

An imperfect mirror. The image of Polonia from Nord-Pas-de-Calais in the “Echo de la Polonia” 1998–2018

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„Echo de la Polonia”, emigration, France, heritage, information centre, journal, Maison de la Polonia, Polish minority, national identity

ABSTRACT

The article describes the magazine "Echo de la Polonia" on the background of the latest fate of the Polish emigration from northern France. Using the journalistic method, the content of the magazine was analysed in the context of maintaining the Polonia's cohesion and national identity. The dissertation presents the origins and evolution of the magazine and the environment around it. It shows both the significance and incompatibility of content in relation to real emigration's problems. It highlights its successes and failures, and the key role of the magazine in maintaining unity of the Polish emigration and emigration heritage registration.

On the occasion of celebration of the “Polish year” in Pas-de-Calais region, president of one of the events, standing at the head of the Department, deputy Dominique Dupilet said: “A large part of our community is of Polish origin. We must do everything so that in the year 2100 or 2150, if someone comes here to examine the history of Polish ancestors, he or she finds all of his emigration past preserved”¹. Ten years have passed since 2007. And although in December 2012 the Museum in Lens had its loud opening, and was called a second Louvre Museum, and a few months before the former mining area of northern France was inscribed on the list of world natural-cultural heritage, there were no declarations on protection or commemorating Polish contribution to the building of high position of cultural and economic region in the inter-war period. Given that the emigration from the inter-war Poland, counting over half a million citizens, belonged to a leading force that helped France regain its strengths after the crisis of the World War I², hopes for commemoration and appropriate reward of this contribution in building of a second homeland seem to be justified.

Polonia in the northern France and its cultural representativeness

The beginning of economic emigration to France is not only 613,300 Poles who arrived in 1938 by virtue of the bilateral Polish-French Convention of 1919³. We should add another 150,000 of Poles who previously⁴, among others through Germany, arrived and permanently settled in France⁵. After 1924, 100,000 of experienced Polish miners from the Ruhr area, forced to renounce Polish citizenship, in the name of loyalty and love of fatherland moved to a neighbouring country that did not require such denationalizing choices. In total, by the end of the 1930s, the number of Polish emigrants ranged between 500,000 and 700,000. Professor Henri Adam in his demographic inquiries on the migration diversity of Nord-Pas-de-Calais emphasised the still, even in the 1950s and 1960s, after the decolonization of northern Africa, dominance of the Polish element. In 1968 it represented 24.2% of all foreigners who settled in

¹ “*Une grande partie de notre population a des origines polonaises. Il faut qu'en 2100 ou 2150, quand quelqu'un recherche l'histoire de ses ancêtres polonais, il trouve chez nous toute la mémoire de cette immigration*”, own translation. IHP; Ch.M. Orpej, *Passeport Généalogique pour la Pologne* [in:] “Gazet@ Beskid”, <http://www.beskid.com/passeport.html> [access: 23.07. 2017].

² More about the war losses in France during World War I, see. J. Gruszyński, *Spoleczność polska we Francji w latach 1918–1978* [Polish community in France in the years 1918-1978], Warszawa 1981, p. 30.

³ More on the subject: “The convention on emigration and immigration”, relating to the conditions of arrival and work, and in this framework ensuring equal pay of Polish and French workers, see *Journal of Laws* 1920, no. 41, item 246.

⁴ On the subject of emigration of Poles to France at the turn of 19th and 20th century, see H. Janowska, *Polska emigracja zarobkowa we Francji 1919–1939* [Polish economic emigration in France in the years 1919-1939], Warszawa 1964, pp. 52–53.

⁵ E. Gogolewski, *Polacy we Francji* [Poles in France], Gorzów 1997, p. 3.

the region. This “ethnic dominance” translated into cultural influences not only on other emigrants of Algerian origin (22.9%), Italian origin (18.8%) or from other nations⁶, but also on the native residents of Hexagon and their lives. Both Polish emigrants and French⁷ wrote about the vaccination, acceptance, and even a kind of fashion for Polish culture (cuisine, manners and appropriate respect for women, Polish celebrations of church holidays, popularity of Polish language and selected phrases). Poles, undoubtedly the most “emigrating nation” in the 19th century panorama of “wandering Europe”, unlike others, did not assimilate easily⁸. They created their own organisational structures: parishes, associations, orphanages and elementary education in order to preserve their nationality. Several interesting works were developed on the subject of their brilliant self-organising sense, including the most important ones written by Polish sons from emigration or its French admirers. It is worth emphasising the numerous studies of the late Janine Ponty⁹, devoted to the Polish/Polish exile history of the mining region discussed here, whom her students continued and still continue to follow. Among the researchers writing and discussing the subject of Polish culture in northern France, we should distinguish Edmond Gogolewski¹⁰, Edmond Marek¹¹, and among contemporary promoters - Maryla Laurent¹², Gabriel Garçon¹³ and Monika Salmon-Siama¹⁴. All of them

⁶ The full list of nationalities present in northern France during the period in question, see H. Adam, *Quelques chiffres concernant les étrangers résidant dans la région Nord-Pas-de-Calais* [in:] *Les étrangers dans la région Nord-Pas-de-Calais*, Villeneuve d'Ascq 1974, p. 19.

⁷ J. Gruszyński, *Spółeczność polska we Francji...*, op. cit., pp. 211–215; B. Michel, *France et Pologne: des relations privilégiées* [in:] *Les relations entre la France et la Pologne au XX^e siècle*, ed. B. Michel, J. Łaptos, Cracovie 2002, p. 15; M. Nossowska, *O Francuzce, która pokochała Polskę. Rosa Bailly i stowarzyszenie Les Amis de la Pologne* [On a French woman who loved Poland. Rosa Bailly and Les Amis de la Pologne association], Lublin 2012, passim; N. Petersen, *Emigracja polska we Francji* [Polish emigration in France], “Kultura”, 1971, no. 1–2, pp. 151–159.

⁸ Read more: J. Ponty, *Une intégration difficile: les Polonais en France dans le premier vingtième siècle*, “Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire”, no. 7, juillet–septembre 1985, pp. 51–58.

⁹ J. Ponty, *Polonais méconnus: histoire des travailleurs immigrés en France dans l'entre-deux-guerres*, Paris 2006; by the same author: *L'immigration dans les textes: France, 1789–2002*, Paris 2004; by the same author: *Nation, nationalités et nationalismes en Europe de 1850 à 1920*, Nanterre 1996 and other.

¹⁰ Out of his most interesting works it is worth mentioning: E. Gogolewski, *L'enseignement du polonais en France avant la seconde guerre mondiale*, Lille 1990; by the same author: *Les polonais et la Pologne dans la tourmente de la deuxième guerre mondiale*, Villeneuve-d'Ascq 1996; by the same author: *La chorale Millenium de Marles, Calonne, Auchel, Pas-de-Calais*, Villeneuve-d'Ascq 2000 and many other.

¹¹ E. Marek, *O pierwszej stacji badań nad Polonią we Francji* [On the first research station of the French Polonia], Warszawa 1984; by the same author: *Sekcja polska na Państwowym Uniwersytecie w Lille (1927–1939). W 65-tą rocznicę jej założenia* [Polish section at the University of Lille. 65th anniversary of its creation], Lille 1992. In addition, there are important scientific works of E. Brand, created and published in the scientific community of northern France, e.g. *La Marseillaise des Polonais: origine et fortune d'un hymne national*, Lille 1987; *Quand toute la France devint polonaise: l'insurrection de novembre 1830 et l'opinion française*, Lille 1994; *La constitution du 3 mai 1791 dans la littérature polonaise et française (1791–1991)*, Lille 1991 and many other.

¹² M. Laurent, *Les échanges et les contacts entre la région Nord et la Pologne* [in:] *Cintribution à la préparation des Assises de la Pologne*, Lille 1989; by the same author: *L'autre tel qu'on le traduit*, Paris 2008.

¹³ G. Garçon, *Le nombre et la répartition des minorités nationales dans la Pologne de l'entre-deux-guerres*, Lille 1995; by the same author: *Les catholiques polonais en France: les années de fondation, 1919–1949*, Lille 2004;

associated with the district of Lille and Polonia's organisations there, in a certain sense of duty towards their community, recreated and continue to record the recent past indicating the emigration's double identity¹⁵. Despite numerous attempts to describe the rich associational activity both in the inter-war period and after World War II¹⁶, the constantly enriching panorama of Polish associations is still waiting for major monograph. Not forgetting about historical continuity, a kind of several generational Polish émigré heritage, which along with the written legacy is the core of its modern functioning, let's take a look at one of the most active associations in the first decade of the 21st century - Maison de la Polonia (hereinafter: MdM), which so far has been the only one that has successfully attempted to unite all emigrant organisations dispersed throughout northern France. The main goal of the article is to show the role played by its leading press body "Echo de la Polonia" and to indicate new possibilities relating to the press research on Polonia.

The House of the Polish Diaspora as the centre of information

The establishment of the House of the Polish Diaspora as a specific centre gathering and organising the rich and varied life of the Polish community in Hauts-de-France took place on the initiative of the French side, which in the early 90s¹⁷ intensified efforts to find its actual representation. Three years after the congress, convened in 1992 by the departmental authorities of all major Polish organisations, their representation was established. The House of the Polish Diaspora was to be a centre and at the same time a "political showcase" of the entire ethnic and national environment. And, towards the entities associated in it, with Polish Congress on head, which has been operating continuously since 1949, it should perform service functions. Especially important role in this process of unification, apart from the

by the same author: *La radio française parle le polonais: histoire des émissions en langue polonaise de la radiodiffusion française 1932–1974*, Lille 1991 and many other.

¹⁴ M. Salmon-Siama, *Les vexilles de l'immigration polonaise dans le Nord et le Pas-de-Calais (1919–2018)*, Vol. 1–3, Lille 2018.

¹⁵ More on the national bivalence: I.H. Pugacewicz, *Problemy tożsamościowe młodzieży polonijnej północnej Francji. Generowanie etosu emigranta* [Identity problems of Polish youth in northern France. Generating the ethos of an emigrant] [in:] *Wspólnoty z perspektywy edukacji międzykulturowej* [Communities from the perspective of intercultural education], ed. J. Nikitorowicz, J. Muszyńska, M. Sobecki, Białystok 2009, pp. 253–266.

¹⁶ See other works: W. Śladkowski, *Szkice polsko-francuskie XIX–XX wiek* [Polish-French sketches of the 19th and 20th century], Lublin 2015; by the same author: *Wysepka polska we Francji: u Marii i Henryka Gierszyńskich w Ouarville: 1878–1930* [Polish isle in France: at the house of Maria and Henryk Gierszyński in Ouarville: 1878–1930], Lublin 2005; by the same author: *Wychodźstwa polskiego zarys dziejowy* [Historical outline of Polish emigration], Lublin 1994; by the same author: *Emigracja polska we Francji 1871–1918* [Polish emigration in France in the years 1871–1918], Lublin 1980.

¹⁷ An excellent testimony of increased interest of the Regional Council of Nord-Pas-de-Calais is posting in its body press a several-pages *dossier* dedicated to Polonia in France. See *Fragments de Pologne*, "Nord-Pas de Calais" 1991, no. 9, pp. 20–33.

French side, was played by the efforts of intellectuals working in the Polish section at the Charles de Gaulle University - Lille III under the direction of Daniel Beauvois, who in 1989 organised a scientific conference “Les ouvriers polonais en France après la seconde guerre”, and then, at the request of the local authorities, in 1992, he organised another one, calling all associations to cooperate in the fields of science, economy and culture¹⁸. The body finally established in 1995, until 2007 called Maison de la Polonité, had an ambitious goal - to bring together about 180 active associations, almost half of which were purely French, on a federal basis¹⁹. The final success of the whole undertaking was secured by the merger into a representative whole of the two largest bodies: the century-old Polish Congress and the young House of the Polish Diaspora, which since 21 December 2007 has the uniform name Maison de la Polonia de France (Congress of Polish community in France)²⁰. Undoubtedly, through this unification, the Congress gave a credit of trust to the new organisation. Before this happened, activists from Maison de la Polonité for more than a decade have proved their stability and the gravity of the relatively young structure with their efforts and numerous undertakings for the community. In order to reach all interested parties, take over, secure or just store the deposited archives and all emigration memorabilia from the past, in 2001 a special cell was established - Centre for Documentation and Information of the House of the Polish Diaspora (Center de Documentation and Information de la Maison de la Polonia, hereinafter CDI), which, apart from protecting the Polish heritage, was also supposed to search for and transfer various kinds of knowledge and information about Poland and Polonia. The aftermath of CDI's activity was the focus of dispersed émigré life around specific, jointly refined goals, which was expressed by unification in the House of the Polish Diaspora until 2007 of as many as 95 organisations with their approx. 7.5 thousand members²¹. From the point of view of the purposefulness of the creation of Maison de Polonia, this fact was a perfect confirmation of the meaning of its actions and the federal structure.

The numerous ventures of CDI were more fully described elsewhere²². Undoubtedly, the fact that French authorities gave the entire environment representative rooms, the so-

¹⁸ *Contribution à la préparation des Assises de la Polonité*, ed. Centre d'Etude de la Culture Polonaise de l'Université Charles de Gaulle – Lille III 1992, introduction, pp. I–II.

¹⁹ Maison de la Polonia de France, Congrès Polonia en France, *Histoire*, <http://maisondelapolonia.com/pl/historique> [access: 08.01.2013].

²⁰ More about the causes and history of this unification, see J.M. Zwerenz, *Qu'est ce que la „Maison de la Polonia”?*, “Echo de la Polonia” Juin 2005, no. 0, p. 5.

²¹ J.M. Zwerenz, *Qu'est ce que...*, op. cit., p. 5.

²² Read more: I.H. Pugacewicz, *Centrum Dokumentacji i Informacji Polonii Północnej Francji – historia, działalność, perspektywy* [Centre for Documentation and Information of Polonia in northern France - history, activity, perspectives], “Z problemów bibliotek naukowych Wrocławia” Vol. 6 (2008), pp. 111-127.

called Espace Lumière, in the heart of the town of Hénin-Beaumont for the period of 2002-2011 and continuous French financial aid is a unique proof of the recognition of the merits of the House of the Polish Diaspora in the promotion of Polish education and culture. The abovementioned complex consisted of office rooms with a total area of 300 m². Some of them, the most representative (150 m²), visible from the main street, were intended for the first Polish library in the region, and its professional organisation was entrusted to the Institute of Information and Book Studies of University of Warsaw.²³ In addition, the complex included three cinemas, conference rooms, internal spacious lobbies in which Polish exhibitions were organised, as well as a gastronomic centre, where the restaurant was immediately opened under the name “Cracovia”, which since 2005 has been the organiser of all Polonia feasts. Thanks to the convenient location not far from Lille and excellent housing conditions, association’s activities have clearly accelerated. The environment attracted more and more recognised partners, including the Consulate General, which, based on the newly organised emigration potential, decided to take on serious challenges, such as the organisation of the Polish Year in Pas-de-Calais or with the aforementioned University of Warsaw organising the first of international conferences for the promotion of Polonia²⁴, at the headquarters and using the potential of MdM.

“Echo de la Polonia” – characteristics

Registration of the extensive activity and intensive life of the revived Polonia would not be possible without its own press organ. “Echo Polskości” (“Echo de la Polonia”), founded in 1998 on the initiative of Edmund Oszczak, was initially published as a four-page, black and white quarterly. The first issues of the magazine (printing was financed exclusively from own contributions) were to promote and support Polonia’s statutory activities²⁵, including the protection of memory and animation of modern culture. Until 2005, 26 volumes were issued. They constantly evolved in terms of content, size and graphics. Already since 1998, edited primarily in French language, understandable for everyone (only a part of texts written in or

²³ More about the cooperation of the said institute with this and other libraries, see: by the same author: *Początki współpracy Instytutu Informacji Naukowej i Studiów Bibliologicznych UW z najstarszą biblioteką polską na świecie* [The beginnings of cooperation between the Institute of Information and Book Studies of University of Warsaw with the oldest Polish library in the world], “Z badań nad książką i księgozbiorami historycznymi” Vol. 4 (2010), pp. 269-272.

²⁴ The above conference entitled “Informational needs of contemporary Polish diaspora/Les besoins en information de la Polonia aujourd’hui” took place on 14-16 October 2008 in the small Polonia village of Hénin-Beaumont near Lille, in northern France.

²⁵ MdM statutory documents, see Maison de la Polonia de France, Congrès Polonia en France, *Statuts* <http://maisondelapolonia.com/pl/statuts/> [access: 08.05.2018].

translated to Polish), the magazine has been printed in colour version, which definitely helped to attract new, especially younger readers who often became co-editors. Thus, it was necessary to expand the substantive content of the magazine, gaining more and more readers. Since 2003, the number of texts submitted to the editorial office has doubled. The last issue of “Echo de la Polonia” from March 2005 had 26 pages (when the average number of pages of the entire edition fluctuated around twenty) and presented a clearly elaborated subject matter. From June 2005 to the last issue, published in mid-2016, a total of 58 issues of the magazine appeared, which is over a thousand pages of important materials and information on the northern France Polonia. “Echo de la Polonia”, with a circulation of 3000 copies, subsidized mainly by the French, and to a lesser extent by the Polish authorities, was probably one of the few chronicles of life of contemporary Polonia, in which ideology and politics, and related polemics and disputes, were replaced by various messages, memories, photos, documents, as well as current Polish and emigration-related information. For this reason, the quarterly devoted mainly to the presentation of Polonia’s heritage and the current life of emigration in northern France in less than a few years became the second most important Polonia magazine, after “Głos Katolicki²⁶”. If we were to place them in the ranking of the most important editorial projects of the Western European Polonia, they would undoubtedly win due to their popularity and socio-cultural usefulness. Not raising the bar too high, bearing in mind the utilitarian character, the magazine set itself the goal of a cultural and informational service towards its own minority. Undoubtedly, it met the expectations, it fit the native tastes, but also attempted to create new emigration trends and needs. The educational and identity value of the magazine building and consolidating the multi-generational Polish-French community around the transmitted content seems to be invaluable. In order to do it effectively and permanently, it was necessary to abandon conflict subjects or events, which, after all, were often observed in the north of France, and to create own hierarchy of émigré values, and based on it, to search for everything that connects and brings people together. The importance of the issues raised was not always consistent with these French or Polish agendas. “Echo de la Polonia” did not follow the trends, and it looked like a newspaper from a bygone era, because it was more focused on the needs of its own, more economic than political Polonia, and this has been aging over the years. As the émigré culture researchers emphasise, time in

²⁶ More about the establishment, evolution, and journalists of “Głos Katolicki”, see B. Usowicz, *Krótką Historią G.K.* [A brief history of G.K.], “Głos Katolicki” <http://www.glos-katolicki.eu/historia> [access: 08.05.2018].

exile is usually “delayed²⁷”. This past time, remembered from a distant homeland, somewhat enchanted in flavours, smells, memories or folk costumes, trying to be reminded and recreated in a new space, makes it more reflexive, but also somewhat isolated.

In a common excess of information, the Western European Polonia’s magazine, while maintaining its unique character, faithfully followed its own principles and goals, developed with the entire community gathered around it. Let’s try to refer to the condition and needs of the local emigration based on the content of “Echo de la Polonia”.

“Echo de la Polonia” - registration and promotion of Polonia’s culture

Already in the “pre-première” zero issue, the then president of the House of the Polish Diaspora, Jean Marc Zwerenz, together with the editor-in-chief of the discussed bulletin, Edmud Oszczak, after consulting with Polonia, proposed a number of permanent columns to be included in the magazine.

The first of them, *House of the Polish Diaspora - activity*, discussed all kinds of undertakings, both those in the region, starting from such events as “Rynek en Fête”, annual week-long celebration of Polish culture²⁸, through the presentation of important events from the current life, various events and exhibitions prepared by organisations affiliated in MDM, to their mutual contacts and activities on a general French or Polish level. Presentation of the unimaginably rich panorama of undertakings within Maison de la Polonia would require a separate discussion and a deeper sociological analysis. Let's hope that soon scientists and specialists dealing with migration, demography and multiculturalism will be interested in these subjects, as the Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies of the University of Warsaw undertook the digitization and, consequently, provides free online access to all issues of the magazine in the Digital Library of Polish Diaspora²⁹.

The second chapter, *Life of the Association*, is a presentation of individual societies, through the prism of their most interesting ideas. For example, in the fifth issue of 2006 in the

²⁷ A. Sadowski, *Spółeczeństwo zróżnicowane kulturowo a problemy dziedzictwa kulturowego* [A culturally diverse society and the problems of cultural heritage] [in:] *Międzygeneracyjna transmisja dziedzictwa kulturowego. Globalizm versus regionalizm* [Intergenerational transmission of cultural heritage. Globalism against regionalism], ed. J. Nikitorowicz, J. Halicki, J. Muszyńska, Białystok 2003, pp. 46–47.

²⁸ The first regional holiday of the Polonia culture, “Rynek en Fête”, in which a special emphasis was placed on folklore and Polish culinary tradition, took place in 2002 and to this day is the most recognisable and popular event among both Polonia and all other inhabitants of the region. See *La troisième édition du „Rynek en Fête” a transformé le quartier de l’Hôtel de Ville de Hénin-Beaumont en véritable « petite Pologne»*, “Echo de la Polonia” 2005, no. 0, pp. 6–7.

²⁹ More on the subject of the Digital Library of Polish Diaspora, see: D. Kuźmina, *Polonijna Biblioteka Cyfrowa 2017*, seria „Z badań nad książką i księgozbiorami historycznymi”, tom specjalny: *Polonika w zbiorach obcych* [Digital Library of Polish Diaspora 2017, series “From research on a book and historical collections”, special volume: *Polonica in foreign collections*], Warszawa 2017, pp. 81–94.

two pages describing *La vie associative*, within column *Portrait* we read about the activities of the Association Professionels de Santé d'Origine Polonaise, Région Nord-Pas de Calais (imperfect translation of the magazine: Association of Health Workers of Polish Origin of the Nord-Pas de Calais Region)³⁰. In the later part of the issue, the most important regional Polonia organisations were presented, from Harnes, Denain, Douai, Allennes Les Marais, Arras and Lens³¹. Depending on the period, type of events, intensity of associative life, it is presented differently in individual issues of the magazine. For example, on the occasion of Christmas 2013, the activity of societies was analysed through the prism of a rich repertoire of nativity plays³².

Another part of the magazine was *Tourism, Economics, Europe* section aimed mainly at showing closer individual regions of Poland, indicating the most interesting and most advantageous ways of travelling. This part discussed the accelerated development of Polish cities, villages and all related infrastructure after the collapse of the communist regime, as well as the growing economic potential of selected provinces. MdM paid particular attention to the promotion and presentation of cultural and economic partnerships between individual agglomerations and towns³³ from both countries. It should be emphasised here that thanks to the efforts and regular work on the regional or even local level, many partnership agreements were signed on the initiative of the House of the Polish Diaspora³⁴, and additionally, since 2007³⁵, an interesting cyclical venture has been organised - Olympiad of partner towns from Poland and Nord-Pas-de-Calais³⁶. The discussed section *Tourism, Economy, Europe* tried to promote the growing importance of Poland on the old continent. It is all the more interesting because the emigrants themselves, somewhat from the outside, reflect on the degree of Poland's integration in a united Europe. It is seen through the eyes of an observer who is rarely present in the homeland, but identifies with it, describing it from own western perspective.

The next pages of the magazine were devoted to *Echo from Poland*, meaning important events and information of a cultural and socio-political nature from the Homeland.

³⁰ "Echo de la Polonia 2006", no. 5, p. 8.

³¹ Ibid., 2006, no. 5, pp. 8-9.

³² Ibid., 2013, no. 41, pp. 10-11.

³³ See e.g. a description of the contacts concluded with the signing of a partnership agreement and further joint ventures between the cities of Libercourt and Jarocin. Ibid., 2008, no. 15, p. 10.

³⁴ More about partnership agreements, see *ibid.*, 2010, no. 27, pp. 10-11.

³⁵ Co-organiser and the most important driving force of these French-Polish sports Olympiads of partner cities from the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region, the first of which took place in 2007 in Libercourt, was respected sports activist Leon Słojewski coming from Polonia. More about him: see footnote no. 52

³⁶ . More on the third issue of this type of event, which is now a permanent part of Libercourt with its Polonia, see "Echo de la Polonia 2012", no. 37, p. 4.

Reports from such events as “Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy” [Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity] or description of popular TV show *Star Académie* often inspired to take similar actions on emigration. The section also informed about important political events, such as parliamentary and presidential elections, reviews of the most important political forces applying for election. Polish performances, concerts and successes of compatriots - people of science, culture and sports were also discussed. Again, it is worth emphasising the subjectivity of the choices, in which the added value of the magazine lies. Thanks to it, we can show the cognitive horizon of the North-French Polonia, its real interests and actual knowledge about the homeland.

Another interesting section is the one presenting *Polonia in the world* and the forms of its diverse activities. It was there, starting from Pietiagorsk³⁷ deep in Russia, through the Vilnius region³⁸, Belarus³⁹ and ending on the Australian antipodes, that successes, concerns and dreams of Polonia were lived. Regular presentation of issues of Polonia gave rise to building of identity unity, and helped in establishing contacts to exchange specific aid or experience. The culminating moment, a kind of milestone for this kind of journalistic cooperation of Polonia, was the First World Congress of the Houses of Polish Diaspora organised in the spring of 2007 in the headquarters of Mdm in Henin-Beaumont⁴⁰.

One of the key parts of the magazine from the very beginning devoted its columns to youth, and that was even reflected in the name. *Youth* is primarily a section confirming vitality and presenting the activity of the youngest members of Polonia, often coming from third and fourth generation, already born and raised in France. Encouraging the youngest to participate in the Polonia's life is giving them attractive opportunities to discover distant homeland, maintain close contacts with their Polish grandparents, uncles, cousins, drawing them in all Polish events, and above all mobilizing them to learn the language and participate in Polish/Polonia's culture⁴¹. It is also an attempt to conduct an intergenerational dialogue while reaching to the Polish roots. As far as this type of activity is concerned, the Educapol Association (Association des Enseignants de polonais et des Amis de la langue polonaise) is definitely on the foreground of the magazine discussed here, which not only promoted the teaching of native tongue in various French centres and schools, but also organised various competitions, Olympiads, excursions and meetings with interesting compatriots for Polonia's

³⁷ Ibid., 2010, no. 29, p. 14.

³⁸ Ibid., 2007, no. 14, p. 5.

³⁹ Ibid., 2013, no. 42, p. 14.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 2007, no. 11, special edition.

⁴¹ More about the possibilities and threats in teaching Polish language, see article *Uczmy sie polskiego!* [Let's learn Polish!] *ibid.*, 2010, no. 29, p.11.

children and youth. At every Polonia's festival, as part of the "Rynek en Fête" (i.e. a series of various Polonia events combined with an obligatory bazaar of regional food products), drawing and Polish poetry recitation contests were organised to attract the youngest participants, because valuable rewards were always provided for, and the audience was always large⁴². Special attention was paid to the career of Polish singer Michał Kwiatkowski, and after his media success - winning the second place in the *Star Académie* show - everyone wanted to follow his path. And this promotion was most appealing to the emotions of the youngest recipient, who eagerly identified himself⁴³ with his countryman - the French pop star. In addition to numerous examples of easy and pleasant Polonia entertainment, it is worth paying attention to one of the more serious and long-term ventures, directed not only to young people but also to the older generation. In order to consolidate and disseminate knowledge about the fate of Polonia in northern France, an attempt was made to record the Polish heritage in the region. The work began with the detailed registration of all Polish objects: monuments, parks, churches, cemeteries, streets, shops with a Polish name or provenance.

Based on the material collected for several years⁴⁴, the routes of the following trips were developed: "In the footsteps of Poles in the mining area" (first of all, visiting Polish mine monuments in the Lens-Liévin agglomeration); "Through the Polonia's routes in Hénin-Carvin"; "Polonia bicycle trip: Lille-intra-muros" (discovering Polish places and memorabilia in the capital of Flanders); "In the Footsteps of Poles from Lille" and "Polonia's raid in Lille-Métropole" (a tour of Polish memorial sites in the Lille district). Initially, the proposed routes were presented as part of the European heritage days⁴⁵. With time, Polish-language trips entered the traditional repertoire of regular events organised on the occasion of *Rynek en Fête*⁴⁶.

The last of the regular columns of "Echo de la Polonia" - as the title itself pointed out - *News*, contained information that more specifically referred to the nodal problems of life on the French land both in the national and regional dimensions, while *Practical information* concerned all types of announcements, notices, calendar of the most important events, useful addresses and all kinds of contact information. It is in this section that recipes for Polish

⁴² See, e.g. a report from the 5th Competition of Polish Poetry Recitation, "Echo de la Polonia" 2007, no. 10, special edition.

⁴³ Interview with M. Kwiatkowski, *ibid.*, 2006, no. 3, p. 11.

⁴⁴ Although already in the nineties Polish activists saw the need to create trails in the footsteps of Polishness, the registration works gained momentum only in 2009.

⁴⁵ "Echo de la Polonia 2009", no. 25, p. 7.

⁴⁶ Example cycle of reports of the so-called *Circuit de la Polonia*, see *ibid.* 2011, no. 32, p. 5; *ibid.*, 2011, no. 34, p. 3; *ibid.*, 2011, no. 35, p. 3.

krupnik or dumplings⁴⁷ were given most frequently, and on the other hand, the neighbouring column, *Sélection bibliographique* recommended interesting new books available in Lille in Polish-French bookstore “Lektura”⁴⁸ and quoted Polish jokes popular among émigrés⁴⁹. This final part of the magazine with innumerable announcements made readers aware of the richness and diversity of their Polish life, their problems, but also ethnic solidarity on the French soil.

The end of the magazine's activity, perspectives

The last, 57th issue of the magazine (May, June, July 2016) said goodbye to its readers only for the duration of holidays. Unfortunately, after the French subsidies stopped, it turned out that there was no money for next issues⁵⁰, and also the House of the Polish Diaspora suspended its functioning. The enthusiasm, good intentions and enormous human capital of émigrés without external financial aid was not enough. Even though, some most deserved and dedicated activists believed that their organisation and the magazine will be resurrected because of the huge demand. These include in particular Franciszka Aghamalin-Konieczny⁵¹, long-time president (2007-2012) of the Polish Congress, and head of the House of the Polish Diaspora (2009-2012); Sylviane Kowalczyk - the only director who many times saved the organisation from the greatest oppression; Edmund Oszczak - the founder and first editor-in-chief of the magazine, and Leon Słojewski⁵², its editor-in-chief from 2011 to the last issue selflessly preparing the next issues of “Echo ...”. Are their beliefs right? Time will tell.

These last two years without magazine’s and organisation’s operation gave some very interesting conclusions. It turned out that the organisational and relational capital, focused in MdM, taken care of by the said organisation, whose best guardian and promoter was “Echo ...,” has not diffused. Small associations of Polonia, deprived of proper representation and coordination, without strong representation uniting their efforts and promoting their activities, lobbying on their behalf and seeking for recognition, began to decline. Such unfavourable

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2007, no. 9, p. 15.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 2006, no. 7, p. 15.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 2006, no. 4, p. 15.

⁵⁰ Authorities of the region, from the 80,000 Euro received annually, in 2016 only gave the organisation 35,000 Euro, announcing the end of subsidization for MdM.

⁵¹ More on this subject, see W.K. Kalińska, *Polonia północnej Francji – marzenia i rzeczywistość. (Spojrzenie obserwatora zewnętrznego)* [Polonia in northern France - dreams and reality. (From the perspective of external observer)] [in:] *Promotion et communication culturelle de l'immigration à travers le patrimoine national*, ed. D. Kuźmina, I. Pugaczewicz, Varsovie 2014, pp. 81–85.

⁵² L. Słojewski, a long-time activist of “Sokół”, honoured for the services to the organisation with: Brown (1966), Silver (1974) and Gold (1983) Medal and the Cross of honour (1990) of the “Sokół” Association of Gymnastic Societies in France, became involved with the House of the Polish Diaspora in 2005.

phenomena resulting in degradation of the Polonia's movement lead to a great inter-organisational discussion on how to survive without a common representation and advertising channel in the form of a Polish-language magazine. At the turn of 2017 and 2018, from over 160 organisations registered in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region, less than half could show some real activity. The rest simply suspended their actions, perhaps for a short time, perhaps forever. In the face of such obvious regress, referring to the self-preservation instinct of survival, as many as 35 of these most active associations decided to replace Maison de la Polonia - the Polish Congress (dissolved by the Court in Béthune by the decree of 5 November 2017) with a new structure with unusually accurate name of Association of Polish Societies of Northern France. This “Collectif Polonia Hauts-de-France” taxed itself, developed a new statute, and carried out the necessary legal procedures for legal registration. The new unit commenced its operation on 15 December 2017, when the Association of Polish Societies has been officially entered in the register of French companies on the basis of the law of 1901.

Summary, conclusions

Events described herein give interesting conclusions and raise further questions. As mentioned, the fall of Maison MDM de la Polonia and “Echo ...” was to some extent unexpected and resulted from the end of the French financial aid. The court proceedings necessary in this situation checked and proved the financial and fiscal correctness of the closing organisation, proper management of the French funds granted to it over the years. In the light of the above, is it not worth to seriously consider the actual role of the Homeland? What kind of support should one expect from his homeland? What should the state policy be towards the Polonia scattered around the world? How to care for and cultivate the identity and heritage on emigration?

From the legal point of view, in the light of the documents, the Association of Polish Societies is a completely new creation. The only evidence of continuity, an important link between what is “new” and what is “lost” may be the continuation of “Echo de la Polonia”, independent of the European or national political climate. It was a magazine that registered the daily life of the local Polonia, reflecting its identity, promoting and registering activities for the benefit of and multiplying, or at least maintaining the Polish national heritage.

It is worth noting that there were no symptoms of crisis found on the pages of the magazine. And it is not just about the abovementioned financial crash. The image of Polonia found in the magazine is almost immaculate. This too idyllic vision of associations, usually

described through the prism of their greatest successes, does not reflect the real-life conditions. This “imperfect mirror” of “Echo de la Polonia” for many years promoted an optimistic and colourful image of Polonia. It praised common achievements, while never mentioning the problems resulting e.g. from globalization, digitization, ecological crisis, increasing problem of refugees arriving to Europe and France, etc. The magazine ignored problems associated with the aging of emigration, its internal divisions or crises of values; the difficulties connected with the interest and long-term inclusion of the young generation in Polonia’s life. In order to unite sometimes extremely different associations, in order to build a solidary image of émigré Polishness, difficult subjects were not addressed, which seems to be a kind of wishful thinking that does not always bring good results. Not once was the amount of real financial aid from Poland compared to the French one. It should be said that about 90% of all subsidies that Polonia in Nord-Pas-de-Calais received came from the regional French authorities, and not from the homeland⁵³.

There has been no deeper reflection on the principles of cooperation between the consulate in Lille⁵⁴ operating from 1923 to 30 June 2013, as well as the Polish embassy in Paris and other national representative offices and local Polonia. After retiring, former general consul in Lille⁵⁵, Krystyna Kalińska, wrote about the insufficient support of domestic diplomatic agencies. As it turns out, the conciliatory policy of universal agreement and acceptance of what comes, somewhat inscribed in the historic mission of “Echo de la Polonia”, had its bad and good sides. This building of exclusively positive image and friendly relations with others served, above all, the purpose of proud representation of own nation. The native diaspora, somewhat sedated by good self-esteem, was unable to develop and activate self-defence mechanisms, for apparently there was no need to do so. Wider public discussion on current social, political and financial challenges would probably not save it from its troubles, but perhaps it would reduce their scale. And it would certainly make the magazine more objective, capable of registering the life of Polonia in a most reliable and honest way, with ups and downs.

⁵³ Information obtained in an interview with S. Kowalczyk dated 22.02. 2018 and confirmed by F. Aghamalin-Konieczny.

⁵⁴ For more on the subject of historical relations between Polonia and the consular authorities in Lille, see 85 *years of the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Lille*, Lille 2009.

⁵⁵ W.K. Kalińska, *Polonia północnej Francji...*, op. cit., p. 85.

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