 27 July 2022. http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2255_89.htm
[178] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland.* 412.
[179] Patrick Worsnip, "Solidarity win will speed Polish Reform." *The Argus*. 7 June 1989.
[180] Anon, "How the party gambled- and lost." *Sunday Tribune*. 11 June 1989.
[181] Małgorzata Krywult Albańska, "Caught in a Fever? The Social and Economic Background of Emigration from Poland in the 1980s". *Polish American Studies*. Vol. 68 (2011): 109.

had family in the destination country. Many Poles did not return to their country after these so-called “personal family trips”.[182]

In addition to escaping unfavourable conditions, emigration was also seen as a way that Polish people could sustain their own Polish culture in other countries where they were free of oppression. An example of this would the Polish Association of the Vaal Triangle in South Africa, a community with a large number of Polish migrants during the 1980s, which this research explores. The reason why it was relatively easy to gain permanent residence in the West for Poles during this time is because they were often classified as refugees, due to the oppressive communist government.[183]

There was a significant spike in emigration just before the implementation of martial law, and just after it was announced to no longer be in effect. Prior to the implementation of martial law, as discussed, there was a surge of protests and strikes, as well as a fear of Soviet occupation and possible emigration bans, resulting in many individuals and families choosing to leave Poland. After martial law was lifted, there was another surge of emigration out of Poland. This time it was to escape the harsh realities of martial law as well as the constant shadow of the Soviet Union. Jacek Fastyn, who left Poland and came to South Africa with his family just after martial law was lifted, stated that life in Poland under martial law was psychologically “hardly bearable”[184] due to the oppressive regime, the realities of martial law, and the severe food restrictions.

During the years of martial law, emigration out of Poland was nearly impossible for the average Polish citizen, as movement was restricted and highly monitored, and all borders were closed by the military. However, this does not mean that there was no movement out of Poland during this time. The authorities would often use emigration to get rid of opposition, for example, those still involved in the under-ground operations of Solidarity. Those suspected of being involved in the banned trade union would be brought to internment camps for questioning. Authorities would offer them a set of emigration papers, which asked the authorities to allow them to emigrate out of the country in an official capacity. At first those being detained thought that the papers

[182] Albańska, “Caught in a Fever? The Social and Economic Background of Emigration from Poland in the 1980s”. 110.
[183]Grazyna Sikorska. “The Church in Poland under martial law.” *Religion in Communist Lands,* Vol. 10, no. 2, (2008): 211.
[184] Jacek Fastyn, interview with author. Vanderbijlpark, Vaal Triangle. 2 June 2022.

were a joke or a lie. However, when prisoners filled out and submitted these papers, they were surprised to have them approved and would be allowed to leave the country shortly after. The communist regime used this method to exile those who they thought were part of the opposition. “Problematic citizens”, as they were called, were given a choice of further detainment, being placed in an internment camp, or filling out the emigration papers. Once this was discovered by Solidarity leaders, they encouraged their members to not take the authorities up on their offer to allow them to emigrate as it was seen as being disloyal and was therefore looked down upon.[185] It was due to this that emigration during the period of martial law held a negative connotation, as it was seen as betraying Solidarity. This negative connotation, however, was only limited to the martial law era.[186]

Patryk Pleskot concurs with Juergensmeyer in remarking that Poland has a long and turbulent history in relation to emigration, and that while the emigration of Poles out of their home country in the 1980s was historically significant, it was not the first nor would it be the last historically significant migration of Poles. Pleskot states regarding Polish emigration in the 1980s, it was in most cases due to financial and economic conditions in the country, but that there was also a significant amount of Solidarity activists who left the country at this time due to political reasons. For many who left Poland during this time, their new countries of residence were simply a place of work, and they developed no real attachment to their new place of residence. For many others, however, their new country quickly became their second home, a place of opportunity and freedom, and many chose to remain even after the social, economic, and political situation in Poland improved. An example of this would be the Polish community in the Vaal Triangle. Most of the members in this community who emigrated to South Africa in the 1980s have chosen to remain in South Africa, only leaving to follow South African-raised children who have elected to emigrate themselves, sometimes back to Poland itself.[187]

[185] Jan Mur, *A prisoner of martial law: Poland, 1981-1982* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984).
[186] Juergensmeyer, “Polish Emigration During the 1980s: The Influence of Martial Law and Solidarity”.55.
[187] Patryk Pleskot, “Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges”. *Polish American Studies*, vol. 72, no. 2, (2015): 60.

It is important to note that there was another type of emigration which was happening in the latter half of the 1980s in Poland. While many Poles emigrated before and after (and some even during) the years of martial law, there was a wave of emigrants who left the country later. An example of this would be Ryszard and Bozena Skoczyński, who left Poland in 1988 with their children to come to South Africa. When asked why they left when the tide seemed to be turning in Poland, Ryszard stated that he saw the economy as completely collapsed in the late 1980s, and could not see how it could ever recover.[188] Bozena stressed that they left Poland because they could see no future for their children in the country.[189] They both felt that their and their children's prospects were better in South Africa.

Conclusion

The situation in Poland resulted in several push factors encouraging citizens to emigrate, but that merely supports the first part of Lee's theory. Zafrini states that it is often denial of religious rights as well as social, political, and economic factors which encourages migration,[190] and regarding social, political, and economic factors, this is true of the migration out of Poland during the 1980s. There was not a denial of religious rights, however, religion was discouraged by the regime as the communist government was secular and discouraged religion of any kind. There was also significant social, political, and economic distress in the country at the time.

Push factors are responsible for why a person chooses to leave, but it does not determine where they decide to go. To determine the second part of the equation, we have to look at the pull factors to other countries. The following chapter will analyse the political and economic situation of South Africa during the 1980s, and will discuss

[188] Ryszard Skoczyński interview with author. Vanderbijlpark, Vaal Triangle.26 June 2022.
[189] Bozena Skoczyński, interview with author. Vanderbijlpark, Vaal Triangle. 26 June 2022.
[190] Zanfrini, *Migrants and Religion: Paths, Issues, and Lenses: A Multidisciplinary and Multi-Sited Study on the Role of Religious Belongings in Migratory and Integration Processes.* 5.

why despite the tense political situation and impending economic crisis, South Africa was an attractive option for Poles leaving their country.

Chapter 2

A Kingdom of Coal and Iron: The Crumbling of Industry and Regime in South Africa (1970s and 1980s)

While the situation in Poland during the 1980s provided the "push" factors for emigration out of the country, South Africa had "pull" factors which drew Poles to the country. Since the economic and political situation in South Africa at this time was even more turbulent than in Poland, it may seem counterintuitive that Poles were leaving one contentious political environment for another. However, despite the difficult conditions South Africans faced, there were still aspects of the country which made it attractive to immigrants, particularly Polish immigrants. The following chapter will discuss the context of 1980s South Africa, and why, despite this decade's difficulties, Poles still sought to immigrate to the country, namely due to the country's industrial sector and need for skilled labour, which was brought about due to the implementation of Bantu education, resulting in a mostly unskilled black population.

The "Pull Factors" for Poles

When the Afrikaner Nationalist government came to power in 1948, they were not initially in favour of pan-European immigration to South Africa, as they did not want the Afrikaner population to be outnumbered. However, by the start of the 1960s the economy was struggling with a massive skilled labour shortage in the country due to the black population not receiving adequate education. The massive skilled labour shortage was a direct result of the implementation of Bantu education in 1953.[191] Bantu education was a substandard level of education to what the white population received. The aim of Bantu education was to result in a black population which was only unskilled or semi-skilled. H. F Verwoerd, the architect of the Act, plainly stated that the reason the apartheid government felt this step necessary was because:

> …the education previously given […] had led to the production of frustrated Africans, who had been made to feel that they were above their community, so that

[191] Robert Henry Wishart Shepherd, "The South African Bantu Education Act." *African Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 215 (Apr., 1955): 138.

> they wanted to become integrated with the life of the European community by obtaining posts in a European setting and through the elimination of Europeans. When this had not happened, […] they became rebellious and tried to make their community dissatisfied because of their misdirected and alien ambition.[192]

In addition to the Bantu Education Act, the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956 also contributed to the lack of skilled labour in South Africa. The main aim of the act was to separate existing trade unions in South Africa along racial lines, while also prohibiting the formation of any new "mixed" trade unions. In addition to this, however, clause 77 of the act "legalized the reservation of skilled jobs to white workers".[193] This meant that even if a black South African acquired the needed skills through years of on-the-job learning, they would be prohibited from getting a skilled labour position.[194]

To resolve this self-made problem of a lack of skilled labour, the South African government elected not to train the black population, but rather to encourage skilled white labourers from Europe to fill the positions in the collapsing industrial sectors, therefore retracting their previous stance on European migrants coming to South Africa. It is important to note that they had to revise their stance on migration due to absolute necessity, and not a change of heart regarding the dominance of the Afrikaner population.[195] Since South Africa was both in economic and political turmoil in the 1980s, it would seem counterintuitive that it would be an attractive option for emigrating Poles. However, despite the circumstances in South Africa being abhorrent for most, it was almost ideal for others: particularly skilled white immigrants.

Due to Bantu Education and most skilled jobs going to white and not black workers, there was a serious shortage of skilled labourers in South Africa's industrial sector. The majority of those seeking to leave Poland in the 1980s were highly skilled, white, and anti-communist, three qualities which were highly desirable in late apartheid-era South Africa. Of course, the irony was that most of these workers were being employed in state-owned industries, which was more reminiscent of communism than capitalism.

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[192] Robert Henry Wishart Shepherd, "The South African Bantu Education Act." *African Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 215 (Apr., 1955), 140.
[193] Anon. "Industrial Conciliation Amendment Act No 28." N.d. Accessed: 4 May 2023. https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/site/q/03lv01538/04lv01828/05lv01829/06lv01877.htm
[194] Anon. "Industrial Conciliation Amendment Act No 28."N.d. Accessed: 4 May 2023. https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/site/q/03lv01538/04lv01828/05lv01829/06lv01877.htm
[195]Isidore Jack Donsky, "Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to south Africa 1946-1970," MA dissertation, University of Johannesburg, 1989. 1.

This economic phenomenon can be defined as “Afrikaner capitalism”, which was created and nurtured through Afrikaner nationalism.[196] Despite this, the conditions in South Africa were very favourable for skilled Polish migrants. When speaking to those who migrated to South Africa from Poland during this time, many noted how incredibly welcoming and helpful the representatives of the industries were, this being indictive of how valued they were to the industries which were on the brink of a collapse of their own making.[197] While it is indeed a positive and respectable thing that those fleeing social upheaval in Poland were welcomed warmly and helped readily by South Africa’s industries, it is important to note that the reasons behind these state-owned industries’ openheartedness was at its core selfish, as they were looking to rectify their lack of skilled labour.

The Bourgeoning Afrikaner Nationalism of the 20th Century

Apartheid was imposed on South Africa in 1948 when the National Party came to power. It shocked many that the National Party won, although it was only by a small minority. To fully understand the circumstances which resulted in the National Party victory, one must look at the circumstances and events which happened in the late 19th and early 20th century in South Africa, and how it impacted the Afrikaner population in particular. From the inception of the Afrikaner populace as a distinctive group, they were at odds with other groups that inhabited South Africa, namely the English settlers as well as the native African population. National mythology and historical folklore were an important part of Afrikaner culture, as it is in many cultures. However, due to the constant struggle for survival, this folklore was an imbittered mythology and was elevated to a level of historical fact and absolute truth, which is where the problem of brewing Afrikaner Nationalism began.

Historian Leonard Thompson states that “one of the characteristic traits of a national culture is a distinctive historical folklore, which lauds the qualities and magnifies the deeds of national heroes and derides those of their opponents, domestic and

[196] Dan O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934-1948.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009 (first published 1983).
[197] Donsky, “Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to south Africa 1946-1970.” 11.

foreign".[198] Thompson clarifies that if a national mythology is somewhat humorous in nature and tone, and not taken too seriously, and that there is objective, formal, and factual information being communicated in an official capacity (such as in universities and schools) which is not based on mythology, then national mythologies are not a cause for concern. However, if a national mythology substitutes "dispassionate teachings [and] objective writing by historians"[199], then it is of grave concern. The reason for this being that when fiction is seen as fact, and there is official backing to it (academically or religiously), it can become a very dangerous foundation on which Nationalistic policies and ideologies can be constructed.

Afrikaner mythologies led to eventual Afrikaner Nationalism, the reason for this being that as South Africa became a part of the British Empire, it bore the brunt of British Imperialism until it became a sovereign state. After becoming a sovereign state and gaining increasingly more power and control over the country, a new threat to Afrikaner sovereignty came about: African Nationalism. As the old threat of the English was gone, Afrikaner Nationalism became principally negrophobic- a sentiment which had always existed, but had always been secondary to anglophobia. The most appropriate explanation of Afrikaner Nationalism is a quote by Thompson, that "it is a hard and humourless mythology of an anxious, embattled people, who have never been assured of a continued national existence-a mythology of bitter grievances and solemness".[200] This thesis argues that Afrikaner Nationalism is based on fear. The existence of the Afrikaner population has always been precarious. They were always in the minority, whether that be in comparison to South African natives or English settlers. They also had no real claim to any piece of land. There was also almost constant tension between themselves and other groups that inhabited South Africa. The Afrikaner population was constantly fearful, whether of being eradicated by the British, feeling threatened by native South Africans, being concerned over their claims to land, or the survival of their culture, language, and very way of life. This feeling of

[198]Leonard Thompson, "Afrikaner Nationalist Historiography and the Policy of Apartheid", *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 3, No. 1, (1962):125.
[199] Leonard Thompson, "Afrikaner Nationalist Historiography and the Policy of Apartheid", *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 3, No. 1, (1962):125.
[200] Leonard Thompson, "Afrikaner Nationalist Historiography and the Policy of Apartheid", *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 3, No. 1, (1962):140.

constantly being under threat helped to breed Afrikaner Nationalism. The constant paranoia and fear of the "other" created essentialist mythologies, and gave rise to ideas of Afrikaners being God's chosen people. It was necessary for them to hold these beliefs as fact, as they were needed to claim that they had a right to occupy the space that they did, as well as to justify their very existence in South Africa. It was fear that caused Afrikaners to write Afrikaner Nationalist histories, it was fear that saw the inauguration of the Apartheid regime, and it was fear that maintained the National Party's reign for as long as what it did. When it came to Afrikaner Nationalism, the "distinction between myth and fact [was] as elusive as ever".[201]

Saul Dubow argues that scientific racism was also used to justify the separation of races, but that the impact of cultural relativism cannot be overstated. Dubow states that "the essentialist view of culture was no less powerful a means of articulating human difference than an approach based entirely on biological determinism."[202] But essentially, Afrikaner nationalism came about through fear. Afrikaner nationalism was given legitimacy through the professionalisation and factualisation of nationalist Afrikaner mythologies. It was this legitimizing of Afrikaner Nationalism which swayed many voters to vote for the National Party in 1948. It was of course not the only reason that voters chose to vote NP, but it did contribute to the NP's marginal victory, and cannot be overlooked when studying 20th century South Africa.

The Economic Base of the Apartheid State

The first known use of the word "apartheid" was by D.F Malan during his 1943 election campaign, when he advocated for the 'apartheid of residential areas'. During a post-election speech, he clarified that apartheid was what he considered to be "just and fair treatment of whites and non-whites, but each in his own terrain".[203] The National Party's Transvaal leader, J.G. Strijdom (who would later be the South African Prime Minister between 1954-1958) used the term again when opening a meeting of the

[201]Leonard Thompson, "Afrikaner Nationalist Historiography and the Policy of Apartheid", *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 3, No. 1, (1962):141.
[202]Saul Dubow, "Afrikaner Nationalism, Apartheid and the Conceptualization of 'Race'", *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 33, No.2, (1992):237.
[203] Thula Simpson, *History of South Africa, from 1902 to the Present.* Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2021.129

Nasionale Jeugbond in Bloemfontein in July 1947. He used the term while discussing what he called the 'threat of black urbanisation'. Black urbanisation was a direct result of South Africa's booming industrial sector.

Twenty-five years prior to Strijdom making the speech, in which he discussed his concerns surrounding black urbanisation, the Electricity Act of 1922 was created to 'stimulate the provision, wherever required, of a cheap and abundant supply of electricity'.[204] This act was a key factor in starting South Africa down a path of large-scale industrialisation. Hendrik van der Bijl was one of the act's key authors. Van der Bijl, a research scientist, had been hired by the government to advise them on industrialisation in South Africa. According to historian Thula Simpson, van der Bijl's advice to the South African government was two-fold: to "ensure a reliable, low-cost electricity power supply, and develop an iron and steel industry".[205] Van der Bijl went on to become the first chairperson of the Electricity Supply Commission (Escom) when it was first established in 1923.[206] Vanderbijlpark, one of the towns which constitutes the Vaal Triangle, was also named after him.

In addition to Escom, the Iron and Steel Corporation (ISCOR), began its operations in August 1934. While speaking at Iscor's official opening, the then prime minister Hertzog explained his large-scale vision for the company, and industrialisation in South Africa as a whole. Hertzog stated that:

> …the fear which we have had and still have is, what will happen to the workmen in this country when the gold mines can no longer absorb them?' That fear was now 'greatly removed', because '[w]hen the steel industry grows up it will absorb many workers, and will enable others to be absorbed in subsidiary industries … industrial life hitherto has not kept pace with agricultural development [but now] we may rest assured that there will be employment for youths from the platteland.[207]

Hertzog was of course only referring to white youths, as this was in direct response to the "poor white problem" The first time that the phrase 'the poor white problem' was used was in 1929. The Carnegie Corporation commissioned a study, the name of which was *The Poor White Problem in South Africa*. This study focused on Afrikaners whose farms were failing and as a result were becoming increasingly poorer. This

[204] Simpson, *History of South Africa, from 1902 to the Present.* 130
[205] Simpson, *History of South Africa, from 1902 to the Present*.130
[206] Anon, "Dr H J van der Bijl." 17 August 2021. Accessed: 16 December 2022. https://www.eskom.co.za/heritage/dr-h-j-van-der-bijl/
[207] Cited in Simpson, *History of South Africa, from 1902 to the Present.* 130.

study resulted in two outcomes, one positive and the other negative. Positively, the government allocated more funding to help the struggling Afrikaner farmers. However, the negative outcome far overshadowed the positive, as this study also recommended that the only permanent and long-term solution to solving the 'poor white problem' in South Africa, would be at the expense of South Africans who were not white (i.e., black, coloured, Indian and Asian South Africans). Years later, the study and its recommendations fell into the hands of South Africa leaders, most notorious of whom was Hendrik Verwoerd, known as the architect of apartheid and who served as the prime minister of South Africa between 1958 and 1966.[208]

Before Verwoerd, one of Hertzog's main objectives was to limit the number of Africans leaving the reserves, but this endeavour was greatly undermined by the rapid industrialisation which the country was undergoing. This rapid industrialisation led to a great influx of African rural-urban migration, which came to be known as the "threat of black urbanisation" under the Hertzog administration. In a census taken in 1946, it showed that for the first time in the country's history, black South Africans made up the majority in urban areas. To quote Simpson, "'White' South Africa was increasingly becoming a fiction."[209]

In 1947 during an address in Bloemfontein, Strijdom predicted that it would end in a bloodbath if the rate of black urbanisation continued, stating that "the only way out was 'apartheid', with Africans only being allowed in white areas as temporary workers".[210] The historian Saul Dubow argues that left analysts have in the past placed too much emphasis on the cheap labour system as the driving force of segregation and its ideologies. He argues that there were broader fears for the white population, in particular relating to black urbanization and proletarianization.[211] This is in agreement with what this thesis also argues, that it was primarily the fear of extinction which fanned the flames of Afrikaner nationalism which resulted in the implementation of the apartheid regime.

[208] Anon. "First Inquiry into Poverty." 2006. Accessed: 12 May 2023. http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/oral_hist/carnegie/special-features/
[209] Simpson, *History of South Africa, from 1902 to the Present.* 130.
[210] Simpson, *History of South Africa, from 1902 to the Present*. 130.
[211] William Beinart and Saul Dubow. *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa.* London: Routledge, 1995. 145.

The Implementation of Apartheid

White South Africa went to the polls on 26 May 1948. The result was a surprising victory for the National Party under Dr D.F. Malan. South African historian Robert Ross explains this seemingly bizarre result by making two points. He begins by stating that the outcome was due to the electoral system, and that the election was incredibly close, with the National Party only getting 41.5 % of the votes. The National Party benefited greatly from one specific ruling, written into the 1910 constitution- the ruling stated that rural seats needed to have fewer voters than urban areas. Furthermore, the National Party won many seats by incredibly small majorities, while the United Party accumulated unneeded votes in areas where it was already sure of success. More broadly speaking, the re-emergence of Afrikaner Nationalism pushed a significant number of voters to favour the National Party. Specifically, the maize farmers of the Transvaal who had found it difficult to retain their black labour force due to the competition of the thriving industry of the Witwatersrand, were swayed to the side of the National Party.[212] Furthermore, the South Africans who held a residual and inherited loyalty to the party of Smuts and Botha became fewer with each year since the South African War. Smuts was a field marshal during the South African War, where he successfully led troops against British soldiers. After the war in 1911, he created a political party called the South African Party. Smuts served as Prime Minister of South Africa from 1919 to 1924. In 1934 Smuts' South African Party and Prime Minister Barry Hertzog's National Party merged, and became the United National South African Party, usually referred to as the United Party. The United Party was the ruling party in South Africa from 1934 until 1948, when the National Party came to power. As those who fought with and for Smuts during the South African War grew older and passed away, the support for his party diminished, leading to the rise of support for the National Party.[213]

In addition to the Afrikaner maize farmers of the Transvaal, the Afrikaner working class of the Witwatersrand also succumbed to the promises of the National Party after years of targeted ideological work by the nationalists. Ultimately, it was the swing of rural Transvaal, as well as a number of urban seats mostly from the Witwatersrand and

[212] Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa.* 124.
[213] Arkadiusz Żukowski, "The Union of South Africa Towards the Outbreak of the Second World War." *African Studies*, no. 42 (2016): 19-21.

Pretoria, that resulted in a win for the National Party enabling them to seize control of the country.[214]

In 1953, upon analysing the policy of apartheid, Bruce Patterson, who had previously been the foreign news editor for the *Rand Daily Mail* and was on the editorial staff of the *Montreal Star* at the time of publication, noted that there were two glaring issues immediately evident when the policy of apartheid was put into practice. The first issue was that "South Africa's economic system [was] based on cheap Native labour."[215] He recognised that South Africa's mines would cease to function without this labour supply, and that it was incredibly unlikely that any secondary industry could continue either. An idealistic system of complete racial *apartheid* would mean a greatly reduced standard of living in South Africa for the white population. Conversely, unless industries were established in the "native reserves", the non-European portion of the South African population would be forced into "white" areas to survive. This issue was not limited to industry but affected agriculture as well; it was doubtful that the agricultural sector could survive total segregation. When these concerns were voiced, D.F Malan side-stepped the complicated issue by merely stating that:

> …total territorial apartheid was an "ideal" but not practical policy or the policy of his government. Europeans and Natives, he said, must continue to live together for a time. The first aim would be to check the flow of Natives from the tribal areas without harming the demand for labour in White areas.[216]

The National Party thus came to power with the weight of two contradictory promises made to white South Africa. On the one hand, the National Party sought to bring full racial separation and dislocation between South Africans, which extended to labour and the interdependent economy. However, this would not be possible if they were to uphold their promise to the farmers of the Transvaal, which was to help them retain their black labour force. The industrialists were also not in favour of the concept of total segregation, as they too relied on black labour, as did the farmers of the Transvaal. These contradictory and confusing promises would lay the foundation for unstable and confusing legislation which would require amendments, and then amendments to these amendments, until the eventual collapse of the apartheid state.[217]

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[214] Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa.* 125.
[215] Bruce Patterson, "The South African Scene". *International Journal* Vol. 8, No. 4 (Autumn, 1953): 250.
[216] Cited in Bruce Patterson, "The South African Scene", 251.
[217] Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 126.

Ultimately, apartheid was a political philosophy, which "was developed in a far more systematic fashion than had ever been the case with segregation."[218] The concept of apartheid was more unyielding in theory than in practice, but this did not make it more tolerable or humane. Apartheid was based on the foundation of Afrikaner Nationalism, which enjoyed a resurgence during this time due to the above-mentioned circumstances. This led to a form of comprehensive racial segregation known as "apartheid." Apartheid made use of four basic legislative principles. Firstly, the franchise would be restricted in such a way that white South Africans, and Afrikaners in particular, had a monopoly on state power. The second envisaged the complete and total segregation of races within South Africa in both rural and urban areas. Thirdly, all black labour was under strict governmental control. Finally, the regime would regulate all aspects of South African life, particularly the lives of black South Africans. Ross states that for these principles to be effective, South Africans would have to be strictly categorised into racial groups, and that no new South Africans being born could fall outside of these groups.[219]

Patterns of Migration in the 20th Century

When South Africa was part of the British Commonwealth, the white population in South Africa comprised 58 percent Afrikaans speaking individuals, and 42 percent English speaking.[220] The Afrikaners wanted to keep this relative majority. From 1948 to the late 1980s, South African state policies towards immigration underwent three distinct stages, whereby they set different sets of qualifying regulations for those considering immigrating to South Africa. Donsky states that due to the Afrikaner Nationalist party coming into power in1948, Afrikaner nationalist ideology played:

> …a major role towards its immigration policies where politics took precedence over socio-economic consideration. Yet, this same ideology was later compelled to alter course and adapt, under the changing face of Africa from colonial territories to black independent states. This political shift influenced

[218] Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 127.
[219] Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 128.
[220] Donsky, "Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to south Africa 1946-1970." 11.

> National Party thinking to pragmatically embark on a large-scale white immigration scheme.[221]

The character and scale of population movement internationally between the 1940s and 1980s was significantly influenced first by the Second World War and then by the communist expansion in Eastern Europe, which resulted in millions of people relocating to areas of improved living conditions and security. Donsky states that while most of the United Nations member states implemented reasonable and humane policies regarding migration, those in the East-European Bloc did not. He goes on to draw a parallel between the "strictly controlled population movements from enforced transfers of groups of people within their own territories to the restriction of the individual's right of domicile and place of work"[222], and the South African 'Group Areas Act', which enforced control and resettlement by the government of its discriminated population.[223] In South Africa between 1949 and 1960, the immigration policy was guided by ideology, as opposed to other immigrant receiving countries whose policies were guided by economic considerations. Since the Second World War, the flow of migration was influenced by governmental policies surrounding migration of both the receiving and the sending countries. This applied to South Africa as well, with most of its migrants coming from Europe, the majority coming from Great Britain.[224]

During the period between of 1946 and the late 1980s, the South African government's policies on migration were largely influenced by its skilled labour shortage. During this time, immigration policy in South Africa went through three distinct phases. The first period, starting just after the end of the Second World War, was under Jan Smuts' government between 1946 and 1948. The main aim of the policies of this time was to encourage skilled immigrants to select South Africa as a destination country as there was a skilled labour shortage in the country. A policy change was implemented in 1949 after the National Party came to power the previous year. This policy lasted until 1960 and was based on ideological aims which took precedence over economic realism. The regime's negative attitude towards migration resulted in a drastic decrease in immigration flow during this time. The third and final stage lasted from 1961 into the 1980s. This period saw a reversal of the previous period's anti-migration attitude, and

[221] Donsky, "Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to south Africa 1946-1970." 11.
[222] Donsky, "Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to south Africa 1946-1970." 12.
[223] Donsky, "Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to south Africa 1946-1970." 26.
[224] Donsky, "Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970." 17.

instead fostered a positive view on immigration into South Africa, seeing the largest influx of migrants of these three time periods.[225]

In the post war era, there were several requirements to allow one to immigrate into South Africa. These requirements were implemented with varying degrees of intensity throughout the 20th century, depending on which of the three stages the country was in regarding its policies on migration. Donsky states that:

> …because of its internal racial population structure, only skilled white workers or entrepreneurs with experience and the means of setting up new industries were considered. All the immigrants from a South African point of view had to be pure white of European parentage. He must not be found to possess undesirable moral characteristics or affiliated to any such groups, nor be a member of the Communist Party or a professed atheist.[226]

White, Catholic, skilled Poles who were fleeing communist Poland were therefore excellent candidates for migration to South Africa, according to the South African authorities.

South African Migration Policies after 1945

After the end of the Second World War the world found itself on the threshold of a new industrial era. Although still a developing country, South Africa was in the unique position where it was economically strong, rich in mineral wealth, and was mostly unaffected by the ravages of the Second World War. Due to this, South Africa was able to supply war-torn Europe with mineral and agricultural exports.[227] South Africa's economy boomed during the war due to commerce and industry expanding at a remarkable rate. When South African servicemen returned from the war, they were easily absorbed into the employment market. However, there was still an acute shortage of skilled labour in the form of artisans and technicians in the rapidly expanded industry. The South African government needed skilled immigrants to fill these positions.[228] The first and seemingly logical step of Smuts' government was to officially encourage skilled European immigration to South Africa. Although all suitable European immigrants were welcome, the government pushed for mainly British immigrants from the United Kingdom. This followed the pattern of past traditional links

[225] Donsky, "Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970." 22.
[226] Donsky, "Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970". 22.
[227] Donsky, "Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970," 22.
[228] Donsky, "Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970," 22.

between South Africa and Britain, where Britain was considered an important potential source of settlers in the country.

Not all white South Africans agreed with Smuts' immigration policy. There was a fear amongst certain Afrikaner groups that they would be outnumbered and would no longer represent the white majority. Donsky states that the disdain and fear regarding Smuts' immigration policy was a factor in uniting Afrikanerdom and contributed to the National Party winning the election in 1948.[229] The National Party claimed that Smuts' policy was too broad when considering the characteristics of those allowed entrance into South Africa. They claimed that only those who could easily be assimilated into South African culture (in this case they meant white, Afrikaans culture), should be allowed to immigrate into the country. This meant that they were only comfortable with white German or Dutch immigrants who came from similar cultural and religious backgrounds to the Afrikaner nation. In 1937 an act entitled the "Aliens Act" was put into effect. The aim of this act was "to restrict and regulate the entry of certain aliens into the Union and their residence or temporary sojourn therein, and to restrict and regulate the right of any person to assume a surname."[230] The cases of all who wanted to immigrate to South Africa were brought before the Selection Board, which had the power to withhold or grant a permit. This act was based on the idea of "assimilability", or how well a potential immigrant would assimilate into South African society. This act did not apply to those born in the British Empire or Ireland. The Nationalists pushed for the Aliens Act to apply to British-born citizens as well, and argued that they should not be given preferential treatment compared to other possible immigrants. Again, this was to ensure the white Afrikaans majority in South Africa.[231]

When the National Party came to power in 1948, they began preparations to implement a new immigration policy, which they passed in 1949. As discussed above, this policy favoured Dutch and German immigrants of similar cultural and religious background as the Afrikaans population and was more selective when allowing other immigrants into the country from Europe. In the 11 years that this policy was in effect, there was a marked reduction in immigration into South Africa. On average, 17 672 migrants entered South Africa per year of this policy being in effect, as opposed to the

[229] Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 124.
[230] Aliens Act 1 of 1937, section 1, 9, and 14. (South Africa).
[231] Donsky, "Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970", 23.

average of 37 863 migrants under Smuts' government. There was also a drastic decline in the number of British-born individuals coming into the country during this time. During the era of Smuts' policy, they made up approximately 86,8 percent of the total number of immigrants, whereas during the era of Verwoerd's policy, this percentage dropped to 33,6 percent. Under Verwoerd the National Party's spokesman denied that they were opposed to immigration. However, later Verwoerd himself stated that ideological reasons took precedence over economic prosperity when the policy was created and enforced.[232]

South African Migration Policies, 1961-1989

There was a notable change in immigration policy from 1961 onwards. The National Party made a decided and positive change to their views on migration in 1961 for four main reasons. Firstly, they had won their third general election in 1958 and had a stronger parliamentary majority. Secondly, South Africa had broken away from the British Commonwealth in 1961. These two events made the Afrikaans population feel politically secure, and no longer under threat of mass British immigration into the country. Demographers stated that up to 40 000 immigrants could be absorbed into white South African society per year without outnumbering the white Afrikaans majority. The third reason for this change of policy was due to Verwoerd needing billions of rands to finance his 'Bantustan' scheme. This would involve relocating South Africans based on their race to their pre-approved 'homelands'. The money needed for this project could only be sourced through taxation from a growing South African economy. Skilled immigrants played an essential role in expanding the South African economy, as the country had a chronic skilled labour shortage. The fourth reason for Verwoerd's change of heart regarding immigrants, was due to the broader African context of the late 1950s and early 1960s. From 1958 onwards, former British and French colonies in Africa were granted their independence. In this age of decolonisation, the world looked down on South Africa and its apartheid policies. In addition to external pressures, the unrest within South Africa itself, namely the events which transpired at Sharpeville and the awakening of black nationalism across the

[232] Donsky, "Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970", 25.

continent, convinced the Nationalist government of the need to strengthen the security of white South African society via immigration.[233]

The government launched its immigration drive by encouraging both private and voluntary organisations such as the 1820 Memorial Settlers Association, concentrating on English-speaking immigrants, and the *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie* (Company for European Migration), for Dutch and German speaking immigrants. The National Party government encouraged these organisations to aim to attract 30 000 white European immigrants to South Africa per year. The new policy stated that all whites were to be accepted, irrespective of religious and cultural background, and did not favour only those of Dutch and German origin. The process of immigration screening became considerably reduced, accepting even those who had been previously rejected.[234]

This state-aided scheme was successful due to the following two reasons. Firstly, South Africa ran a successful advertising campaign in Britain and Europe, offering "the most generous subsidies and financial aid in comparison to other receiving countries".[235] In addition to this successful advertising campaign, South African immigration branches overseas were now staffed with helpful and highly sympathetic officials, who were offering relaxed regulations. One such recruiter was Hannes Viljoen, Iscor's works personnel officer. Viljoen was stationed in Vienna, where he recruited Poles to work for Iscor. By January 1982, he had already interviewed 360 Poles, 65 of whom he offered employment at Iscor.[236] Jacek Fastyn was one of the individuals who met with these officials, who helped him and his family leave Poland and come to South Africa. While Polish migration to South Africa was certainly not stagnant in the first half of the 20th century, the majority of those who came to South Africa did so during these last 23 years of the National Party's rule.[237]

[233] Donsky, "Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970", 26.
[234] Donsky, "Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970", 27.
[235] Donsky, "Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970", 28.
[236] Anon, "Poles apart- in Vanderbijl". *Rand Daily Mail.* 28 January 1982.
[237] Donsky, "Aspects of the immigration of Europeans to south Africa 1946-1970", 28.

The South African Economy during the mid to late 20th Century

From the beginning of the 1950s until well into the 1970s, South Africa's economy grew steadily. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased by an average of approximately 4.75 percent per annum between 1948 and 1975.[238] Simultaneously, the annual growth rate in the country's population was about 3 percent a year. If you were to take these figures at face value, it would seem a largely positive, perhaps even impressive performance of the economy, but this disregards the fact that it was almost exclusively benefitting white South Africa. It would therefore seem that the apartheid state supplied the ideal conditions for capitalist firms to dominate the South African economy. A good case study of how apartheid benefitted these firms, was Anglo American.[239]

Many foreign firms decided to withdraw from South Africa due to the call for sanctions and to avoid the bad association of the apartheid state, a route which Anglo American, a multinational mining company which first appeared in South Africa in 1917[240], decided to avoid. Anglo American was not the only international company which operated in South Africa during the years of apartheid, as companies such as Shell and Johnson and Johnson also remained[241], but Anglo American was by far the most profitable. Anglo American started to buy up the local operations of the withdrawing foreign firms. Gavin Relly, who took over from South Africa businessman, philanthropist, and industrialist Harry Oppenheimer in 1983, stated that "we will certainly mine anything we can lay our hands on".[242] Ultimately, this led to Anglo American owning 60 percent of the mining industry in South Africa by 1987. In the short term, this is a clear example of how apartheid could benefit such businesses. However, it was not just apartheid that was responsible for the economic boom in the country, and the financial success of certain industries, but also the world economy

[238] Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa.* 128.
[239] Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa.* 129.
[240] Hall, Mathew. "Anglo American's History in South Africa."3 February 2021. Accessed: 11 May 2023. https://www.mining-technology.com/features/anglo-americans-history-in-south-africa/#:~:text=1917%20%E2%80%93%20The%20early%20years,American%20to%20the%20company%20name.
[241] Geoffrey Jones and Cate Reavis. "Multinational Corporations in Apartheid-era South Africa: The Issue of Reparations." Harvard Business School Case 804-027, August 2003. (Revised January 2013.)
[242] Anon, "Mining remains Anglo's top priority." *Rand Daily Mail.* 28 August 1984.

which provided more than favourable conditions for economies that produced mainly primary products from the 1950s until the mid-1970s.[243]

To monopolise on these favourable conditions, industries needed a large supply of cheap and pliable labour, which the apartheid state could provide. The apartheid state did not supply a form of forced labour, but rather coerced labour due to the laws, restrictions and policies surrounding the lives of black South Africans. It left black South Africans with little freedom regarding work choice and working conditions. While South Africa saw a decrease in white immigration to South Africa from other southern African countries due to economic and political turbulence in South Africa, the country experienced a large number of black southern African migrants entering the country during the 1970s and 1980s. Most of these individuals came to South Africa to work in the mining sector. From 1980-1989 South Africa saw 2 000 000 legal entries into the country from Zimbabwe alone.[244] It was due to the world economy booming in the primary products sector, as well as apartheid South Africa providing an abundant source of cheap labour which could be exploited without repercussions, that led the South African mining industry to flourish, together with other sectors who made use of cheap, unskilled labour, and with it, the South African economy as a whole.[245] It is important to note, however, that despite Anglo American thriving financially in apartheid South Africa, it did put pressure on the apartheid government. During the 1950s, the Afrikaner Nationalist government called Anglo American a "threat to Afrikanerdom, the sinister embodiment of English 'money power'".[246] During the 1990s, Nelson Mandela praised Oppenheimer, calling him a "nation-builder, a key figure in South Africa's transition to democracy".[247]

Despite global conditions being advantageous in the short term, they proved to be disastrous in the long term, which left South Africa in a position where it was tremendously ill-equipped to deal with the downturn of the world economy after 1973. Up until that point, the South African government saw no point in transforming its

[243] Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa.* 130.
[244] Jonathan Crush. "Complex Movements, Confused Responses: Labour Migration in South Africa," South African Migration Programme Policy Brief No. 25. (August 2011): 6
[245] Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa.* 131.
[246]Michael Cardo, "There be dragons: How Harry Oppenheimer felt when businesspeople went to meet the ANC in 1985." *News24*. 14 April 2023.
[247] Michael Cardo, "There be dragons: How Harry Oppenheimer felt when businesspeople went to meet the ANC in 1985." *News24*. 14 April 2023.

abundant low-skilled, low-paid working class into semi-skilled or skilled workers, as a large, unskilled, cheap workforce was far more beneficial to the primary sector, and therefore South Africa. However, when the world moved from having a high demand for primary products to secondary products through means of industrialisation, South Africa lagged, and its economy suffered. One could argue that this dip in the economy was a direct result of Bantu education, which was implemented specifically to keep the skills of black South Africans low. According to Ross "its share of total world trade in manufactured goods declined from 0.78 per cent to 0.27 per cent between 1955 and 1985."[248] In addition, "the machine-tool sector of the South African economy utterly failed to capitalise on the growth of the 1950s and 1960s, and by 1980, the productivity of the South African labour force was stagnating".[249]

Despite unskilled labour becoming a glaring problem for the South African economy in the final quarter of the 20th century, the state's overall approach to industrialisation was problematic and ultimately detrimental as well. Ultimately industrialisation in South Africa was controlled by the apartheid regime's insecurity, and not by a desire to support new industries that may have been profitable. South African industries became less and less competitive due to high tariff barriers implemented by the government, which led to complacency on the part of manufacturers. Ross states that "there were few, if any, countries outside the Communist bloc in which the state had a greater direct involvement in the economy".[250] It is therefore again ironic that those who left communist Poland and came to South Africa to work in these industries did so to escape communism, only to be absorbed into industries which were run as state enterprises. Sasol and its massive projects to produce oil from coal is an example of this, as it ultimately produced half of the domestic requirements, and supplemented the state ownership of steel, iron, railway, and electricity concerns.

The Origins of the Vaal Industries

South Africa in the 1920s and the 1930s experienced significant social, political, and economic turmoil. As already mentioned, a large part of this was caused by what was

[248] Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa.* 142.
[249] Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa.* 143.
[250] Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa.* 144.

dubbed the “poor white problem”. A significant number of Afrikaners could no longer find work in the agricultural sector, and as a result sought jobs in towns and cities, of which there were few. In 1925 the Pan African Coalition for Transformation (PACT) government, which consisted of both the predominately English-speaking South African Labour Party, and the National Party, sought to solve this problem by promoting domestic manufacturing. In addition to this, policies were put in place to ensure that most of the jobs that were created by these industries went to white and not black workers.[251]

Escom was formed in 1922 to supply the country with electricity, and Iscor (the Iron and Steel Corporation) was created in 1929. These industries thus predated the inception of Sasol, but it was soon realised after the creation of these industries that the industrial sector was in desperate need of petroleum.[252] The South African Coal, Oil and Gas Corporation (colloquially known as Sasol) was established in 1950. The South African government considered industrialisation crucial to the South African economy at this time for the country to be autonomous. The result of this was a push for industrialisation. Despite South Africa having no oil reserves and converting coal to oil being a massively expense endeavour, it was deemed necessary due to the economic and political circumstances facing the country. South Africa had always been heavily reliant on imports, but it was after the First World War that the government realised just how vulnerable South Africa was to external events, and the ensuing issues that accompanied it with regards to imports. Prior to the coal to oil conversion industry, the main driving force of the South African economy was mining. Roberts and Rustomjee observe that “Sasol and Iscor were nurtured as state-owned enterprises by the apartheid state”.[253] All these industries were seen as strategic due to their primary products of steel and liquid fuels, without which “the apartheid state could not ensure its prolonged life through military and other means”.[254]

[251] *International Directory of Company Histories*, Vol. 47. St. James Press, 2002
[252] *International Directory of Company Histories*, Vol. 47. St. James Press, 2002
[253] Roberts and Rustomjee, “Industrial Policy Under Democracy: Apartheid’s Grown-up Infant Industries? Sasol and Iscor”, 70.
[254] Roberts and Rustomjee, “Industrial Policy Under Democracy: Apartheid’s Grown-up Infant Industries? Sasol and Iscor”, 71.

The Beginning of Sasol's Production

There is one central argument for why South Africa pushed to be independent of internationally-sourced oil according to South African historian, Stephen Sparks. This argument centres around the apartheid government and its struggle for continued survival. At its core, South Africa needed to be independent of internationally-sourced oil to ensure the continuation of power of the Afrikaner Nationalists, as after Sharpeville there was a growing threat of anti-apartheid oil sanctions. Saul Dubow states that the National Party was "determinedly insular and wholly focused on the survival of white South Africa".[255] This was made possible by cheaply paid black labour, which was a cornerstone of the Sasol company, and was therefore crucial to maintain the apartheid state in South Africa.[256] Essentially, cheaply paid black labour made Sasol's success possible, which alleviated South Africa of the need for internationally-sourced oil, and thus helped to make South Africa more self-sufficient and less susceptible to international anti-apartheid oil sanctions. This ensured the continuation of the rule of the National Party. Despite these steps to make South Africa self-sufficient, the oil embargos of the 1970s plunged South Africa into an oil crisis, and by 1979, oil imports to South Africa were down 90 percent of what they were the previous year.[257]

Sparks writes that towards the end of the 20th century South Africa was "out of step" with the rest of the world in two ways. Firstly, it was stubbornly hanging onto white supremacist ideologies in an age where the rest of the world was in the process of decolonisation. Secondly, it insisted on continuing with its economically uncompetitive dependence on coal as its only source for fuel production. This was in opposition to the global energy transition where the world was moving towards making use of more renewable energy sources, as described by British born political theorist Timothy Mitchell.[258] It is important to note that both points are closely related.

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[255] Saul Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility, and White South Africa, 1820–2000* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), 248.
[256] Sparks, "Between 'Artificial Economics' and the 'Discipline of the Market': Sasol from Parastatal to Privatisation". 720.
[257] John Burns, "South Africa, Plunged Into Oil Crisis, Seeks Ways to Cope," *The New York Times,* 13 July 1979.
[258] Sparks, "Between 'Artificial Economics' and the 'Discipline of the Market': Sasol from Parastatal to Privatisation". 721.

Sparks has, however, also challenged the idea that Sasol was completely under the control of the Nationalist government. By drawing on Sasol's archives and interviews, Sparks argues that while the senior figures at Sasol where undoubtably Afrikaner Nationalists, the enterprise became unavoidably and increasingly cosmopolitan, despite South Africa's isolation and preoccupation with prioritising employment for white Afrikaners, a development which did not sit well with hardcore Afrikaner nationalists.[259]

Oil prices remained low during the 1960s, resulting in Sasol having to put their oil-from-coal expansions on hold. Instead, Sasol made use of their state support to aggressively move into the chemical industry, and after the events of Sharpeville, spearheaded the growing isolationist oil strategy as the world introduced oil sanctions. It is important to note that it was mainly due to external pressures (international oil sanctions) that drove South Africa to adopt an isolationist oil strategy- becoming independent of internationally sourced oil made South Africa's isolation possible, and as a result, made the Afrikaner Nationalist's continued rule possible.[260] While Sasol was planning apartheid South Africa's oil strategy, those speaking on its behalf became increasingly defensive about its reliance on the state's support, no doubt resenting the implication of communist-like management. Sasol became privatised in 1979 which was triggered by the demands of financing two momentous oil-from-coal projects in the coming years of the Iranian Revolution and the aforementioned oil shocks. Sparks states that "it was a case of privatisation by panic to meet the apartheid state's strategic priorities".[261]

As previously discussed, apartheid-era South Africa had a chronic skilled labour shortage due to its segregationist policies, especially in industry. This included Sasol, Iscor, and Escom, industries which were the lifeblood of the Vaal Triangle. It was the need for white, skilled labour which drew many qualified Europeans to immigrate to the area in the 1970s and 1980s, Polish migrants among them. All those who were interviewed for this study had direct links to these industries, as it was the promise of

[259] Sparks, "Between 'Artificial Economics' and the 'Discipline of the Market': Sasol from Parastatal to Privatisation". 722.
[260] Sparks, "Between 'Artificial Economics' and the 'Discipline of the Market': Sasol from Parastatal to Privatisation". 722
[261] Sparks, "Between 'Artificial Economics' and the 'Discipline of the Market': Sasol from Parastatal to Privatisation". 723.

being compensated thoroughly for work in these industries which swayed many leaving Poland to choose South Africa, and the Vaal Triangle in particular, as their final destination to settle. When journalist Stan Maher from the *Rand Daily Mail* interviewed a couple who had left Poland with their daughter and settled in Vanderbijlpark in January 1982, he reported that they had heard that South Africa was a "paradise for white people".[262] The couple worked for Iscor, after being recruited by a personnel officer in Vienna, a commonality shared in many cases by those who left Poland and settled in the Vaal Triangle. It was largely these industries which helped create a tightly knit Polish community in the Vaal. Jola Chmela emphasised the industries' importance in this saying that the different families were made aware of each other as they worked together, and thus helped facilitate the consolidation of the Polish community in the Vaal Triangle.[263]

The Economic Crisis of the late 20th Century

As is well-known, the Soweto Uprising took place on 16 June 1976, where a group of approximately 15,000 students protested the use of Afrikaans as the language of instruction in schools, according to some under the inspiration of the Black Consciousness movement.[264] However, many of the former students of Sowetan schools do not recall any involvement of outside organisations or liberation movements, but rather that their only motivating factor was to protest the use of Afrikaans in schools.[265] The students were met with lethal force by the police, resulting in the death of 174 students and wider violence resulted in the deaths of two white South Africans. Ross argues that the Soweto Uprising was the beginning of the end of apartheid rule in two ways. Firstly, the uprising was the catalyst for widespread protests and revolts against the apartheid government and its policies across the country. The unrest spread to the townships of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand as well as to areas of the Eastern Cape, where coloured South Africans joined black South Africans in their protest. Secondly, despite the government's initial repression,

[262] Anon, "Poles apart- in Vanderbijl", *Rand Daily Mail.* 28 January 1982.
[263] Jola Chmela, interview with author. Sasolburg, Vaal Triangle.12 May 2022.
[264] Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa.* 150.
[265] Anon. "Soweto Student Uprising," N.d. Accessed: 2 May 2023. https://overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/sidebar.php?kid=163-581-3&page=2

the Soweto Uprising caused the government to move away from the harsher practices of the apartheid system in an attempt to pacify those who were growing restless with the system and its policies, in effect moving towards the goals of the students of the initial revolt.[266]

The concurrent collapse of the apartheid state with the economic crisis of the late 20th century poses a unique problem for South African historians. According to Iliffe, there are three explanations of the economic crisis, and each has its own view of South Africa and its past. The first analysis is that after nearly 40 years of mostly uninterrupted growth, the South African economy entered a state of crisis in the mid-1970s. This was due to high inflation, stagnant output (mainly in the manufacturing sector), a weak currency, weak exports, low savings, low reserves, and a high amount of unemployment. Iliffe suggests that the reason for this was racial Fordism, which he described as:

> ...[the]mass production of consumer goods for an internal market so limited by the unequal racial distribution of income that production and employment could expand further only by drawing in imports for which South Africa's small, protected, and uncompetitive manufacturing sector could not pay.[267]

This issue could not easily be rectified, despite wages for black South Africans having increased in the mid-1970s, and the easing of restrictions that meant more black South Africans were now allowed to be employed in the semi-skilled, white-collar sector. These reforms did not sufficiently broaden the market due to structural unemployment, which had been a long-time problem in South Africa and which was compounded under the apartheid state.[268] The second view of the crisis mostly agrees with the first, but argues that the crisis was more deeply rooted in the dominant “minerals-energy complex” which Illiffe describes as “not being committed to industrial modernisation”.[269] In essence, this view argues that an effective and coherent industrial policy was not a possibility as long as political and economic power were one in the same. In contrast to the first and second view, the third position denies that there was a structural crisis at all. In one variation of this view, it raises the point that perhaps South Africa did not experience a crisis that started in the 1970s, but rather

[266] Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa.* 151.
[267] John Iliffe, ‘The South African Economy, 1652-1997’. *The Economic History Review* 52, no. 1 (1999): 87.
[268] Iliffe, ‘The South African Economy, 1652-1997’. 90.
[269] Iliffe, ‘The South African Economy, 1652-1997’. 91.

that it experienced an ongoing economic crisis since the implementation of apartheid and was only worsened by the depression of the 1970s and the sanctions of the 1980s. After coming into power in 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) conformed to the ideas of the third view, a position which is held until today.[270]

The Cold War, Oil, and Sasol

Outlining the broader geopolitical context, David Painter states that the Watergate crisis, America's withdrawal from Vietnam, the Soviet Union's achievement of nuclear parity with the U.S, increased competition in the field of manufacturing from Western Europe and Japan, the wave of revolutions in the Third World, as well as the oil crises that raised concerns about America's leadership in the Western alliance, resulted in concerns about the first world's dependency on third world resources. All these factors led to the United States seeming weak, which led to the fear that the Soviet Union was winning the Cold War.[271]

Needless to say, oil was an important source of influence and power for the U.S during the 20th century. American policy focussed primarily on containing the Soviet Union by ending destructive economic, political and military competition among key capitalist states by "mitigating class conflict within the capitalist core by promoting economic growth, and retaining access to the raw materials, markets, and labour of the periphery in an era of decolonization and national liberation."[272] The two oil crises of the 1970s jeopardized America's control of world oil, and therefore dominance in the international system. Moreover, American oil production peaked in the 1970s, meaning that America was increasingly reliant on international oil supplies, as well as ending its ability to aid its allies with oil during supply interruptions, which had been an important source of American influence. Simultaneously, war and revolution, as well as economic nationalism in the Middle East raised concerns about the U.S being able to maintain its access to Middle Eastern oil. [273]

[270] Iliffe, 'The South African Economy, 1652-1997'. 93.
[271] David Painter, "Oil and Geopolitics: The Oil Crises of the 1970s and the Cold War." *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* , Vol. 39, No. 4 (2014): 186.
[272] David Painter. "Oil and Geopolitics: The Oil Crises of the 1970s and the Cold War." *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* , Vol. 39, No. 4 (2014): 187.
[273] Painter, "Oil and Geopolitics: The Oil Crises of the 1970s and the Cold War." 188.

The price of oil increased significantly during 1973-1974, and then again between 1978-1980, which caused significant economic problems for the United States as well as its allies. Along with the economic repercussions, the West realised that their access to low-cost oil was being threatened, which undermined their confidence in their dominance. Adding insult to injury was the fact that the Soviet Union became the world's leading oil producer by overtaking the United Sates. The increased revenue that the Soviet Union brought in due to their dominance in the oil market, as well as their higher prices, resulted in them being able to import far more Western grain and machinery than before. This increased revenue would help finance Soviet military power, which in turn would result in more involvement and military presence in countries in the Eastern Bloc, for example, Poland.[274]

The oil crises of the 1970s are so intimately interwoven with the history of the Cold War, that it is surprising that this link is such an understudied component. While it is true that the history of oil and its impact does not explain every intricacy of the dynamics of the Cold War, without mentioning oil, the accounts of the Cold War are incomplete.[275]

The Soviet Union's Relationship with Apartheid South Africa

When the National Party came to power in South Africa in 1948, the already strained South African-Soviet relations worsened considerably. Relations were already strained due to the Cold War, but when the staunchly anti-communist Nationalists came to power any amicable relations between them dissolved. The Soviets had been supportive of the South African Communist Party as well as the African National Congress, and this support increased greatly when the ANC created its armed wing of the party, *Umkhonto We Sizwe* (MK). The Soviet Union became a leading source of assistance for MK, providing military assistance and training. The Soviet Union was also part of the effort to isolate South Africa economically. By the 1980s, the Soviet

[274] Painter, "Oil and Geopolitics: The Oil Crises of the 1970s and the Cold War", 200.
[275] Painter, "Oil and Geopolitics: The Oil Crises of the 1970s and the Cold War", 201

Union openly admitted that its primary objective in South Africa was to help undermine, and if possible, overthrow the South African government.[276]

Conclusion

Industrialisation after the First World War led to a dramatic increase in black urbanisation which heightened fear in the Afrikaner population and facilitated Afrikaner nationalism, resulting ultimately in the implementation of grand apartheid. The isolationist strategy of apartheid, which the government adopted because of international criticism, sanctions, and embargos, led to a need for increased industrialisation, primarily with regards to oil. This led to a need for skilled labour, as there was a shortage due to Bantu education and discriminatory employment regulations, and these skilled professionals also had to be white to increase the white population. This meant that by the 1980s skilled Polish individuals who were seeking to escape communism were the ideal candidates for the vacant positions. The irony is that while the Poles were fleeing Poland due to economic and political problems, South Africa was experiencing many of the same problems, however, they were just better at hiding these issues from its white population. It is also ironic although Sasol was hailed as a beacon of capitalism in apartheid South Africa, it was essentially a nationalised enterprise from the very beginning, due to it being substantially supported by and owned by the government for most of its existence.

The Poles coming to the Vaal Triangle for work formed a community in the area. When apartheid was dissolved, the Vaal industries began to deteriorate. This led to less jobs, which meant people started to leave the Vaal Triangle to look for work elsewhere. This has resulted in a shrinking Polish population in the Vaal Triangle. Despite the fact that it is "becoming history" as one member of the community put it, it is an important part of the story of democracy and freedom for South Africa and Poland, and the importance of this community cannot be negated or overlooked. It is the intention of this thesis to document the history of this significant and vibrant community before it

[276] Daniel Kempton, "New Thinking and Soviet Policy towards South Africa." *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Dec., 1990): 546-547.

does in fact, ‘become history’. The formation and importance of this Polish expatriate community in the Vaal Triangle is the focus of the following two chapters.

Chapter 3

Migration in an Age of Uncertainty: A History of Polish Migration to South Africa

Dariusz Stola states that it was the combination of the political and economic crises of 1980-1982, the advent of Solidarity, and the implementation of martial law in December 1981, which resulted in a major migratory turning point in the history of the Polish Peoples' Republic (PRL). In 1981, prior to the declaration of martial law, travel out of Poland peaked. A total of 1.2 million Poles travelled to the West in 1981- this was more international travel out of Poland than in the years between 1949 and 1969 combined. Although not widely known or researched, migration from Poland to South Africa has been a phenomenon which started as early as 1652 in the Dutch Cape Colony. Since then, there were waves of migration to South Africa from Poland, the most recent of which being that of the 1980s. South Africa is home to the largest Polish diaspora on the African continent and the following chapter will discuss how this came to be by examining the history of Polish migration to South Africa and by analysing the specific wave of Polish migration which took place during the 1980s. Case studies derived from oral interviews will be used to further analyse the 1980s migration from Poland to South Africa, looking specifically at the migrants who came to the Vaal Triangle.

There are between 10 000 to 30 000 members of the contemporary Polish diaspora in South Africa, but its numbers are diminishing. This community is the largest ethnic minority from Central and Eastern Europe in South Africa. The origin of this community can be traced back to the second half of the 17th century. It is, however, important to note that while there has been a Polish presence in South Africa since the time of the Dutch occupation, it was only the migrants who settled in South Africa during and after the Second World War that make up the contemporary Polish diaspora, as previous waves of immigrants were absorbed into the broader, almost exclusively Afrikaans, South African society.[277]

[277] Arkadiusz Żukowski. "Contemporary Polish Diaspora in the Republic of South Africa and its Attitudes Towards Politics". *Polish Political Science* 39 (2010): 191.

Overwhelming, the communities which make up the contemporary Polish diaspora in South Africa reside in industrial and metropolitan areas. As already noted, Żukowski states that approximately 60 percent of the current diaspora live in the greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Area, and that Cape Town is the second biggest centre. In addition to these areas, there are also a significant number residing in Port Elizabeth, Pietermaritzburg, Pretoria, and Durban. Żukowski highlights that due to the specific wave of Polish migration that South Africa saw during the 1980s, there are now also centres in the Vaal Triangle Industrial district (Sasolburg, Vanderbijlpark, Vereeniging), as well as cities situated south-east and south-west of Johannesburg (Secunda, Evander, Ermelo, Leandra, and Westonaria, Carltonville and Leanasia, respectively). It is noteworthy that Secunda, while not located in the Vaal Triangle industrial district, did spring up around Sasol II and Sasol III, as expansions of one of the main Vaal industries, Sasol Ltd.[278]

In terms of social and economic standing, the South African Polish diaspora has "attained a relatively high social and professional position in South Africa. They occupy middle rungs of the white ethnic social stratification ladder."[279] Żukowski goes on to say that in the last four decades, these communities have confirmed a "high standing in recognition of its professional qualification".[280] The majority of these individuals are or were part of technical professions, and tend to occupy highly ranking posts in electrical, chemical, mining, and computer companies. They tend to represent a high level of education, at a minimum having a secondary education, and most holding university degrees. This is true of both those that came to South Africa during the past few decades, as well as those who were born, and therefore educated, in South Africa.[281]

[278] Sparks, "Between 'Artificial Economics' and the 'Discipline of the Market': Sasol from Parastatal to Privatisation",712.
[279] Żukowski, "Contemporary Polish Diaspora in the Republic of South Africa and its Attitudes Towards Politics", 191.
[280] Żukowski, "Contemporary Polish Diaspora in the Republic of South Africa and its Attitudes Towards Politics",192.
[281] Żukowski, "Contemporary Polish Diaspora in the Republic of South Africa and its Attitudes Towards Politics", 193.

The 1980s as a period of European Migration

Christof van Mol and Helga de Valk outline what they refer to as the three main periods of migration in the second half of the 20th century. The first period begins with the signing of bilateral labour migration agreements by several European countries in the 1950s and the 1960s. This period ended with the oil crisis in 1973-1974. The first period was categorized by steady economic growth in Europe as well as "development and deployment of guest worker schemes, (return) migration from former colonies to motherlands, and refugee migration, mainly dominated by movements from East to West".[282] This resulted in a favourable view on labour migration, and with the steadily growing economy in Europe, there was a significant amount of labour migration.

The second period extends from the oil crisis to the end of the Cold War, and saw the implementation of far more stringent and restrictive migration policies. Migration however did not stop during this time, but rather took a different form. Asylum applications increased and most who emigrated did so through family reunification. This can also be seen in the Polish migration to South Africa during this time. Travelling abroad using a tourist's passport and then electing not to return was also common. Again, it is important to note that while the way in which migration took place changed, it did not halt during this time (1973-1989), despite increased restrictions and suppression. The third period is dated to after the fall of the Iron Curtain and continues until the present day. The current period is characterised by increased influence from the European Union, and encouragement for intra-European mobility.[283]

The Structure of Labour Demand in Destination Countries

According to Hein de Haas, labour demand in destination countries is a fundamental driver, or "pull" factor in migration. He goes on to ascertain that it is perhaps the most important factor which influences migration, as there is a "high correlation between

[282]Christof Van Mol and Helga de Valk, "Migration and Immigrants in Europe: A Historical and Demographic Perspective," in *Integration Policies and Processes in Europe* edited by Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas and Rinus Penninx (Springer International Publishing, 2016): 37.
[283] Van Mol and de Valk, "Migration and Immigrants in Europe: A Historical and Demographic Perspective",38.

business cycles […] and immigration in Europe".[284] This phenomenon is amplified since whole family migration is often a result of labour demand migration, increasing the number of individuals crossing borders.[285] While factors such as conflict in origin countries cannot be ignored when looking at migration, it is still evident that a high labour demand in the destination country is a key reason for migrating and almost always is the main pull factor. An example of conflict in origin countries being a smaller influence on migration than what one would think, is that presently in Europe, refugees only make up on average 10% of total migrants. However, this does not negate the fact that conflict in the country of origin is a very common push factor for those migrating. An example of this, which combines push (conflict in country of origin) and pull (labour demand in destination country), would be the emigration of Poles out of Poland and to South Africa during the 1980s. As shown, Poland was going through a period of great political, social, and economic turmoil, and South Africa was experiencing a serious shortage in skilled labour. In this case as well, it was usually the entire nuclear family that emigrated.

It would be reasonable for one to assume that political oppression, violence, and conflict in the origin country would lead to greater emigration. However, when examining the data more closely, the results are not conclusive. It would seem that an authoritarian and oppressive regime would increase the desire to emigrate in a population, and while this may be true, it could also be that the very reasons for wanting to emigrate constitute the reason that they are unable to. An example of this would be during the martial law period in Poland, which was arguably the most difficult time that the country faced during the 1980s, and although there was a great desire to emigrate out of Poland during this time to escape oppression, the borders were closed, and emigration forbidden unless under extreme circumstances. This does not of course mean that migration out of Poland came to a complete halt, but it was a far more difficult process than what it had been previously, and the number of migrants leaving the country was less than the numbers counted before martial law, as well as after it was suspended.[286]

[284] Hein De Haas, "European Migrations: Dynamics, Drivers, and the Role of Policies". *Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union* (2018): 5.
[285] De Haas, "European Migrations: Dynamics, Drivers, and the Role of Policies", 10.
[286] De Haas, "European Migrations: Dynamics, Drivers, and the Role of Policies", 11.

De Haas states that there have been surprisingly few studies that have actively tried to measure the influence and impact that migration policies have on actual migration, mostly due to inadequate data on the subject. However, a study that did investigate this relationship was conducted by Hatton,[287] who investigated the determinants of asylum migration. Hatton found that a decrease in asylum applications was a result of the decline of instability in origin countries, and that the more restrictive policies which came into effect in the early 2000s, were only responsible for a third of the decline in applications since 2001. De Haas goes on to say that:

> …until recently, surprisingly few studies tried to measure the effects of migration policies, partly as a result of the absence of adequate data on migration and policies. This corroborates the importance of looking beyond migration policies if governments want to be more effective in influencing trends and patterns of migration.[288]

In a 2011 paper De Haas identifies four "substitution effects" which can limit the effectiveness of migration control and restrictions. These four substitution effects are as follows:

> 1) spatial substitution through the diversion of migration via other legal or irregular routes or destinations; 2) categorical substitution through a reorientation towards other legal or illegal channels; 3) inter-temporal substitution affecting the timing of migration such as 'now or never migration' in the expectation or fear of future tightening of policies; and 4) reverse flow substitution if immigration restrictions interrupt circulation by discouraging return migration and encouraging permanent settlement, making the effect of entry restrictions on net migration and the growth of migrant communities ambiguous…[289]

In the case of migration from Poland to South Africa in the 1980s, this thesis argues that De Haas' first, third and fourth substitution effects all played a role. During the period of martial law, the Polish borders were closed, and emigration halted (on paper at least). This then led individuals and families to find other means of leaving the country, mainly as refugees going to the neighbouring countries of Austria and

[287] Timothy J. Hatton, "The Rise and Fall of Asylum: What Happened?" *The Economic Journal 119.* (2009). 183.
[288] De Haas, "European Migrations: Dynamics, Drivers, and the Role of Policies",12.
[289] Hein de Haas, "The determinants of international migration: conceptualizing policy, origin and destination effects" *European Research Council.* 2011. 36.

Germany and either staying in these countries or then migrating to another country. His third point is exemplified through the boom of emigration out of Poland shortly before martial law was declared. In fact, it was during this time that the first mass wave of Polish migrants came to the Vaal Triangle and formed the Polish Association of the Vaal Triangle. The fourth point is exemplified in the fact that for the duration of martial law, Poles who emigrated were not allowed back into the country, and due to this delay, many remained in their destination countries indefinitely. [290]

The First Polish Migrants and Visitors in South Africa

While it is only the Poles who immigrated to South Africa during and after the Second World War which make up the contemporary Polish diaspora in South Africa, and this study focuses particularly on those who make up the contemporary Polish diaspora in the Vaal Triangle, it is important to note the historical importance, extent, and significance of Polish involvement in South Africa before this time period. The following section will provide a brief overview of the previous waves of Polish migrants and visitors to South Africa, as well as previous Polish-South African relations.

Despite Poles being relatively influential in the colonisation of the Dutch Cape colony, this is a little-known fact and topic of research. Mariusz Kowalski states that the presence of Poles in the Cape colony can be traced back to its very inception in 1652. The reason for this presence was due to the strong economic ties between Poland and the Netherlands at the time. Numerous Poles served in the Dutch military, some of whom were stationed in the Dutch Cape Colony. Many of these individuals went on to stay in South Africa permanently, starting families in South Africa. These families went on to make up a portion of local society. As already noted, it is estimated that approximately 1% of present-day Afrikaners have Polish ancestry. These include the Drotsky, Kitshoff, Kolesky, Latsky, Masuriek, Troskie, and Zowitsky Afrikaner families.[291]

Immigrants from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth migrated to the Dutch Cape Colony for the entirety of the Dutch occupation. There was a surge of migrations twice

[290]De Haas, “European Migrations: Dynamics, Drivers, and the Role of Policies”, 11.
[291] Mariusz Kowalski. “Poles in the Dutch Cape Colony 1652-1814”. *Werkwinkel* 10, no. 1 (2015): 65.

during this time, at the turn of the 18th century, and at the turn of the 19th century. The prevalence of Polish-Lithuanian migration to South Africa during the turn of the 18th century can be attributed to "the decline of the colonial efforts of the Baltic dukes of the Commonwealth (the ones of Courland and of Prussia), and with the phasing out of the maritime policy of king Jan III Sobieski, which was largely linked to the strength of Gdańsk as harbouring city".[292] It was due to the fact that they could no longer find work in the Commonwealth that Polish citizens began to look for employment in the colonies of the Netherlands. In combination with the effort to increase settling by the Dutch authorities in the colony this resulted in an influx of Poles to the Cape. Proof of the Polish influence in the colony would be that two consecutive governors of the Cape colony namely, Simon van der Stel and his son Willem Adrian van der Stel, had Polish links.

The influx of Polish nationals into the Cape Colony at the turn of the 19th century can be attributed to the wars and political turmoil in relation to "the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the struggle between the partisans of the Oranje-Nassau house and the New Dutch Patriots in the Netherlands, the French Revolution, and the Napoleonic wars".[293] During this time, Poland was occupied by foreign forces, which resulted in more Polish soldiers arriving in the Cape under various banners. The reason for this was that "they would have had experience in the Prussian, Austrian or Napoleon's army, from where, owing to desertion or being taken prisoner of war, they would join the Dutch, Swiss, French, German, or British troops, stationed in the Cape Colony".[294]

Due to a lack of genealogical records, it is difficult to ascertain how many present-day Afrikaners are descendants of Poles. However, as stated above, it is thought to be approximately 1% of the population. However, this figure increases if one considers that almost all those migrating from Poland, particularly those originating from Polish Prussia, as well as those bearing Germanic names, were classified as German. It is documented that until 1795, 50 Poles and 800 Germans settled in the Dutch Cape Colony. When considering the genealogy of modern-day Afrikaners, their genetic makeup is estimated to be 27-37% of German origin.[295] This would shift the

[292] Kowalski, "Poles in the Dutch Cape Colony 1652-1814", 66.
[293] Kowalski, "Poles in the Dutch Cape Colony 1652-1814", 67.
[294] Kowalski, "Poles in the Dutch Cape Colony 1652-1814", 68.
[295] Kowalski, "Poles in the Dutch Cape Colony 1652-1814", 69.

assumption that 1% of Afrikaners have Polish ancestry, to a more realistic estimate of between 1 and 2%.[296] Although this is only a small percentage, it is still noteworthy.

During the time of the Dutch occupation, Poles were often directly involved in pioneering endeavours situated on the fringes of the colony. According to Kowalski:

> …Jan Liske took part in the expedition to Namaqualand, Michiel Kowalski and four other emigrants from Poland – in the expedition to Cobuquas people, Christian Truschke and Jan Michiel Sowiecki settled the eastern borderland of the Colony (Sowiecki remained in close relations with the Boer pioneer and rebel Conraad de Buys) and Jan Latsky became the pioneer of the European colonisation of the High Karoo.[297]

Kowalski notes that many foreign scholars who deal with South African history are often unaware of the Polish origins of many of the early European settlers. This is rather strange, as there are numerous sources documenting the role that individuals of Polish origin played in settling and expanding the Dutch Cape Colony. For example, Lady Anne Barnard, a British noblewoman who lived in the Cape during the first British occupancy (1797-1801)[298], noted in a letter that "the early settlers, though under Dutch rule, were not wholly Dutch, but were made up also of Flemings, Germans, Poles, and Portuguese, mostly of a low class".[299] Furthermore, Sir John Barrow, an English geographer,[300] made similar observations while travelling through the colony between the years of 1797 and 1798. Kowalski suggests that the reason behind these observations is perhaps the fact that there was a particularly high number of Polish soldiers in the Cape at the turn of the 19th century, as has been discussed above. However, this does not negate the fact that there has been a strong Polish influence in South Africa from the very beginning of the Dutch occupation, and that these individuals' contributions were influential in the colony, and are still evident in South African society today (such as the presence of Polish surnames in the Afrikaans community).

Kowalski exemplifies these sentiments by stating that:

> …it is highly probable that in no other part of the New World, at the time here considered – that is, before the mass migrations of the 19th and 20th centuries –

[296] Kowalski, "Poles in the Dutch Cape Colony 1652-1814", 70.
[297] Kowalski, "Poles in the Dutch Cape Colony 1652-1814", 70.
[298] Peter Ball, "Meet Lady Anne Barnard". Published: 22 December 2018. Accessed: 17 November 2022. https://www.theheritageportal.co.za/article/meet-lady-anne-barnard
[299] Cited in Kowalski, "Poles in the Dutch Cape Colony 1652-1814", 71.
[300] Steve Ritchie, "Sir John Barrow, Bart., F. R. S." *The Geographical Journal* 130, no. 3 (1964): 350.

> the contribution of Poles to the development of the overseas territories and in the formation of new societies was so significant.[301]

It is therefore imperative to the study with respect to both South African and Polish history to take note of this early and significant interaction between these two countries.

Migration and Visitation of Poles to South Africa during the 1800s to mid-1900s

After being taken prisoner by the British, Polish soldiers and sailors who had fought in the Napoleonic armies were forced to join the British Royal Navy. This resulted in many of them landing in South Africa. Examples of such Polish soldiers and sailors who found themselves in South Africa include Karol Piątkowski, Maksymillian Wikliński, and Maurycy Beniowski. Piątkowski spent a year imprisoned with Napoleon Bonaparte on St Helena Island,[302] before being imprisoned in Cape Town. Beniowski and Piątkowski, who were associated with the French colonial services, maintained contact with South Africa at this time.

The second half of the 19th century up until the beginning of the 20th century saw extensive travel by Poles to South Africa in service of Western European countries. The country also saw an increase in Polish travellers, such as writer Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski,[303] who sailed around the Cape of Good Hope 12 times during his numerous sea voyages. His links to South Africa were not only reflected in his writings, but also in his finances, as he invested capital in the South African gold mines. Another Polish traveller who came to South Africa during this time is geobotanist Antoni Rehman, who in addition to his work in botany and geomorphology, also conducted ethnographical and sociological studies on the native population. In addition to geobotanist Rehman, naturalist Stefan Poraj-Suchecki and microbiologist and Jan Danysz also took part in studying the natural environment of South Africa. Poraj-

[301]Kowalski, “Poles in the Dutch Cape Colony 1652-1814”, 72.
[302] Elizabeth Duquette, “The Man of the World.” *American Literary History*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Winter 2015): 635.
[303] Joanna Skolik, “Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski, an English writer with a Polish soul: Joseph Conrad’s Polish heritage.” *Yearbook of Conrad Studies (Poland)* 13 (2018): 119.

Suchecki worked in Natal, and Danysz in the Transvaal. The Poles at Mariannhill Mission in Natal took part in studies of the surrounding Zulu culture and tradition.[304]

Polish interest in South Africa increased during the South African War (1899-1902),[305] with most Poles supporting the Boer cause against the British. Not only did Poles declare their support for the Boers in their newspapers, but some Poles came to fight by their side in the war, mainly as subjects of the Russian empire. There were some, however, who backed the British. One such individual was Kataryzyna Radziwiłł, who had close relations with Cecil John Rhodes from 1899,[306] whom she met when she came to Cape Town. Polish pianist Ignacy Paderewski, after performing in Johannesburg and Cape Town, also supported the British.[307]

Early Polish settlers played an important role in Christian missions in South Africa. The Poles of the Mariannhill Mission in Natal[308] formed the largest community of male and female Polish missionaries in Africa (approximately 70 people). They worked closely with the German congregation in South Africa but sustained their connections to Poland and Polish traditions. They prayed in Polish; they published the first Polish magazine in Africa called *List ŚW. Józefa* (St. Joseph's Letter) and co-founded a mission station called *Częstochowa*. The female missionaries arranged for Roman Catholic education to be available to the native black population in Natal.[309]

The discovery of diamonds in 1867[310] and gold in 1886[311] resulted in a temporary economic migration of Poles to South Africa. Impermanent Polish communities sprung up in the mining centres of South Africa, namely the Transvaal and Cape Town. There was such a large influx of Poles that in 1897 in Braamfontein, a new parish "the Polish and Native Mission" was established for the Polish miners and was run by Trappist mokns from the Mariannhill Mission. A few years later in 1904, religious services were

[304] Arkadiusz Żukowski, "W kraju złota i diamentów. Polacy w Afryce Południowej XVI-XX w." *Acta Poloniae Historica* 73 (1996): 306.
[305] Andrew Porter, "The South African War (1899-1902): Context and Motive Reconsidered." *The Journal of African History* 31, no. 1 (1990): 43.
[306] Richard McFarlane, "Historiography of Selected Works on Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902)." *History in Africa* 34 (2007): 437.
[307] Żukowski, "W kraju złota i diamentów. Polacy w Afryce Południowej XVI-XX w." 306- 310.
[308] Anon, "Mariann Hill Monastery." N.d. Accessed: 15 December 2022. https://mariannhillmonastery.org.za/
[309] Żukowski, "W kraju złota i diamentów. Polacy w Afryce Południowej XVI-XX w." 306- 310
[310] Harlow, Barbara. "The 'Kimberley Process': Literary Gems, Civil Wars, and Historical Resources." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 2 (2003): 219.
[311] Wilson, Francis, "Minerals and Migrants: How the Mining Industry Has Shaped South Africa." *Daedalus* 130, no. 1 (2001): 99.

given for Poles in Johannesburg and Pretoria, with services led by Priest Ludwik Wojtyś, who came from Europe. There was also Polish involvement at the Roman Catholic Church in Cape Town (St. Mary's Cathedral), with records of baptism and marriage containing Polish names which date back to 1828.[312]

By the end of the 19th century, there were approximately 300 Poles settled permanently in the Transvaal. Most were employed as joiners and carpenters. There were also groups of Poles who worked on the railroad and in a dynamite factory in Modderfontein. Between Johannesburg and Heidelburg, a small town of Poles was established, called Modderspruit. This was the first Polish settlement of its kind in South Africa. The Poles that settled there were emigrants who had previously left Poland for Australia to work in the gold fields of the Antipodes.[313] After being unsuccessful in this venture, they re-settled in Modderspruit South Africa, where they worked as farmers and food processors.[314]

As Poles residing in southern Africa were considered citizens of the enemy countries (Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire), the outbreak of the First World War meant departure, internment camps, and in some cases, armed struggle. Subsequently several thousand Poles immigrated to the Union of South Africa in between the two world wars. This wave of immigrants was predominately Jewish (95% of the total number of migrants)[315] and was of a more permanent nature than previous waves of Polish migration to South Africa. These individuals mostly assimilated into the English-speaking population of South Africa, as since the inception of colonial rule in South Africa, Jews (regardless of their country of origin) tended to assimilate into English culture rather than Afrikaans culture. The reason for this being that "Afrikaners (the descendants of the original Dutch settlers), like the Jews themselves, were a relatively closed group, maintaining strict social, cultural, linguistic, and religious boundaries."[316] Despite this assimilation, however, some still emphasised their Polish roots through starting cultural and social organisations, for example, the Polish-

[312] Żukowski, "W kraju złota i diamentów. Polacy w Afryce Południowej XVI-XX w" , 306.
[313] Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary,"antipode," accessed December 15, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/antipode.
[314] Żukowski, "W kraju złota i diamentów. Polacy w Afryce Południowej XVI-XX w", 307.
[315] Żukowski. "W kraju złota i diamentów. Polacy w Afryce Południowej XVI-XX w", 308.
[316] Sergio DellaPergola and Allie Dubb, "South African Jewry: A Sociodemographic Profile." *The American Jewish Year Book*, Vol. 88 (1988): 59.

Hebrew Benevolent Association in Johannesburg, and the Federation of Polish Jews in the Cape. In an attempt at establishing diplomatic relations between South Africa and Poland, a Polish consulate was established, first in Cape Town in 1929, and then another in Johannesburg in 1939. The consulates proved to be important in maintaining links to Poland and the Polish-cause. At this time, the Polish-Jewish community's numbers are estimated to have been between 10 000 and 15 000.[317]

The 1920s and 1930s saw an increase in Polish scientific interest in South Africa. In 1929 Walery Goetel, Jan Lewinski, Jerzy Loth, and Jozef Morozewicz took part in the 4th International Geology Congress, held in Pretoria. Their research in mineralogical and geological specimens went on to be published in *South Africa* by Lewinski in *The Great General Geography.* The South African Congress also gave Goetel and Loth an opportunity to take part in an expedition, during which they crossed Africa from the Cape of Good Hope to the Mediterranean Sea. In 1934, social anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski gave a series of lectures in Johannesburg. 1935-1936 saw the Polish anthropologist Roman Stopa carry out ethnographical, anthropological, and linguistic studies on native South Africans, namely the San, Khoikhoi, and Bantu tribes. This period also saw a continuation in Polish missionary work in South Africa. These included members of Polish Pallottines (who were part of the Union of the Catholic Apostolate),[318] missionaries of the Holy Ghost Congregation, Benedictine and Dominican nuns, as well as the Holy Family Sisters from Bordeaux. Priest Daniel Kauczor of the Sons of the Heart of Jesus Congregation became head of the Lydenburg prefecture in the Eastern Transvaal. All these Polish missionaries worked within German orders.[319]

While Polish soldiers had been present in South Africa as early as the first European settlements, Polish soldiers arrived for the first time in South Africa as members of the Polish Armed Forces during the Second World War. Approximately 12 000 soldiers arrived in South Africa during this time. This group included soldiers who were on leave, part of convoy crews, undergoing military training, escorts of Italian and German Prisoners of War transports, ferry pilots, and those who had been wounded in battle on different fronts, mainly from North Africa. Ships from the Polish Merchant Navy

[317]Żukowski. "W kraju złota i diamentów. Polacy w Afryce Południowej XVI-XX w", 308.
[318] Anon, "Pallottines South Africa". N.d. Accessed: 16 December 2022. https://pallottines.co.za/
[319] Żukowski, "W kraju złota i diamentów. Polacy w Afryce Południowej XVI-XX w", 309.

called at South African ports, and the Polish ship M/S *Sobieski* took part in the invasion of Madagascar from Durban in April 1942.[320] The largest number of Polish Armed Forces were stationed near Pietermaritzburg. In addition to performing military duties, these soldiers also made efforts to create a small Polish community amongst themselves, where they strove to keep their culture tangible even on another continent. On the third anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, as well as Minister of Defence, Jan Smuts, stated that the Polish soldiers were "the first and best among all the Allies"[321]. To commemorate their presence, one of the streets in Pietermaritzburg was named "Poland Street", which is evidence of the impact of the Polish influence in the area. Between 1942 and 1944 over 1 000 Polish soldiers were treated at Baragwanath Hospital in Johannesburg. The Polish Disabled Ex-Servicemen's Association was established during this time in Johannesburg and continued to operate even after the war.[322]

During and after the Second World War, multiple waves of Polish refugees came to South Africa. The first were called the "Cypriots". After September 1939 these individuals found themselves in the Balkan countries, from where they were expatriated to South-East Africa. The next wave of refugees were soldiers and civilians associated with General Wladyslaw Anders' Polish army, who were evacuated from the Soviet Union to Persia (Iran), and then taken to South Africa. Upon the invitation of South African authorities, 500 Polish orphans were brought to South Africa via the Soviet Union and Persia (Iran) in April 1943. These children were taken to Oudtshoorn, where they were housed and educated.[323] "These children came to form the core of the Polish community in South Africa," said Stefan Szewczuk, the president of the Polish Association of Siberian Deportees in South Africa, who is also the descendent of two of the Polish deportees.[324] These children remained attached to their Polish culture and heritage, joining Polish associations later in life. Most of these children remained in South Africa. The consular posts in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town,

[320] Col Clayton, "The South African Air Force in the Madagascar Campaign, 1942". December 1992. Accessed: 15 December 2022. http://samilitaryhistory.org/vol092jc.html
[321]Żukowski, "W kraju złota i diamentów. Polacy w Afryce Południowej XVI-XX w", 309.
[322]Żukowski, "W kraju złota i diamentów. Polacy w Afryce Południowej XVI-XX w", 310.
[323] Iga Motylska, "SA's Poles recall a bitter journey". *Mail and Guardian.* 23 November 2018.
[324] Tali Feinberg, "Oudtshoorn museum honours rescue of Polish WWII orphans." *South African Jewish Report.* 9 March 2023.

and Durban played an important role in protecting civilian and military refugees. They reported on Polish matters in South African mass media, for example, they established the Polish Information Centre in Johannesburg. These consulates also supported initiatives in aid of Poland, for example the Warsaw Appeal. The Polish Relief Fund also aided these refugees. Today, only the consular posts in Durban and Pretoria remain in use.[325]

Although Polish immigration to South Africa was limited with the ascension of the National Party, there was still a flow of Polish migrants to South Africa in the 1950s and 1960s, although not on the same scale as previous waves. Despite this, the period saw the growth of Polish associations and cultural centres in South Africa. Poles studying at the University of the Witwatersrand created the Association of Polish Students in Exile. A Polish film club was started and operated out of Durban, Cape Town, and Johannesburg. In 1978, the Federation of Poles in Southern Africa was established, which represented the Polish communities of South Africa and Zimbabwe.[326]

While the largest and perhaps most influential wave of Polish migrants to South Africa happened during the 1980s, it is clear that there has been a near constant flow of Poles, regardless of how small in number, to South Africa since the time of the Dutch occupation at the Cape. It is also important to note the existence of Polish communities and associations which were started often long before the migrants of the 1980s arrived. These organisations absorbed many of the Poles who arrived in the 1980s, and some went on to start new branches of these associations in their own communities. An example of this would be *Zjednoczenia Polskiego Vaal-Triangle* or the Polish Union of the Vaal Triangle in English (ZPVT), which began as a branch of the Polish Association of South Africa, but eventually became its own independent organisation. The following chapter will study this organisation and its impact on its surrounding community in more detail. It is important to note that the terms ‘Polish Union of the Vaal Triangle’ and ‘Polish Association of the Vaal Triangle’ are used interchangeably by both the members of this organisation, as well as in official

[325] Anon. “Poland Embassy and Consulates in South Africa.” N.d. Accessed: 4 May 2023. https://embassies.net/poland-in-south-africa
[326] Żukowski, “W kraju złota i diamentów. Polacy w Afryce Południowej XVI-XX w”,310.

documentation pertaining to this organisation and it is for this reason that both versions of the name are used in this thesis.

Polish Migrants Who Settled in the Vaal Triangle

Jola Chmela was born in Sopot Poland in 1946. Her husband was a first officer in the navy, and as such Chmela and her daughter were allowed to travel with her husband by ship once a year for leisure purposes. They were on such a trip when martial law was suddenly declared in Poland. They were in the Mediterranean when the captain of the ship made the announcement of what had happened, and explained that once they returned to Poland, the borders would be closed, and they would not be able to leave. The captain suggested to her husband that because he had his wife and his child with him on the ship, that they should consider leaving Poland permanently. The Chmelas agreed and elected to stay in Spain while they made more permanent plans. Jola recalled that they did not want to leave Poland, as they were happy there, but decided that leaving would be best for their family. The situation in Poland was highly undesirable. The main reason was the implementation of martial law. The country also saw severe restrictions, food shortages, food cards, and internment camps for Solidarity activists. Poland had no outside communication, and every aspect of life was tightly controlled.[327]

When martial law was declared, many Poles who were travelling in the West decided to remain there and not return to Poland. The number of individuals who decided not to return was approximately 150 000. Due to the abundance of international support and sympathy, these individuals easily acquired either asylum or residence permits. For those who had received residency or asylum in other countries, arrangements were made for their families to join them, triggering a second mass wave of emigration out of Poland. In addition to the families of those who had already received residency in other countries, approximately 4 500 people left Poland as political prisoners.[328] The reality of martial law amplified the desire to emigrate for those who had to endure it, and it is a reasonable assumption to make that it was mainly because of martial law

[327] Jola Chmela, interview with author. Sasolburg, Vaal Triangle.12 May 2022.
[328] Stola, “A Country with No Exit? International Migrations from Poland, 1949-1989”. 472.

that when individuals were given the opportunity and means to leave the country during the 1980s, they did.

During the 1980s, Poles saw a massive inconsistency in travel regulations, but while the restrictions of emigration out of Poland remained high, restraints on short-term travel out of Poland lessened. When this happened, many Poles left the country with a tourist passport, and once arriving in the destination country, simply remained there, not returning to Poland. In the 1988 Polish census, over 600 000 people were marked as "temporarily absent". These were the individuals who left on tourist passports and did not return.[329]

Towards the end of the 1980s, the PRL was in its final stages of implosion. The economy was collapsing, and the country was plagued by a general feeling of hopelessness. This occurred with the Gorbachev-era reform, which saw the Polish government departing from their previous migration policies and made passports available for almost all who applied. This, in combination with the widespread dissatisfaction with the regime, resulted in yet another mass wave of migration out of the country. In the span of five years (1985-1989), 400 000 Poles left the country, mostly migrating to the West. During this time of widespread panic and hopelessness, migration became a respected alternative, and members of all social strata were involved in mobilisation, with migration networks becoming prevalent in areas where migration had been limited in the past.[330]

Ryszard and Bozena Skoczyński were both born in Szczecin in 1958. They came to South Africa in 1988, during the second wave of Polish migrants in the 1980s. Ryszard Skoczyński makes the distinction between the economic and the political immigrants of the 1980s, stating that the first Polish immigrants to come to South Africa came due to political instability, while those who came later in the decade came due to economic instability. He states that he and his family came to South Africa in 1988 because they believed the economic collapse of Poland was so severe that they could see no resolution to the staggering financial problems, and they could not foresee any kind of future for their children. As stated in earlier chapters, South Africa (just like Poland) was also facing economic collapse. However, the Skoczyńskis felt that while they were

[329] Stola, "A Country with No Exit? International Migrations from Poland, 1949-1989". 473.
[330] Stola, "A Country with No Exit? International Migrations from Poland, 1949-1989", 474.

aware that South Africa's economy was weak, they did not see it completely collapsing, as they suspected would happen in Poland. They, like many migrants, believed South Africa to be the more economically stable of the two countries. Similar sentiments were shared by Jola Chmela, who thought South Africa to be more politically stable compared to Poland. Upon arrival, these migrants saw that South Africa faced its own economic and political struggles, but they believed that unlike Poland, the problems could be resolved. Ryszard Skoczyński states that while "Apartheid was coming to an end, the situation in Poland was simply not sustainable".[331]

Solidarity Emigration

Polish scholar Patryk Pleskot discusses a specific phenomenon, which he refers to as "Solidarity Emigration". This was the mass exodus of Poles who left Poland during the 1980s, the majority of which (55%) left while Solidarity operated as a legal trade union (1980-1981) as well as during the years of political reform (1987-1989). South Africa, and the Vaal Triangle in particular, also saw the majority of Polish migrants enter the country and the region during these two particular time periods.[332] During the 1980s, most Polish emigrants left to West Germany, France, Italy, Scandinavia, and the United States of America. Most of those who elected to leave Poland, did so due to economic and financial reasons. Despite the overwhelming majority leaving in search of a better life in an economically stable country, some of those who left, did so for political reasons and they were usually Solidarity activists who were quite influential. Despite the reason behind the emigration out of Poland, many found a second home in the destination country, going on to remain there indefinitely, while some developed antipathies to their new country of residence.[333]

An example of Solidarity activists who left Poland during the 1980s would be those who were outside the Polish borders when martial law was declared and decided not to return. It is difficult to calculate the exact number of Solidarity activists who elected

[331] Ryszard Skoczyńskiinterview with author. Vanderbijlpark, Vaal Triangle.26 June 2022.
[332] Pleskot, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges," 52.
[333] Pleskot, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges," 53.

to not return home after the implementation of martial law, but they were among the 100 000 Poles who found themselves abroad and decided to remain in exile. While most decided it best not to return home, "some of the most active members of the Solidarity movement found themselves outside Poland in different, surprising circumstances" and who found "exile from their homeland [to be] very painful".[334]

As already discussed in chapter one, in the aftermath of General Wojciech Jaruzelski's coup, the authorities arrested several thousand of Solidarity's most active members. Pleskot states that "as early as January 1982, General Czesław Kiszczak, a close associate of Jaruzelski's and the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Security Service, devised a perverse operation". [335] The operation in question was that of offering those who had been detained as Solidarity activists and their families, an option to emigrate. Pleskot suggests that this solution was perhaps modelled on similar operations which were used in Cuba. This allowed internees and their families, as well as other Solidarity activists, to emigrate. The communist regime decided on this course of action as it seemed easier to simply get rid of any opposition rather than having to constantly monitor them. Many declined this offer, but approximately 4 300 left under these circumstances between 1982 and 1983.[336]

Pleskot states that this is an area of research which needs to be explored further, but that there seems to be one consistent pattern, that only a very small number of the Polish diaspora who left Poland in the 1980s became involved in activities and activism aimed at supporting Solidarity. Surprisingly, this was true even of those who had been deeply involved in Solidarity while in Poland.[337] The findings of this thesis mostly confirms Pleskot's observation, although there was still some financial support for Solidarity from the community in the Vaal Triangle. While the political context of Poland during the 1980s was the foundation of Polish emigration, it is difficult to determine how many of those who left can truly be classified as a 'political migrant'. Despite the

[334] Pleskot, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges", 54.
[335]Pleskot, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges", 56.
[336] Pleskot, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges", 57.
[337] Pleskot,, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges",58.

circumstances regarding their leaving, one thing is clear, very few continued their activism upon arriving in their destination country.

Of those who were interviewed for this study, most were barely, if at all involved, in activism against the Polish regime once arriving in South Africa. Although he was active in the trade union Solidarity while still in Poland, Jacek Fastyn and his family were not involved in either Polish or South African politics after emigrating. Ryszard and Bozena Skoczyński were against the communist regime in Poland, and donated money to a campaign in Johannesburg which supported Solidarity financially, but that was the extent of their activism. The Skoczyńskis instead turned their attention and gave their support to the Polish Association of the Vaal Triangle (ZPVT), an organisation both are very passionate about. Ryszard Skoczyński states that the importance of the ZPVT to the Polish migrants of the 1980s cannot be understated, and that it "brought people together, gave each other support, ensured that children were not cut-off from their culture, and that the members of the community felt secure and welcome".[338] The Chmelas were not involved in South African or Polish politics; in fact, like the majority of Poles who came to the Vaal Triangle during the 1980s, they were aware of very little of what was happening in South Africa prior to arriving in South Africa. They understood that the situation was bad, but they believed that it would be resolved, so they did not concern themselves too much with it. Instead, they focused on building a new life for their family.[339]

The Role of the Vaal Industries in Selecting Migration Destinations

In January 1982 the *Rand Daily Mail* reported that Hannes Viljoen, a recruiter for Iscor stationed in Vienna, observed that "Poland is especially rich in human resources. I find that the standard of education is exceptional."[340] Viljoen stated that he felt sympathetic to the Polish people he met, and that "they are really good workers and their technicians are all very well trained."[341] One such well-trained technician was Jan Chmela. Chmela and his wife were both 36 years old and their daughter was eight when they elected not to return to Poland. They remained in Spain until June 1983,

[338] Ryszard Skoczyński interview with author. Vanderbijlpark, Vaal Triangle.26 June 2022.
[339] Jola Chmela, interview with author. Sasolburg, Vaal Triangle.12 May 2022.
[340] Anon, "Poles apart- in Vanderbijl". *Rand Daily Mail.* 28 January 1982.
[341] Anon, "Poles apart- in Vanderbijl". *Rand Daily Mail.* 28 January 1982.

and then travelled to South Africa. Jola Chmela's sister was married to a South African at the time and told her sister that she was happy in South Africa. Jola states that at the time all she knew about South Africa was that her sister was happy there. Her sister was a chemical engineer at MINTEK in Johannesburg, and organised an interview at Eskom for Jan Chmela, who was a qualified electrical engineer. He was hired by Eskom and the family came to South Africa, first settling in Kriel for two years due to its proximity to the power station there, then coming to the Vaal Triangle when the Lethabo power station was completed. Chmela's husband has since passed away, but she still remains in the Vaal Triangle, where her daughter and her family also still reside.

Chmela says that when they elected to not return to Poland, there were many others also leaving or deciding to remain outside of Poland, but that there were not many in her own city of Sopot that she was aware of or knew personally that left due to martial law, as the closing of the borders made this difficult. She emphasizes that her and her family's situation was unique, and that most of those who left during the period of martial law left via West Germany and Austria, both of which had refugee camps. She notes that from there most travelled to the United States, Western Europe, or Australia. This statement is in accordance with this study's own findings. While those migrating out of Poland who would eventually settle in South Africa may have considered the more popular destinations of the United States, Western Europe, and Australia, ultimately, they decided to come to South Africa and the Vaal Triangle in particular as they were recruited personally and ensured job security and support- something they may not necessarily have had if they elected a more popular immigration destination.

Jacek Fastyn was born in Kutno in 1947. He attended Łódź Technical University where he studied chemical engineering. He was part of the 1968 student strikes. In 1981, Fastyn and his family started looking to emigrate due to the situation in Poland, which he described as "hardly bearable".[342] In November 1981 he went to Austria to meet a representative of Sasol, and when he was offered a position at the company, he signed the contract. Fastyn states that the Sasol representative made a comment which he did not understand at the time, he said that he hoped that Fastyn and his family would "be in time". Despite martial law being declared suddenly, this individual clearly

[342] Jacek Fastyn, interview with author. Vanderbijlpark, Vaal Triangle. 2 June 2022.

thought that something along those lines was brewing. Fastyn returned home where he packed up his life and his family. There were long lines while waiting for visas to leave the country, so they had to wait many days. On Friday11 December 1981, they were second from the front. The person issuing visas told the family to come back on Monday, and that they would certainly get their visas to leave for South Africa. Martial law was declared that Monday morning on 13 December. They were stuck in Poland for three years, after already packing up and selling everything that they owned. Once the borders were opened, Fastyn travelled to West Germany, where he contacted the South African embassy to see if the contract he had signed with Sasol three years earlier was still valid. Unfortunately, it was not. However, there was a possibility of a new position at Natref (a Sasol oil refinery), which he applied for. He was offered the position in December 1985 and he and his family immediately left Poland. He began work on 13 December 1985. They came to South Africa because the country was in desperate need of skilled labour. Being highly qualified is a recurrent theme for those who came from Poland to South Africa during the 1980s. Despite South Africa's desperate need, Jacek Fastyn remarks that South Africa was often not the most popular choice for those leaving Poland. Most went to western Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia.[343]

Conclusion

The history of migration from Poland to South Africa has been extensive and dynamic. Even when there were overarching reasons for migrating, each individual's story and motivations were unique, a sentiment which extends to those who migrated to the Vaal Triangle during the 1980s. It was due to the push factors out of Poland (political and economic instability) and the pull factors to South Africa (the need for white, skilled labour) that resulted in South Africa becoming home to the largest Polish diaspora on the African continent. While it is true that Polish nationals have had a great impact on South Africa and the specific communities they migrated to, it is also obvious that not enough research has been done on this subject, a subject which is of great relevance to both Polish and South Africa history. While this chapter looked at the forces driving

[343] Jacek Fastyn, interview with author. Vanderbijlpark, Vaal Triangle. 2 June 2022.

migration and the stories of individuals who migrated under these conditions, the following chapter will discuss the creation of a Polish community in the Vaal Triangle which was a result of this migration. It will also analyse the impact that this community had on those who were part of it, as well as the Vaal Triangle and its industries.

Chapter 4
The Importance of Community: The Formation of a Polish Diaspora in the Vaal Triangle, South Africa

The political and economic situation of the 1980s in Poland had created ideal "push" factors for Polish individuals wanting to leave the country in search of a better life elsewhere. Although the situation in South Africa was less than ideal, it was appealing to many who left Poland as the economic situation in South Africa seemed to be much better than that of Poland. This, together with the fact that South Africa was desperate for white professionals to work in industries, which would otherwise implode due to their own anti-black policies, made South African industrial towns ideal for educated Poles who sought to leave Poland to seek better economic conditions elsewhere. These individuals would also be minimally affected by the ruling apartheid regime of the time, as they would be considered part of the ruling minority. It was under these conditions that many Polish families left for South Africa during the turbulent 1980s, and this chapter will investigate the creation and impact of a Polish expatriate community which sprung up in the industrial hub of the Vaal Triangle. While the previous chapter sought to shed light on the individual journeys of those who came to the Vaal Triangle during the 1980s, this chapter will focus on the development of the Polish Association of the Vaal Triangle, and its influence on the members of the Polish community as well as the Vaal Triangle in more general terms.

According to Żukowski, after the end of the Second World War, many Polish refugees who found themselves in South Africa returned to Poland. Some refugees who had been in Polish refugee camps in other parts of Africa (mainly Rhodesia and Tanganyika) also migrated to South Africa after the war. At the end of the war there were approximately 18 000 Poles in these camps. Immigration of Poles into South Africa was limited at this time, but some individual permits were granted. Żukowski notes how according to a census taken in 1951, approximately 5 000 individuals who had been born in Poland resided in South Africa at this time.[344] These individuals proved to be very active in the cultural and social sphere of their Polish heritage. Polish organisations sprang up in the main concentrations of Polish settlers. The largest of

[344] Żukowski, "W kraju złota i diamentów. Polacy w Afryce Południowej XVI-XX w", 310.

these was the Association of Polish Settler's in South Africa, which was created in 1948. Eventually, in 1973, the name was changed to the Polish Association of South Africa. This organisation operated out of Johannesburg, but had an agencies in Cape Town, which finally became independent and changed its name to the Polish Association in Cape Province. Żukowski observes that the Union of Polish Youth was predominately made up of the children who came to Oudtshoorn operated within the Association of Polish Settlers in South Africa. There were a few other Polish organisations which were founded in the 1940s and 1950s, such as the Polish Circle in Natal in Durban which encompassed the South African association of Polish Engineers as well as the Polish Ex-combatants Association. The League of Poles in Africa operated out of Cape Town at this time and had 4 000 members across Africa.[345]

The Vaal Triangle

The Vaal Triangle is comprised of three main areas: Sasolburg, Vanderbijlpark, and Vereeniging (hence the name Vaal Triangle), although residents of Meyerton, Sebokeng, Sharpeville, Zamdela, Boipatong, and Bophelong are also typically considered to be part of the Vaal Triangle as well. The area bestrides either side of the Vaal River, and is situated close to the Vaal dam. Thanks to Iscor and Sasol, the Vaal Tringle was considered South Africa's industrial hub in the second half of the 20th century.[346] The area is of significance to South African history. It was where the Battle of Vyffontein took place during the South African War, as well as where the Treaty of Vereeniging was drawn up in Vereeniging, and after being signed at Melrose House in Pretoria, ended the South African War.[347] The area was very significant during apartheid, and was home to much of the resistance against the apartheid regime. Tragically, the area is also home to both the Sharpeville, and the Boipatong Massacres.

It was the Vaal industries, namely Sasol and Iscor which inspired over 100 Polish professionals and their families to leave Poland and come to South Africa in the years

[345] Żukowski, "W kraju złota i diamentów. Polacy w Afryce Południowej XVI-XX w", 310.
[346].
[347]Anon, N.d < https://vaalexplorer.co.za/vaalregion/ > Accessed: 23 August 2020.

between 1989 and 1990. This wave of Polish immigrants came to be known as “Young Polonia” and added vitality to an already existing Polish community in the Vaal Triangle. This community was established in 1982, with the wave of Polish immigrants who came to the area immediately after the declaration of martial law in Poland. Skoczyński, who worked as an engineer for Iscor, when asked what he thought the future of the Polish Union of the Vaal Triangle (ZPVT) looked like, sadly remarked that it was “becoming history”, as the Vaal industries are now in economic decline and there are no longer jobs for these migrants’ children, who have left to other parts of the country or other parts of the world to seek employment. The passion and love that the Skocynskis have for their community and organisation was evident, as was their sadness that despite their best efforts at sustaining this community, it was slowly “becoming history”. This shows the intrinsic link between the Vaal industries and the existence of this community. Without the need for skilled labour in the Vaal industries, Poles seeking to emigrate out of Poland in the 1980s would probably not have chosen the Vaal Triangle to settle in, and as such the community would not exist. It is therefore unsurprising that the decline of the Vaal industrial sector is leading to the demise of this community.

While the union was officially formed in 1982, this does not mean that the first group of immigrants came during this time. While it is true that there was a large influx of Polish migrants into the Vaal Triangle in 1981 (directly before the implementation of martial law) and 1982 (directly after the implementation of martial law), there was already somewhat of an existing Polish community in the area due to previous waves of immigrants to South Africa and to the Vaal Triangle more specifically. The importance of those who came before cannot be overstated, as they welcomed the newer migrants into the area and explained the intricacies of South African life.

One such individual was Halina Potgieter nee Mazur who was one of the 500 children who came to Oudtshoorn in 1948 after the Second World War. Many of these children stayed on and worked in the area. Others, like Halina Potgieter, came to the Vaal Triangle sporadically during the following decades. Another such individual was Leszek Kondal, who came to Vanderbijlpark on 3 January 1967, and who was the first president of the Polish Association of the Vaal Triangle (ZPVT). The arrival of Halina Potgieter and Leszek Kondal in the Vaal Triangle was significant as they went on to found the Polish community in the Vaal Triangle. Ryszard Skoczyński reflected that

while many of those who came before the two waves of migration in the 1980s have since either left the Vaal Triangle, South Africa, or have passed away, the Polish Union of the Vaal Triangle "do not want them to die from our fragile and impermanent memory".[348]

The Vaal Triangle in the 1980s

The situation in South Africa during the 1980s was highly volatile, with the Vaal Triangle being one of the epicentres of violence and revolt. There were a number of reasons for this, the most predominant of which being the cost of rent. By 1984, the cost of rent had increased by 400 percent from 1977. In May 1984, the Vaal Triangle's two black councils (Lekoa and Evaton) announced that arrears had reached R3.5 million. At first residents were asked to pay what they could, but when that did not work, they were threatened with expropriation and prosecution. The situation in the townships were already volatile, but fuel was added to the fire when on the 4 and 5 August residents were informed that there would be yet another rent price hike, this time by R5.50. The new tariffs were so steep that Sebokeng township, who at R50 a month paid the lowest rate, still paid R2 more than the highest fee charged in Soweto. The price hikes resulted in the following four weekends being used to plan retaliation against the steep new rent prices. On 2 September a meeting was held in Sharpeville, and a stayaway was planned for the following day. Rioting broke out the following morning in Evaton, Sebokeng, and Sharpeville. 26 people died in the confrontation, four of whom were city councillors, and the rest were civilians who had been killed by the police.[349]

On the same day that the rioting broke out in the Vaal Triangle (3 September), South Africa's Tricameral Constitution came into effect. It was hoped that the Tricameral Parliament would usher in a new era of peace, but the ensuing violence in the East Rand and Vaal Triangle suggested otherwise. An affiliate of the UDF (The United Democratic Front), the Release Mandela Committee, called for a one-day strike over various protests, namely "the cost of living, housing shortages and a lack of qualified

[348] Biuletyn Polonia ZPVT 1982-2012, pamphlet, unpublished.
[349] Simpson, *History of South Africa, from 1902 to the Present*, 211.

teachers".[350] The protests began on 17 September, but the crowds were quickly dispersed by the police. Despite the protests being stopped, buses and taxis transporting workers were still attacked the following morning. This raised the tension between workers and students to levels previously only seen during the SSRC (Soweto Students Representatives Council) strikes in August 1976. To prevent the violence from escalating, activists in the Springs township of Kwa-Thema established the Kwa-Thema Parent Student Committee which consisted of 10 parents (most of whom were unionists) and 10 students. The goal of the association was to prevent the same levels of violence witnessed in the 1970s, and this was achieved when they arranged a successful, and more importantly, peaceful, boycott stayaway on 22 October 1984.

Despite the success in Springs, the Vaal Triangle remained an epicentre of revolt in the country. On the night of the strike in Springs, law and order minister Louis le Grange declared 'Operation Palmiet', whose purpose was to "to restore law and order' in Sebokeng and 'rid the area of criminal and revolutionary elements".[351] The following day, 7 000 soldiers and policemen conducted door-to-door searches. 19 500 houses were searched in Sebokeng before law enforcement moved onto Boipatong and Sharpeville. Hundreds were arrested for various infringements including the possession of firearms, drugs, and obscene materials (namely obscene photographs and photographic material which were of a pornographic nature, as stated in the Indecent and Obscene Photographic Matter Act 37 of 1967).[352] It became obvious that this large-scale sweep of the Vaal Triangle townships was not successful in limiting revolt, as on 31 October rioting broke out again in the area. The largest protest to take place in the Vaal Triangle was organised for 5 and 6 November by the Transvaal Regional Stayaway Committee (TRSC), where between 300 000 and 500 000 strikers participated. Violence unfortunately ensued.[353] This violence was committed against residents by both the South African Defence Force, as well as other residents. Some residents were attacked with sjamboks by strikers in order to prevent them from going to work. The homes of councillors and policemen as well as state-funded beerhalls

[350] Simpson, *History of South Africa, from 1902 to the Present*, 212.
[351] Simpson. *History of South Africa, from 1902 to the Present*, 213.
[352] Anon. "Media Law." N.d. Accessed 29 April 2023. https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/EJC27410#:~:text=The%20Indecent%20and%20Obscene%20Photographic,)%20SA%20617%20(CC).
[353] Simpson. *History of South Africa, from 1902 to the Present,* 213.

were targeted for arson. This in addition to the SADF's severe response, resulted in over 150 deaths.[354]

On 20 July 1985 president P.W Botha announced emergency rule effective from midnight in South Africa's three most volatile areas, namely, the Eastern Cape, the Witwatersrand, and the Vaal Triangle. What seems to have prompted this decision was the funeral of the Cradock Four, which was held at Lingelihle sports stadium in the Eastern Cape. During the funeral, a huge red flag emblazoned with the hammer and sickle was flown- no doubt prompting the strongly anti-communist government to take action.

Violence and unrest continued to ravage the area for many years. Amongst these bouts of violence on 26 March in Sebokeng, police opened fire on rioters and killed 18 people. The Sebokeng massacre of mourners, mourning the death of ANC member Chris Nangalembe, resulted in the death of a further 39 individuals with over 40 injured. The violence in the Vaal Triangle townships was not restricted to just conflict between protesters and the authorities, there were also tensions between ANC and Inkatha members. During the bouts of violence aimed at Inkatha supporters (as well as ordinary Zulu speakers), four homes were burnt down, one business attacked, and three people were killed.[355]

The white residents of the Vaal Triangle were mostly shielded from the violence in the townships, with most not being particularly aware of the extent of it nor involved in any way. This was true of the Polish community in the Vaal Triangle as well. Most had little to no knowledge of the political situation in South Africa prior to immigrating, and the majority were not involved in South African politics once they had settled in the area. There was limited, if any, interaction between the Polish immigrants and the black population. A member of the community who had come to South Africa with her parents as a child, said that:

> …I remember news reports regarding the protests in the townships and the sanctions against South Africa. I remember my parents talking about the fact that Black people were not allowed to be in our suburb after dark and I questioned why and how it would work if every house had a so-called servant's quarters. I don't

[354]Anon. "No Apartheid War: remembering the November stayaway." 5 November 2010. Accessed. 30 April 2023. https://www.saha.org.za/news/2010/November/no_apartheid_war_remembering_the_november_stayaway.htm

[355] Simpson, *History of South Africa, from 1902 to the Present,* 213.

> remember the answer that my parents gave. As a child it wasn't something that I questioned as it was a part of our reality and just the way things were. It was only in High School that I made friends with a girl from a "liberal" family, and I learned about other points of view.[356]

While unrest was a reality in the Vaal Triangle townships, the Vaal industries were actively courting the Polish community, as they were in desperate need of technicians. As such, the Poles who had come to the Vaal Triangle to work for the Vaal Industries did not question their choice of migration destination, as they were largely shielded from the horrors of apartheid and were treated exceptionally well by the Vaal Industries that employed them. In August 1982, Iscor organised a "Polish Evening" for those who had immigrated from Poland to the Vaal Triangle, indicating that Iscor recognised the importance of the Poles to its operations. Under the direction of Zyta Bąk and Jolanta Grabczan-Grabowska, the ZPVT arranged a small production to be performed for the 340 individuals who attended the event. The income generated from the evening was used to support Poles who still resided in Poland. In November 1983, at the Vaal Triangle Technikon, the ZPVT participated in the "International Christmas Table Show" in which they took second place for their Easter-themed table which was prepared by Helena Bryłowska, Barbara Kwiatkowska, Iwona Jochelson, Jagoda Stolarek and Ala Wojciechowska. Finally, in 1993, the organisation took part in Iscor's "International Evening", where representatives of different countries presented their nation's specialities. Marlena Tomżyńska and Renata Wilczyńska was responsible for the ZPVT's contribution.[357]

The creation of the Polish Union of the Vaal Triangle

The Polish union of Johannesburg had existed for many years, and in a meeting held on 16 April 1982 in Vanderbijlpark, it was decided that a branch in the Vaal Triangle would be created, to be known as *Zjednoczenia Polskiego Vaal-Triangle* or the Polish Union of the Vaal Triangle in English (ZPVT). The meeting was attended by the president of the Polish Union of South Africa, Edward de Virion as well as the president of the Council of Polonia South African, Jerzy Wallas. Leszek Kondal was elected as the head of the new branch in the Vaal Triangle. In July 1986, the ZPVT became a

[356] Anon, interview with author. Sasolburg, Vaal Triangle. 27 September 2022.
[357] Biuletyn Polonia ZPVT 1982-2012, pamphlet, unpublished.

separate organisation, and was no longer seen as a branch of the Johannesburg Association. The main goals of the association were decided then, and still remain the association's cornerstone to this day. The aim has always been to "maintain national, cultural, social and social communication among Poles in South Africa, [as well as to] maintain and promote Polish traditions, defend the interests and good name of all of us."[358] Since its inception, the Polish Union of the Vaal Triangle has had seven presidents, namely, Leszek Kondal (1982-1984), Stanisław Wojtasik (1984-1990), Henryk Staudt (1990-1992), Renata Wilczyńska (1992-1996), Jan Chmela (1996-2000), Jacek Fastyn (2000-2003), and Ryszard Skoczyński (2003- to date).

History of the Catholic Church in South Africa

Catholicism was brought to South Africa in 1488 by Portuguese explorers, namely Bartholomew Diaz and his crew. Ten years later Vasco da Gama arrived in South Africa. The Dutch East India Company ruled over the Cape Colony from 1652 until 1795, and under its rule Catholicism was prohibited. Occasionally priests who were passengers on visiting ships were allowed to visit the colony. The British ruled the colony from 1785 until 1802, and they too prohibited Catholicism. In 1804 the then ruling Dutch government opted for religious tolerance, however, when the British came to power again in 1806, they once again forbade Catholicism and expelled all Catholic priests and clergy. These prohibitions were eventually revoked, and in 1837 Bishop Raymond Griffith was appointed as the first bishop of South Africa. This was the beginning of the Catholic church in South Africa as an institution. By 1925 the South African Catholic church was still heavily reliant on expatriate clergy. However, 1925 saw David O'Leary, the first South African born bishop, consecrated in Johannesburg. It was not until 1948 that a national seminary was founded in South Africa, and it was only for the white population. The national seminary for the black population was founded in 1951.[359]

Much the same as other churches of different Christian denominations, the Catholic Church was slow in opposing the apartheid regime. At first the church wanted to

[358] Biuletyn Polonia ZPVT 1982-2012, pamphlet, unpublished.
[359] Anon. "History of the Catholic Church in Southern Africa." N.d. Accessed: 4 May 2023. https://sacbc.org.za/history-of-the-catholic-church-in-southern-africa/

maintain amicable relations with the regime, as they wanted to maintain their network of hospitals, schools, and welfare institutions. This however ended in 1953 when the government enforced the Bantu Education Act, and black children were forced to leave the Catholic mission schools. The Catholic church fought the act to maintain their schools, but to no avail. In 1957 at the Sothern African Bishops' Conference, the church declared that apartheid was 'intrinsically evil".[360] Despite this public condemnation, there were no substantial acts of defiance from the church, and some of the regime's discriminatory practices were practiced within the church itself.

The start of the 1970s saw the intensification of Catholic protest against apartheid. This was a direct result of encouragement from the Vatican Council, as well as protests from black clergy in South Africa. In 1972 they began discussing desegregating seminaries, and in 1976 this was enforced. The Soweto Uprising of 1976 led to an even greater awareness amongst South African Catholics that more protest was required of them. This took place mainly under the guidance of the South African Council of Churches and the Christian Institute. In 1990 the Catholic church in South Africa made its top priority conflict resolution, education, democracy, and development. By the 1990s, approximately 6% of South Africans were Catholic, with the majority being black.[361]

Role of the Catholic Church in Consolidating the Polish Community in the Vaal Triangle

While the ZPVT acted as the cornerstone for the Polish community in the Vaal Triangle in an official sense, it would not be an exaggeration to state that the Catholic church acted as the true foundation upon which the Polish community in the Vaal Triangle built itself. Although an exact date of implementation could not be found (although when interviewing members of the community it was said to be in the early 1980s),[362] an archival source in the form of a contract between the ZPVT and the Parish Council of St. Francis Church of Vanderbijlpark outlines the relationship that the two

[360] Anon. "History of the Catholic Church in Southern Africa." N.d. Accessed: 4 May 2023. https://sacbc.org.za/history-of-the-catholic-church-in-southern-africa/
[361] Anon. "History of the Catholic Church in Southern Africa." N.d. Accessed: 4 May 2023. https://sacbc.org.za/history-of-the-catholic-church-in-southern-africa/

[362] Jacek Fastyn, interview with author. Vanderbijlpark, Vaal Triangle. 2 June 2022

organisations had with each other. The contract was between the church and the "Polish Catholic Centre" (PCC), which was a branch of the ZPVT. The church defined the PCC as "a formally established and operating society of Polish immigrants or/and persons of Polish decent."[363] The document goes on to state that "the PCC is held to be and to remain established for the social and cultural benefit of its members operating as a non-profit society and federated to the Polish Association of South Africa."[364] The objective of the agreement was to set up the conditions of use of the facilities and buildings of the church at 16 Wells Street, Vanderbijlpark for PCC-related events and activities. One of the conditions was that "the Club shall submit to the Council a copy of its constitution or/ and any document pertaining to PCC and members status, objectives, and activities."[365] Another condition of the agreement was that "the PCC shall endeavour to strive for an integration of its membership and its activities with the activities and objectives of the Parish of St. Francis' community as a whole."[366]

The first Polish masses began in 1981 when the Polish community in the Vaal Triangle was visited by a Polish priest from Johannesburg, Monsignor Jan Jaworski, who came once a month to give a Polish mass in the church of St. Francis in Vanderbijlpark. The young Polish community in the Vaal Triangle flocked to the Church, and as a result wanted to have their own permanent Polish priest at St. Francis. Efforts began to achieve this, and on 2 February 1982 Priest Jaworski spoke at a meeting at the South African Bishops' Conference. In addition to this, the ZPVT as well as individuals in the community made requests to the papal nuncio in Pretoria, and letters were sent to the Polish bishops requesting that they have their own permanent Polish priest at the church of Saint Francis.

Their request was granted on 27 February 1983, and Priest Jan Westfal from the Society of Christ, became the first priest of the Polish parish at the church of St. Francis

[363] "Parish Council of St. Francis Church: Vanderbijlpark, Agreement of Tenure: Polish Catholic Centre", N.d. Polish Association of South Africa Archive, Mary Immaculate Convent, Lyndhurst, Johannesburg: 1
[364] "Parish Council of St. Francis Church: Vanderbijlpark, Agreement of Tenure: Polish Catholic Centre", 1.
[365] "Parish Council of St. Francis Church: Vanderbijlpark, Agreement of Tenure: Polish Catholic Centre", 4.
[366] "Parish Council of St. Francis Church: Vanderbijlpark, Agreement of Tenure: Polish Catholic Centre", 4.

in Vanderbijlpark. The Polish parish began to officially operate, and religious education began, as well as preparations for baptisms and weddings. In June 1985, Priest Westfal (the priest at St. Francis) and the then Parish Council organized the first procession in South Africa to the four altars on the feast of Corpus Christi. The tradition of the Corpus Christi procession continues to date. In 1986, Bishop Reginald Osmond, in a sermon delivered during the Feast of Corpus Christi, praised the ZPVT for keeping Polish traditions in the church, stating that "a nation without history ceases to be a nation".[367]

At the beginning of 1984, the ZPVT delegated one of the board members to work in the Parish Council, and the close cooperation of the Union and the Church began. The Polish community events began with field masses, Priest Jan Jaworski made sure that the Polish community was part of the parish of St. Francis. Priest Jaworski left Vanderbijlpark for Cape Town on 23 October 1988. He was succeeded by Priest Bogdan Wilkaniec from Australia. On the foundations laid by Priest Jan, Priest Bogdan built a Polish parish that was teeming with religious and social life. The activity of the Polish school resumed, the dance ensemble was reactivated, and religious and social meetings were held. Under the leadership of Priest Bogdan, preparations began for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the arrival of Poles to the Vaal Triangle and an image of the Mother of God in Częstochowa was also ordered. In March 1991 Priest Bogdan was transferred to the second Polish parish in Johannesburg. He was succeeded by Marek Cieśla.[368]

The Polish Parish at the Church of St. Francis endures, there are Polish masses for Easter and Christmas, the feast of Corpus Christi is celebrated on the last Sunday of August, and in October the pope is commemorated. Brodziak concludes the article by stating that:

> …there are fewer and fewer of us in the Vaal Triangle, people are leaving for the world – but we survive thanks to the Polish Parish, which unites us into one Polish society. Thank you, Lord God, the Father of Christ, who sustains this centre of faith and Polishness in Vanderbijlpark.[369]

The Catholic Church was therefore of great importance not just for the Polish nation and Solidarity, but also for Polish diasporas in other parts of the world. In Poland during

[367] Biuletyn Polonia ZPVT 1982-2012, pamphlet, unpublished.
[368] Biuletyn Polonia ZPVT 1982-2012, pamphlet, unpublished.
[369] Biuletyn Polonia ZPVT 1982-2012, pamphlet, unpublished.

the 1980s, it served as a mediator between Solidarity and the regime, as well as a source of hope and unity for Poles. At the same time in South Africa, it acted as the foundation upon which the Polish community of the Vaal Triangle built itself and provided a sense of home and familiarity in a foreign country.

The Polish school for children

In 1982 the ZPVT started a school programme with the intent of teaching children of the Polish migrants to speak their mother tongue and to have an understanding of Polish history and geography. The school was run by members of the Polish immigrant community, all of whom were women. The programme was originally run out of the local Catholic school in Vanderbijlpark, the Convent Sancta Maria, on Saturday mornings. In January 1983, after the December school holidays, the school was unfortunately unable to reopen in the convent school, so a decision was made to run the school from the home of Anna Gosek-Jęczmyk. The school ceased its operations again in July 1984, but ran again from 1987-1988 in Sasolburg, the classes being led by Halina Fastyn and Maryla Małek. Despite the foundations being laid in the 1980s, the popularity of the school peaked between 1989 and 1999, and the school had to relocate to the Catholic Church of St. Francis, as it saw a great influx in students.[370]

At its height 50 children attended the school, and it had a large staff cohort including, Bogusława Czerwińska, Ewa Gregorczyk-Sedenko, Halina Fastyn, Elżbieta Malinowska, Barbara Matuszewicz, Anna Kowalska, Alicja Kołodziejska, Krystyna Kołodziej, Władysława Kowalik, Urszula Kluza, Małgorzata Kubiak, Ewa Ordysińska, Anna Plis, Maria Sala, Małgorzta Solarz, Bożena Skoczyńska, Marlena Tomżyńska, Anna and Barbara Warchoła, Barbara Wnęk, and Renata Wilczyńska. The school was divided into four age groups, the largest group being comprised of the youngest children. Catechesis was taught during this time by Priest Bogdan Wilkaniec as well as Krystyna Kaczor, Małgorzata Kubiak, and Stanisław Brodziak. Catechesis was considered the most important part of the children's Polish education. Krystyna Karczmarczyk states that all the children are now grown, and that there is no one left

[370] Biuletyn Polonia ZPVT 1982-2012, pamphlet, unpublished.

to attend the now closed school. She states that it is now up to their grandchildren to carry on the culture and, traditions and beliefs of their grandparents.[371]

In addition to the Saturday school, Polish children learnt about their history, language, and culture though the medium of theatre. Led primarily by Ewa Gulbis, the children and young adults performed plays, puppet theatre and poems. For example, the children of the ZPVT performed a play entitled *Robotek*, which they performed for the *Review of Young Talents* in Randburg, which was sponsored by the Polish Embassy.

The Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland was established on 16 October 1992 and replaced the Order of Merit of the Polish People's republic, which had existed since 1974. This award is given to foreigners as well as Polish citizens who permanently live abroad, who through their initiatives, have made an outstanding contribution to international cooperation with the Republic of Poland. This order is divided into five classes, namely, class I Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland, class II Commander's Cross with Star of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland, class III Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland, class IV Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland, and class V Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland.[372] The honour of the Knight's Cross was awarded to multiple members of the ZPVT for their service, including Jacek Fastyn and Ryszard Skoczyński, who were interviewed for this study and whose contribution was invaluable.

The First Rally of the Polish Community of South Africa, at the Groenowers resort on the Vaal River, was held in May 1983, under the initiative of Staszek Wojtasik. It was the largest Polish community rally at that time. It was a four-day long event which consisted of sports, games, and dance. The rally was a great success and took place again the following year in 1984. All the income generated by the events was donated to the then banned trade union Solidarity in Poland.[373]

The ZPVT also created and distributed its own newspaper in the Vaal Triangle from 1982 until 2007 under various titles and editors, and there was also slight overlapping of the different publications. These newspapers mostly contained information about

[371] Biuletyn Polonia ZPVT 1982-2012, pamphlet, unpublished.
[372] Anon, "Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland". N.d. Accessed: 10 October 2022.https://www.prezydent.pl/prezydent/kompetencje/ordery-i-odznaczenia/ordery/order-zaslugi-rp
[373] Biuletyn Polonia ZPVT 1982-2012, pamphlet, unpublished.

the Polish community in the Vaal Triangle, but it also discussed the situation in Poland itself, Polish history, and provided updates on the other Polish communities in South Africa.[374] Its first period was between May 1982 and August 1983, under the name *News Polonia Vaal Triangle*[375], and it was edited by Albert Jochelson and Ewa Gulbis. The newspaper's name was changed in November 1983 to *Jednym Tchem* (*In one Breath)*,[376] with Albert Jochelson as the editor for this period. This paper was in publication until March 1984. There was a slight overlap in publications, as another newspaper started being published in June 1983, and ran until 1985 under the name *Biuletyn Informacyjny ZPVT* (Bulletin of the ZPVT*),* the editors for this paper were Iwona and Albert Jochelson, and from November 1984, Liliana Bachurzewska. There was a break in publication of the newspaper from September 1985 until February 1986. There were then two editions published for February 1986 and March 1986 again under the name *Jednym Tchem* (In One Breath*)* which was edited by Ewa Gulbis. From April 1986 until 1988 the newspaper was published monthly under the name *Lech*,[377] edited first by Ewa Gulbis, and then by Jacek Fastyn and Hanna Granickich and Jacek Granickich from 1987-1988.

From June 1989 until September 1992 the newspaper was called *Wiadomości ZPVT* (News of the ZPVT) and was edited by Andrzej Tomżyński. There was a three-year break in publication from February 1995 until September 1997. After this, "Wiadomości ZPVT"[378] returned under the editorship of Janusz Lorent. From October 1997 until 1999 "Wiadomości ZPVT" was edited by Jolanta and Ryszard Nardy. After a break, the paper returned in September 2001 under the name *Biuletyn informacyjny*[379] and ran until December 2007 under the editorship of Halina Fastyn, Renata Wilczyńska, and Andrzej Tomżyński.

A Polish dance group for the children of the community was formed under the initiative of Krystyna Kaczor and Jacek Korcz, with the assistance of Barbara Martysiuk and

[374] Jacek Fastyn, interview with author. Vanderbijlpark, Vaal Triangle. 2 June 2022
[375] Biuletyn Polonia ZPVT 1982-2012, pamphlet, unpublished.
[376] "Jednym Tchem", 1986. Polish Association of South Africa Archive, Mary Immaculate Convent, Lyndhurst, Johannesburg.
[377] "Lech",1988. Polish Association of South Africa Archive, Mary Immaculate Convent, Lyndhurst, Johannesburg.
[378] "Wiadomości ZPVT", 2006. Polish Association of South Africa Archive, Mary Immaculate Convent, Lyndhurst, Johannesburg.
[379] "Biuletyn informacyjny", 200. Polish Association of South Africa Archive, Mary Immaculate Convent, Lyndhurst, Johannesburg.

Marta Wróblicka. The children danced for many events, including Wianki and Marzannach. Wianki is a celebration in Krakow which has its origins as a pagan event connected to the summer solstice, but after Poland adopted Christianity, it became known as "Noc Świętojańska" (*St. John's Night*).[380] Marzannach is a festival which also started as a pagan ritual, celebrating Marzanna, the Slavic goddess of nature and rebirth. In contemporary society the festival has lost its religious importance, and instead is an opportunity to celebrate the Spring equinox.[381] The children also danced in front of the city authorities, during an acceptance ceremony of South African citizenship by a group of Poles, in their schools, workplaces and most importantly, they performed before the pope in 1995.

The Polish library was created in 1982 from contributions received from the members of the Polish community in the Vaal Triangle. The library was originally located in the apartment of Andrzej Elbe. At first, the library contained approximately 350 Polish books. In 1986 the library was moved to the house of Ewa and Jerzy Gulbis, where there was an official opening and ribbon cutting ceremony by the then president of the association, Staszek Wojtasik. The relocation of the library coincided with the formation of the puppet theatre. The library doubled its collection with books, 60 of which were censored in Poland and most of them donated by Lilka and Piotr Bachurzewski. The collection was catalogued by Ela and Jacek Korcz and Ewa Gulbis. In 1987, after the departure of the Gulbis family, the library came under the care of Eli Korcz and Eli Bogucka and in 1988 the library was transferred to the Polish club. In 1989 the library was moved to the house of Eli and Jurek Bogucki, and in 1990 it was relocated to the Catholic Church of St. Francis where it remained for the next eleven years. It was during this time that the library was used the most. Its final journey was in 2001 to the Polish Club in Well Street in Vanderbijlpark, where it remains to this day. Unfortunately, the library has scarcely been used during the last two decades.[382]

Despite the union playing a massive role in the lives of the Poles who migrated to South Africa during the 1980s, not everyone who migrated to the Vaal Triangle at this time was involved. One member of the community who came to the Vaal Triangle as a child with her parents in 1981 stated that while she was aware of all the activities the

[380] Lamus Dworski. *Wianki (wreaths) in Polish folk beliefs connected to summer solstice,* 8 June 2016. Accessed: 12 October 2022. https://lamusdworski.wordpress.com/2016/06/08/wianki/
[381]Andrzej Szyjewski, *Religia Słowian*. Kraków: Wydawn, 2003.
[382] Biuletyn Polonia ZPVT 1982-2012, pamphlet, unpublished.

union offered, especially for children, she was not involved in any of it (the school, the theatre, the celebrations) as there were no children in the association that were close to her in age, and therefore she had no friends to play with. She states that initially it was a big adjustment being in South Africa, and that she missed her family in Poland terribly. However, there were many children at her school from other countries who had also migrated to the Vaal Triangle around the same time as what she and her family did. She states that "in the 80s there were so many kids in my class that were born elsewhere but ended up in South Africa".[383] She states that due to there being other children from different places, mostly from England, Scotland, Greece, and Portugal, she did not feel like an outsider, as she was absorbed into this multicultural group of children, many of whom could also not speak English. She reflected that she was not sure when she began to feel more South African than Polish but knew for certain when she went to visit Poland during university and felt like an outsider. She states that "Ironically [her] mother tongue had [now] become a barrier".[384] This indicates that while the union played a massive role in the lives of Polish-born individuals in the Vaal Triangle, the experiences of those in the community were not universal. Some, for example, found more belonging in a group of multi-cultural expatriate children than within the Polish community itself.

Conclusion

The future of the ZPVT is likely eventual extinction. Those who came during the wave of migration during the 1980s are now retired, and most of their children have moved away, as the Vaal industries were no longer able to provide work for them. The children and grandchildren of those who migrated to the Vaal Triangle during this time and still stay in the area, have mostly been absorbed into South African cultural life, and many identify as being more South African than Polish. Most have married South Africans and have raised their children speaking South African languages, not Polish. One such individual states that while her parents tried to speak Polish to her now 17-year-old when he was younger, he cannot speak the language, and when visiting Poland with his grandparents, although enjoying it, felt like a South African tourist in a foreign

[383] Anon, interview with author. Sasolburg, Vaal Triangle. 27 September 2022.
[384] Anon, interview with author. Sasolburg, Vaal Triangle. 27 September 2022.

country. This is the case for most of the grandchildren of those who came from Poland to the Vaal during the 1980s. Despite the influence of the union not being able to cross generational boundaries, its contributions to the community cannot be overlooked, as along with the Catholic church, it provided a firm foundation upon which the Polish migrants for the 1980s could build their lives in South Africa.

Despite the many celebrations and cultural activities discussed above and carrying on well into the 2000s, the last decade has shown a notable decrease in such activities and involvement in the community. While there is still a valiant effort being made to sustain this community, it is undoubtably shrinking and becoming less vibrant. This of course is to be expected, as older members of the community are passing away and many of the younger members of the community are moving away- or alternatively- have been absorbed almost completely into their South African heritage. Interestingly, a conclusion which was drawn in the previous chapter, that most Poles who left Poland in the 1980s were no longer politically active in their new countries of residence, is not entirely applicable to the Polish community in the Vaal Triangle, as they often held events where the proceeds made were used to fund the then banned trade union, Solidarity. It is also important to note that while these individuals were united in heritage, language, and often the ZPVT, all of their experiences were unique, both in how they found themselves in South Africa as well as how they adapted to South Africa. While many found community and security in the union, others found a sense of belonging with other expatriate children, as opposed to the Polish community.

Today, the ZPVT is still operational, though at a smaller scale. From the start of the ZPVTs existence, certain holidays have always been celebrated. The first commemorates the Constitution of May 3 1791, which was implemented by the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, to safeguard political equality and freedom on its territory, as well as to introduce the constitutional monarchy system. This constitution reflected the Enlightenment influences of this period in Europe, which gave great importance to law, reason, freedom, and religious tolerance. The Constitution of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth is considered one of the first constitutions in Europe to reflect the values of the Enlightenment.[385] The celebration for this commemoration

[385] European Commission. “The May 3, 1791 Constitution, Warsaw Poland.” N..d. Accessed: 25 November 2022. https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-heritage/initiatives-and-success-

takes place in the local parish in Vanderbijlpark. The second holiday that has always been celebrated is Polish Independence Day, a tradition which continues until this day and which has already been discussed. In addition to celebrating the Constitution of 3 May and Polish Independence Day, the community also celebrates “Flights over Warsaw”, which takes place at the Monument to the Victims of Katyn in Johannesburg.

On the initiative of Ewa Gulbis, a member of the ZPVT, the 60th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising was celebrated by the union in 2004. Gulbis arranged for a verbal and musical montage commemorating the outbreak of the uprising. Fragments of the diaries of Monika Żeromska, a participant of the uprising, as well as poems by the poet Kamil Baczyński were recited by the youth of the ZPVT. In addition to this, a mass was also given by Priest Stanisław Lipski to solemnly honour the victims of the uprising. The ceremony was attended by the Sister Servants from Lyndhurst and guests from the Polish Embassy, namely the acting Ambassador of the Republic of Poland- Secretary of the Embassy Juliusz Gojło, as well as Consuls Marian Bark and Anna Czapiewska-Brabander. The 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War was also celebrated by the community with a mass held by Priest Stanisław Lipski, as well as a sombre commemoration of the Poles who gave their lives and who were murdered during the war. At the end of the mass, *Appeal of the Fallen* was read by Bożena Skoczyński, and a recitation of a poem by K. Baczyński was performed by Konrad Dulik. Gosia Kubiak sang "Ave Maria" with the accompaniment of Alek Pielichowski.

Finally, the 25th anniversary of Solidarity was celebrated by the Polish Union of the Vaal Triangle on the initiative of Andrzej Otomański, Andrzej Dulik and Ewa Gulbis. The commemoration of the 25th anniversary of Solidarity was celebrated with a Polish film festival which ran from the 5 until the 17th of September 2005, there was also an exhibition dedicated to Solidarity displayed at this time. The celebrations culminated on 18 September 2005 to commemorate Solidarity officially being established on 17 September, 1980. The day began with a mass, and was attended by representatives of the Polish Embassy of South Africa. A play was performed which remembered the establishment of Solidarity, and the proclamation of martial law a year later by General Jaruzelski. Ewa Gulbis wrote the script which was performed. Gulbis noted that when

stories/european-heritage-label/european-heritage-label-sites/the-may-3-1791-constitution-warsaw-poland

asked by the consul Marek Kolański how she managed to convince all the young men to perform on stage, she responded that she did not have to persuade them, and that their enthusiasm and patriotism was the biggest 'thank you' she had ever received for her many years of work in the community.[386] She noted that the young people in the community reacted similarly when they commemorated the 65th anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising. For this anniversary, they performed *Wieczornica* (Freedom more valuable than life), which was arranged by the ZPVT and took place in the Polish Club on 1 August 2009.

[386] Biuletyn Polonia ZPVT 1982-2012, pamphlet, unpublished.

Conclusion

On 13 November 2022 Polish Independence Day was commemorated with a Mass at the Polish Church in Johannesburg, followed by a celebration afterwards. Individuals of Polish decent of various backgrounds attended the event, each with their own story of how they came to be in South Africa. Speaking to these individuals, it became clear that all had a unique history and circumstances which led to them finding themselves in South Africa. As discussed, the Second World War had a massive impact on those who came to South Africa before and after it, while the decision to leave Poland and come to South Africa in the latter half of the 20th century was because of unfavourable economic and political circumstances in Poland, and seemingly better circumstances in South Africa. The current Polish diaspora is diverse in its origins and history, but united in language, culture, and religion. This group is becoming smaller, and their social gatherings less frequent, but this show of unity and patriotism reveals that though the community is shrinking, it is no less lively. Of those who attended, some were part of the group of Poles who came to the Vaal Triangle during the 1980s. Much like the extended Polish community of South Africa, this community has also become smaller as its members have become older, moved away, or passed away. However, this Polish community in the Vaal Triangle does still exist, and although not as vibrant as it once was, the history of this community needs to be recorded, and its impact on its surrounding area discussed.

This thesis made use of three main arguments for its framework. The first is Everett Lee's push and pull theory of migration. This theory states that every geographic location has both positive and negative characteristics, a location's negative characteristics are its push factors, and its positive characteristics are its pull factors. Both pull and push factors are considered when an individual or group migrates. Poland had several push factors, including restrictions of human rights as well as social, political, and economic problems. These specific factors are also in accordance with Zafrini's theory that these are the factors which are most common amongst the reasons for one to migrate. Despite South Africa experiencing significantly difficult problems, there were specific pull factors which made it attractive to Poles in particular. There was a serious skilled-labour shortage in South Africa's industries due to Bantu education, and for which the highly skilled, white, and anti-communist Poles were

perfect candidates for these open positions. It is therefore clear that Lee's theory provided a framework for studying the Polish migrations to South Africa during the 1980s. It is however ironic that while Poles were leaving Poland to escape the communist regime, they came to work in the Vaal industries which were state-owned, and therefore more reminiscent of communist than capitalist enterprises.

The second argument which was used in this thesis was that of Patryk Pleskot, who stated that Polish migration in the 1980s cannot be "easily categorized as either political or economic."[387] This research has found that when analysing Polish migration to South Africa in the 1980s specifically, there were two distinct waves of migrants. The first wave of migrants who came to South Africa in the early and mid-1980s were political migrants, whereas those who came in the late 1980s were economic migrants. Those interviewed for this study defined their own emigration in such terms as well.

The final framework which was used to conduct this research surrounded Laura Zafrini's book *Migrants and Religion: Paths, Issues, and Lenses: A Multidisciplinary and Multi-Sited Study on the Role of Religious Belongings in Migratory and Integration Processes,* where she makes four main arguments. The first being that "the denial of religious rights –in its overall meaning– is one of the main drivers of contemporary (forced) migration, usually in interconnection with other social, political and economic factors."[388] While the social, political, and economic factors were certainly drivers of migration for Poles leaving Poland during the 1980s, the denial of religious rights cannot be considered a main factor as even though the Catholic Church was considered an enemy of the state, there was never an outright denial of religious rights for those affiliated with the Church.

The second hypothesis that her work is based on is that "religious institutions, religious affiliations and religious values are crucial factors not only in structuring migration patterns and practices, but also in supporting the adaptation of newcomers – particularly in the case of (forced) migrants and asylum seekers."[389] These statements can effectively be applied to the Polish migration out of Poland during the 1980s. The

[387] Pleskot, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s: Current Research, Perspectives, and Challenges," 60.
[388] Zanfrini. *Migrants and Religion: Paths, Issues, and Lenses: A Multidisciplinary and Multi-Sited Study on the Role of Religious Belongings in Migratory and Integration Processes.* 10.
[389] Zanfrini. *Migrants and Religion: Paths, Issues, and Lenses: A Multidisciplinary and Multi-Sited Study on the Role of Religious Belongings in Migratory and Integration Processes.* 11.

second statement she makes is that in America belonging to a religious group is seen as a "bridging" factor, making it easier to assimilate into American culture. However, in Europe, it is seen as a "bonding" factor, where the immigrants belonging to the religious group are connected to others of the same group but does not help with assimilation into broader society- sometime it is even a hinderance.

This study argues that the predominantly Catholic Polish community in the Vaal Triangle experienced both bonding and bridging, as opposed to either one or the other, as the church formed the foundation upon which the Polish Association of the Vaal Triangle was built, and consolidated the Polish community as a whole. It also bridged the Polish community with the South African Catholic community, as the church of Saint Francis in Vanderbijlpark served both Polish and South African communities, therefore facilitating assimilation.[390] The role of the Catholic church in consolidating the Polish diaspora of the Vaal Triangle cannot be overstated. The ZPVT may have been the official organisation which brought the community together on paper, but the church was the actual foundation upon which the community built and defined itself.

Politically, the Polish community in the Vaal Triangle was not involved in South African politics, and most of those in the community had a very limited, if not non-existent, understanding of the South African situation before immigrating. Once they had learnt more about South African politics, those interviewed for this thesis said that they disagreed with the country's policies surrounding race. However, they all seemed to have the sense that the situation in South Africa was going to be resolved quickly and easily, and they did not see it as severe as the situation in Poland.

While some were active in politics while still in Poland, with some being members of Solidarity, their activism decreased once arriving in South Africa. However, there was still financial support for Solidarity, with the ZPVT donating the proceeds of the events which it organised. Pleskot states that once immigrating, those who supported Solidarity while still living in Poland stopped their activism entirely in most cases once arriving in their destination country- the facts found in this thesis deviates slightly from this observation.

[390] Zanfrini. *Migrants and Religion: Paths, Issues, and Lenses: A Multidisciplinary and Multi-Sited Study on the Role of Religious Belongings in Migratory and Integration Processes.* 12.

Now that this community has existed for many decades, and its members are more intimately aware of South African politics, when asked what some individuals thought of the contemporary situation many voiced concern regarding the ruling government, with all drawing worrying parallels between the communist regime in Poland in the 1980s, and the contemporary ruling party of the African National Congress (ANC). These concerns mainly revolved around selfishness from government officials, and a general lack of concern for the wellbeing of the country's citizens.

The history of Polish migration to South Africa has been long and dynamic, and the Polish influence in South Africa, although mostly unheard-of or overlooked, has helped shape South Africa and has left its mark on society. The hope of this thesis was to tell the stories of the individuals who came to South Africa during the 1980s, and how they built their lives and created a new community in a new country. This community is shrinking, with the older generation moving or passing away, and the younger generation either being assimilated into South African culture or leaving the Vaal Triangle or South Africa for better opportunities elsewhere. It is therefore important to tell the history of this community before it does in fact, "become history".[391]

[391] Ryszard Skoczyński interview with author. Vanderbijlpark, Vaal Triangle.26 June 2022.

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