

# **Moving Lives**

**Everyday experiences of nation and migration  
within the Polish, Greek-Cypriot and Italian  
populations of Leicester since 1945**

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## **Abstract**

### **Moving Lives**

#### **Everyday experiences of nation and migration within the Polish, Greek-Cypriot and Italian populations of Leicester since 1945**

**Katherine Burrell**

This thesis aims to uncover and explore a series of everyday experiences of migration, a phenomenon which can be both a monumental upheaval and an ordinary activity. The research for this study has been carried out in Leicester, a city recognised for its large and diverse migrant population, orientating around Polish, Greek-Cypriot and Italian immigrants, three relatively small but distinctive migrant groups. Based on evidence collected from 55 oral history/in-depth interviews and supplemented by other sources including the census, local newspapers and several pre-recorded interviews, four overlapping themes are considered. The first studies the migration process itself, highlighting the important contrast between voluntary and involuntary migration and examining the different memories and legacies of migration. While migration has been the pivotal experience in Polish life histories, for example, it has been notably less significant for the Italian and Greek-Cypriot interviewees. Secondly, the national, rather than ethnic, identities of the groups are analysed, demonstrating how national consciousness survives the upheaval of migration to continue through the recognition of national histories, traditional rituals and material culture, and the persistence of national myths and ambiguities. The third theme incorporates the different respondents' memories and experiences of their homelands, focusing especially on the transnational connections that are established with the national territory after migration. Subscriptions to national satellite television channels, for example, have become an important feature in homeland relationships in the past decade. Finally, different experiences of community life in Leicester are studied, considering how 'community' is projected in the interviews, and analysing the shared social and cultural norms and values that underpin community life. Using the individual testimonies, the study highlights the tensions felt between collective ideals and personal autonomy. Overall the thesis seeks to assert the continued importance of national identity in migrants' everyday lives, and the flexibility of collective constructs which allow each respondent to experience migration, nation and community individually.

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## **Preface**

I have no Polish, Italian or Greek-Cypriot ancestry. I am not an international migrant, nor even a direct descendent of one. Within my own family history experiences of migration are limited to the arrival of a Philo - my maternal grandmother's maiden name - family in Essex from Greece in the nineteenth century and the eight years my mother and her family spent living in Malta when she was a child as her father worked in the dockyards. Nevertheless, I have been drawn to the study of migration. Living in Leicester, the most interesting aspect of the city for me is the diversity of the population. I love the idea that all around me are myriad histories from around the world, embodied in the memories and experiences of the migrants themselves. It was this interest, coupled with a fascination with Eastern Europe born of a childhood lived during the last years of the Cold War, which made the decision to research the Polish population of Leicester an easy one. It took a while to get there - at first I was going to study racial violence in Bristol and Cardiff - but once the decision had been made I knew I was on the right track. Research into the Polish group led quite naturally to an interest in other European populations in the city, and the Italian and Greek-Cypriot communities were chosen through a combination of the examination of census data and personal ties with people with Italian and Greek-Cypriot family histories - although not related to the groups in Leicester. Four years on and the research is complete - slowed by a year in post as a history lecturer - and I have gained enormously from the project academically and personally. I have made lasting contacts with the Polish community in particular, have been to Krakow and am having Polish language lessons with one of my former interviewees.

# Introduction

## Setting the Theoretical Scene

The overarching aim of this thesis is to uncover and explore a series of everyday experiences of migration, a phenomenon which is both a monumental upheaval and an ordinary activity. Inspired early on by the absorbing memoirs of Eva Hoffman's journey from post-war Poland to Canada, this research focuses on the often invisible aspects of migration and post-migration - feelings, experiences and perceptions - using the Polish, Greek-Cypriot and Italian migrant populations in Leicester as illustrative case-studies.<sup>1</sup> Taking the four distinctive but overlapping themes of migration, national identity, transnational connections and community life, this thesis draws together a mosaic of testimonies orientated around experiences and memories of nation and migration.

There is a vast and ever growing academic literature on every conceivable aspect of migration and migrant settlement, incorporating contributions from a diverse range of disciplines - most notably history, geography, sociology, anthropology, media studies, cultural studies, literature and psychology. Studies of migration itself range from economic approaches and overviews of modern international migration, to more personalised accounts of the experiences of migration which seek to uncover why people move, and how it feels to do so.<sup>2</sup> The majority of migration related research concentrates on immigrants once they have

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<sup>1</sup> E. Hoffman, *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (London: Vintage, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> See for example, S. Castles, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993); D. S. Massey, J. Arango, G. Hugo, A. Kouaouci, A. Pellegrino and J. E. Taylor, "Causes of Migration" in M. Guibernau and J. Rex, eds, *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), pp. 257-269; M. Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile and Return* (London: Macmillan, 1997).

'settled', and extends across themes such as social integration and assimilation, race and racism, segregation and inequality, moving more recently into debates on multiculturalism and post-colonialism.<sup>3</sup> Migration research has been dominated by evolving discourses all sharing an ongoing interest in the relationship between immigrant populations and their 'host' societies. Within the discipline of British immigration history in particular, historical responses to 'foreigners' have become the main focus of debate, ranging from Louise London's arguments about the British government's attitude to Jewish refugees in the 1930s, to Holmes', Panayi's and Cohen's explorations of Britain's intolerance towards immigrants and refugees.<sup>4</sup> For other disciplines, sociology especially, ethnicity, ethnic identity and ethnic minority status have been the most important considerations. Again, emphasis is placed on exclusion, under-representation and housing segregation, but also on the internal mechanisms of ethnic minority communities and the survival of their cultural identities.<sup>5</sup>

A more recent trend in migration studies has been to locate experiences of international migration within the context of an increasingly globalised world. As nation states find their territorial scope reconfigured by an intensification in international information exchanges and travel technology, so migrants benefit from easier links to their original homelands. Thus experiences of migration inevitably overlap with experiences of transnationalism as migrants become more able to live

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<sup>3</sup> See for example, C. Husband, *'Race' in Britain: Continuity and Change* (London: Hutchinson, 1982); R. Baubock, A. Heller and A. R. Zolberg, *The Challenge of Diversity: Integration and Pluralism in Societies of Immigration* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1996); J. Rex, "The Concept of a Multicultural Society" in Guibernau and Rex, *The Ethnicity Reader*, pp. 205-220; M. Dunne and T. Bonazzi, eds, *Citizenship and Rights in Multicultural Societies* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1995); E. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> L. London, *Whitehall and the Jews: British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); C. Holmes, *A Tolerant Country? Immigrants, Refugees and Minorities in Britain* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991); P. Panayi, *Immigration, Ethnicity and Racism in Britain: 1815-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994); P. Panayi, ed., *Racial Violence in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Leicester University Press, 1993); R. Cohen, *Frontiers of Identity: The British and the Others* (London: Longman, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> See for example, T. Modood, S. Beishon and S. Virdee, *Changing Ethnic Identities* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1994); T. Modood, R. Berthoud, J. Lakey, J. Nazroo, P. Smith, S. Virdee and S. Beishon, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1997).

their lives between two national spheres at the same time, able to have both the old home and the new home simultaneously, without having to choose one or the other.<sup>6</sup> This liberation from the linear, progressional understanding of migration as a finite movement from A to B is accompanied conceptually, although not explicitly, by an increased interest in migrant identity and belonging. Notions of assimilation and integration are superseded by ideas of hybridity and multiple identities, acknowledging the dislocation that often accompanies migration.<sup>7</sup> More than anything else, studies of migration are moving towards an appreciation that human movements and the ensuing cultural repercussions cannot be easily generalised. In accepting the diversity of the migration experience, research is therefore orientating more and more around small-scale studies and investigations into everyday experiences of migration, settlement and transnationalism.

These are just a small representation of the burgeoning field of migration studies. Within these different areas there are further specialisms: interesting work on the significance of gender and age in the migration process, for example, is now well established.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, refugee studies has undergone something of a renaissance in recent years, with increased interest in the historical and contemporary experiences of refugee settlement in Britain.<sup>9</sup> On a European scale, the fall of communism and the approaching succession of several east European countries into the European Union has ensured that migration movements from the former

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<sup>6</sup> See particularly, L. Basch, N. Glick Schiller and C. Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (Basel: Gordon and Breach, 1994); L. Pries, ed., *Migration and Transnational Social Spaces* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> See for example, H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); P. Werbner and T. Modood, eds, *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism* (London: Zed Books, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> For example, A. Phizacklea, ed., *One Way Ticket: Migration and Female Labour* (London: Routledge, 1983); K. Gardner, *Age, Narrative and Migration: The Life Course and Life Histories of Bengali Elders in London* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> For example, T. Kushner and K. Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National and Local Perspectives During the Twentieth Century* (London: Frank Cass, 1999); A. Bloch, *The Migration and Settlement of Refugees in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

eastern bloc to the west are attracting attention.<sup>10</sup> Inevitably, studies of asylum and people trafficking are following suite.<sup>11</sup>

Migration studies is a hugely diverse area, and there is always scope for new research. This thesis seeks to both complement existing literature and forge an original contribution to associated debates in several areas. Firstly, this research is situated at the heart of the trend towards micro studies of migration. Throughout the thesis it is the experiences and perceptions of the individual that are key. Furthermore, rather than simply chronicling these experiences for their own sake - which is undeniably a worthy study in itself - it seeks to place small-scale examples within the context of wider theoretical and conceptual debates. Thus, two of the chapters specifically consider personal accounts of migration and transnationalism, marrying the theories with tangible illustrations. Secondly, this research aims to achieve originality primarily in the decision to depart from the standard, dominant theme of ethnicity and ethnic identity, to consider instead the national identities of the chosen migrant populations. In an acknowledgement of the continued hegemonic status of the nation-state, and inspired by the work of Billig and Edensor in particular, the identities and attachments of the migrants are considered fundamentally through the prism of the nation, rather than the ethnic group.<sup>12</sup> As such, a large proportion of the thesis is concerned with the memories of, and the continuation of real and emotional ties with, the homeland and the national culture. Thirdly, throughout the research there has been a conscious movement away from the analysis of the migrants' relationships with their 'host' society. Instead, the aim has been to research and present the three groups as they would be recognised, understood and experienced from within, not how they relate to the wider population. As a result, a quarter of the thesis is devoted to an anthropological-style study of community life among the different groups, investigating the varying networks that work to maintain close social and cultural bonds away from the homeland. Above all, this thesis

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<sup>10</sup> A good example can be found in K. Iglicka, *Poland's Post-War Dynamic of Migration* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> For example, L. Schuster, *The Use and Abuse of Political Asylum in Britain and Germany* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); United Nations, "Perspectives on Trafficking of Migrants", special issue of *International Migration* 38 3 (2000); P. Williams, ed., *Illegal Immigration and Commercial Sex: The New Slave Trade* (London: Frank Cass, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995); T. Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

claims originality through its inter-disciplinary approach to the study of migration, and its openness to ideas, theories and concepts from a wide range of academic disciplines. It would have been easy to build up a chronological narrative of the three case-study groups and their respective experiences in Leicester, but instead every effort has been taken to ensure that the findings of this research can resonate on a broader scale, and are relevant to historical and contemporary debates on both migration and national identity.

## Who, Where and Why?

This thesis, then, rests on research undertaken into the Polish, Greek-Cypriot and Italian populations of Leicester since 1945. Nationally, while not numerically extensive, all three groups have attracted a reasonable level of academic interest. The Polish population in Britain is historically the largest of the three, with numbers of Polish born individuals peaking at 162,339 in 1951, as shown in Table 1. As will be discussed in the first chapter, Polish migration to Britain was fuelled by military and civilian displacement resulting from the Second World War, thus accounting for the dramatic increase in numbers between the 1931 and 1951 census figures. Before this, the Polish born presence in Britain would largely have been Jewish with Polish born individuals being far more likely to belong to the Jewish community in Britain, and not a specifically Polish one.

Census Year	Resident Population
1931	44462
1951	162339
1961	127246
1971	110925
1981	93721
1991	73700

**Table 1.** Polish born individuals resident in Britain, 1931-91.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> 1931 figure from C. Holmes, *John Bull's Island: Immigration and British Society, 1871-1971* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 168; figures for 1951, 1961 and 1971 from Holmes, *John Bull's Island*, p. 212; 1981 figure from E. Muir, "The Polish Speech Community" in S. Alladina and V. Edwards, eds, *Multilingualism in the British Isles: The Older Mother Tongues and Europe* (London: Longman, 1991), p.144; 1991 figure drawn from P. Compton, "Indigenous and Older Minorities" in D.

After 1951, while the total size of the Polish community in Britain rose through natural increase, new migration diminished, restricted only to the arrival of small numbers of dissidents and professionals escaping the Communist regime and the aftermath of its fall in the 1980s and 1990s, a significant movement, but one barely large enough to register in official records.<sup>14</sup> What is particularly striking about the demographics of the Polish community, therefore, is its ageing profile. The lack of renewed migration has ensured that, as Table 2 illustrates, numbers of first generation Polish migrants have fallen to less than half of the 1951 figure. Furthermore, this decline has accelerated in the past two decades, particularly in Scotland. While figures for 2001 are as yet unavailable, the more recent enumeration will be smaller again. There is clearly limited time in which to research the migration histories of first generation Poles in Britain, making research into the Polish population, and similar ageing groups, more urgent: in ten years time there may no longer be many war-time survivors at all.

	% change in population		
	England	Wales	Scotland
1951-1991	-53.3	-66.1	-56.5
1981-1991	-20.6	-18.1	-40.3

**Table 2.** Percentage change in Polish born population, 1951-1991.<sup>15</sup>

With regards to geographical settlement, in comparison with most minority migrant groups the Polish population is dispersed quite widely throughout Britain: in England no more than one third of the first generation were resident in Greater London in 1991, an increase from one fifth in 1951.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, statistics from 1951 also demonstrate that while Polish migrants constituted a significant presence in large regional centres such as Birmingham, Manchester and Bradford, Polish

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Coleman and J. Salt, eds, *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census - Volume 1: Demographic Characteristics of Ethnic Minority Populations* (London: HMSO, 1996), p.255.

<sup>14</sup> See Iglicka, *Poland's Post-War Dynamic of Migration*.

<sup>15</sup> Compton, "Indigenous and Older Minorities", p.256.

<sup>16</sup> For 1991 see Compton, "Indigenous and Older Minorities", p. 265; for 1951 see J. Zubrzycki, *Polish Immigrants in Britain: A Study of Adjustment* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956), pp. 69-70.



settlement also reached into smaller cities, towns and even villages. Zubrzycki notes, for example, that 55% of the Polish population of Warwickshire was in residence in Birmingham, leaving 45% outside the major city, with only 22% of the Gloucestershire population settled in Bristol.<sup>17</sup> Importantly, these patterns of settlement have assured that any findings on the Polish community in one place will be of direct relevance to all the other cities and towns which are home to people of Polish origin.

Research into Britain's Polish population has been significant, though far from exhaustive. Alongside the statistical, background study of Zubrzycki, work has ranged from Sheila Patterson's useful overview of the Polish community, to Keith Sword's numerous studies on both the community, and deportation and exile, in the Second World War, to other research focusing on the reception given to Polish immigrants.<sup>18</sup> Several publications focus on oral testimonies and local studies, including accounts of forced migration and stories of life in Britain.<sup>19</sup> In other work, the role of the Catholic church within the community has been singled out for attention.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the most interesting work, however, has been produced more recently by Bogusia Temple and Michelle Winslow, concentrating on aspects of migration narratives in

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<sup>17</sup> Zubrzycki, *Polish Immigrants in Britain*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>18</sup> Zubrzycki, *Polish Immigrants in Britain*; S. Patterson, "The Poles: An Exile Community in Britain" in J. Watson, ed., *Between Two Cultures* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), pp. 214-241; K. Sword, *Deportation and Exile: Poles in the Soviet Union, 1939-48* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); K. Sword, N. Davies and J. Ciechanowski, *The Formation of the Polish Community in Great Britain, 1939-50: The N. B. Grabowski Polish Migration Project Report* (London: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 1989); K. Sword, *Identity in Flux: The Polish Community in Britain* (Loughborough: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 1996); K. Sword, "Their Prospects Will Not Be Bright: British Responses to the Problem of the Polish Recalcitrants, 1946-49", *Journal of Contemporary History* 21 3 (1986), pp. 367-390; A. Nocon, "A Reluctant Welcome? Poles in Britain in the 1940s", *Oral History* 24 1 (1996), pp. 79-87; Kushner and Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*, chapter 7. See also, P. Stachura, ed., *From Betrayal to Assimilation: The Poles in Britain, 1940-2000* (London: Frank Cass, forthcoming).

<sup>19</sup> For example, S. Kyriacou, *Passport to Exile: The Polish Way to London* (London: Ethnic Communities Oral History Project, 1988); T. Smith and M. Winslow, *Keeping the Faith: The Polish Community in Britain* (Bradford: Bradford Heritage Recording Unit in association with the Migration and Ethnicity Research Centre at the University of Sheffield, 2000); Forum Polek, *Polish Women's Forum* (London: Forum Publication Group, 1988).

<sup>20</sup> J. Gula, *The Roman Catholic Church in the History of the Polish Exiled Community in Great Britain* (London: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 1993); S. Wesoly, *Fifty Years of the Church in the Polish Diaspora, 1945-95: A Lecture in English and Polish* (London: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 1996).

addition to gender and community, and ageing and mental health respectively.<sup>21</sup> Inevitably, research into the Polish community orientates around themes of exile and displacement: while this is still an important area of investigation, there is definitely scope within the existing literature for more in-depth, analytical studies, particularly in the areas of national identity and transnational connections and their relevance to forced migration.

The second largest of the three groups is the Italian population. As Table 3 illustrates, Italian migration to Britain originated in the nineteenth century, gathering momentum in the 1950s and 1960s. Predominantly characterised by economic migration from the southern regions of Italy in particular, post-war figures also include a relatively small number of Italian prisoners of war - Holmes cites the total as 1,000.<sup>22</sup>

Year	Italian born population
1871	5063
1911	20389
1951	38427
1961	87234
1971	108985
1991	90900

**Table 3.** Italian born population in Britain, 1871-1991.<sup>23</sup>

As with the Polish population, Italian settlement has spread throughout England, Scotland and Wales, though with a higher concentration in the South East of England and London. Figures for 1991 show that while 35.9% of England's Italian

<sup>21</sup> B. Temple, "Constructing Polishness: Researching Polish Women's Lives", *Women's Studies International Forum* 17 1 (1994), pp. 47-55; B. Temple, "'Gatherers of Pig-swill and Thinkers': Gender and Community amongst British Poles", *Journal of Gender Studies* 4 1 (1995), pp. 63-72; B. Temple, "Time Travels: Oral History and British-Polish Identities", *Time and Society* 5 1 (1996), pp. 85-96; B. Temple, "Diaspora, Diaspora Space and Polish Women", *Women's Studies International Forum* 22 1 (1999), pp. 17-24; M. Winslow, "Polish Migration to Britain: War, Exile and Mental Health", *Oral History* 27 1 (1999), pp. 57-64.

<sup>22</sup> Holmes, *John Bull's Island* p. 211.

<sup>23</sup> Figures for 1871 and 1911 relate to England and Wales only and are taken from Holmes, *John Bull's Island*, p.30. 1951 through to 1971 inclusive are taken from Holmes, *John Bull's Island*, p.214; for 1991 see Compton, "Indigenous and Older Minorities", p.255.

born population lived in Greater London, 63.1% were in residence in the South East region.<sup>24</sup> The age demographic of the Italian population also follows a similar trend to the Polish community. While not as marked, Table 4 demonstrates that the number of Italian born individuals has fallen significantly since 1981, although in England and Wales the total size of the Italian communities were still higher in 1991 than in 1951. Clearly England has been the main focus for post World War Two Italian migration to Britain.

	% change in population		
	England	Wales	Scotland
1951-1991	+173.2	+32.9	-25.1
1981-1991	-6.0	-16.0	-21.3

**Table 4.** Percentage change in Italian born population, 1951-1991.<sup>25</sup>

There is a diverse literature on Italian migration to Britain, covering both nineteenth and twentieth century movements.<sup>26</sup> Particular attention has been paid to the migration process itself, focusing on chain migration to Britain, and also acknowledging the distinctive phenomenon of Italian return migration and its social consequences.<sup>27</sup> Other studies focus on the treatment of Italians in Britain during both world wars, including the wartime internment of 'aliens' and prisoners of war.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Compton, "Indigenous and Older Minorities", p.265.

<sup>25</sup> Compton, "Indigenous and Older Minorities", p.256.

<sup>26</sup> Useful overviews include T. Colpi, *The Italian Factor: The Italian Community in Great Britain* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1999); T. Colpi, *Italians Forward: A Visual History of the Italian Community in Great Britain* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1991); L. Sponza, *Italian Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Realities and Images* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988); L. Sponza and A. Tosi, eds, *A Century of Italian Emigration to Britain 1880s-1980s*, Supplement to *The Italianist* 13 (1993); C. Hughes, *Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla: The Italian Community in South Wales, 1881-1945* (Brigend: Seren, 1991).

<sup>27</sup> See for example, R. Palmer, "The Italians: Patterns of Migration to London" in Watson, *Between Two Cultures*, pp. 242-268; R. Palmer, "Process of Estrangement and Disengagement in an Italian Emigrant Community", *New Community* VIII 3 (1980), pp. 277-287; R. King, *Il Ritorno in Patria: Return Migration to Italy in Historical Perspective* (Durham: University of Durham Occasional Publications No. 23, 1988).

<sup>28</sup> D. Cesarani and T. Kushner, eds, *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 1993); B. Moore, "Turning Liabilities into Assets: British Government Policy towards German and Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War", *Journal of Contemporary History*

Newer research undertaken by Anne-Marie Fortier in particular stands out as important, focusing on the more qualitative aspects of Italian migration and investigating identity and belonging among the Italian community in Britain.<sup>29</sup> As with the Polish community, more recent research also incorporates a closer appreciation of gendered experiences within the Italian community.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, local studies have been important in research into the Italian population, with the town of Bedford, noted for its large Italian population, being used as a case-study for community dynamics.<sup>31</sup> Once again, there are noticeable gaps in the extensive literature, especially in the areas of migrant national identity and transnationalism.

Year	Cypriot born population	Estimated Greek-Cypriot population <sup>32</sup>
1951	10208	8166
1961	41898	33518
1966	59200	47360
1971	72270	57816
1981 <sup>33</sup>	84327	67461

**Table 5.** Cypriot born population resident in England and Wales, 1951-81.<sup>34</sup>

23 1 (1997), pp. 117-136; L. Sponza, *Divided Loyalties: Italians in Britain During the Second World War* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000).

<sup>29</sup> A. Fortier, "The Politics of 'Italians Abroad': Nation, Diaspora and New Geographies of Identity", *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 7 2 (1998), pp. 197-224; A. Fortier, "Historicity and Communitarity: Narratives about the Origins of the Italian 'Community' in Britain" in J. R. Campbell and A. Rew, eds, *Identity and Affect: Experiences of Identity in a Globalising World* (London: Pluto, 1999), pp. 199-223; A. Fortier, *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity* (Oxford: Berg, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> A. Medaglia, *Patriarchal Structures and Ethnicity in the Italian Community in Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

<sup>31</sup> See for example T. Colpi, "Origins and *Campanilismo* in Bedford's Italian Community" in L. Sponza and A. Tosi, eds, *A Century of Italian Emigration to Britain*, pp. 59-77; R. L. King and P. D. King, "The Spatial Evolution of the Italian Community in Bedford", *East Midland Geographer* 6 7 (1977), pp. 337-345.

<sup>32</sup> The census does not discriminate between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. However, Oakley estimates that the ratio of Greek to Turkish Cypriots in Britain is 4:1, and these figures have been calculated on this basis. He also argues that outside of Greater London the Cypriot born population is predominately Greek-Cypriot. See R. Oakley, *Changing Patterns of Distribution of Cypriot Settlement* (University of Warwick: Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, 1987), pp. 4-5.

<sup>33</sup> The figures for the Cypriot born population in 1981 relate to Britain rather than England and Wales. Extracted from F. Anthias, *Ethnicity, Class, Gender and Migration: Greek-Cypriots in Britain* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992), p.5.

The smallest group studied is Britain's Greek-Cypriot community. Colonial ties facilitated Cypriot economic migration to Britain before the Second World War, but as Table 5 illustrates, most Cypriot immigration occurred later on, with the Cypriot born population peaking at 84,327 in the 1981 census. As Oakley has shown, exact numbers for Greek-Cypriot residents are difficult to ascertain, although it is accepted that the majority of Cypriot born individuals in Britain are Greek rather than Turkish.<sup>35</sup> Unlike the Polish and Italian populations, the Greek-Cypriot community is located predominantly in Greater London: Oakley notes that in 1961 81.2% of the Cypriot population was in residence in London, with the figure falling to 73.5% in 1971.<sup>36</sup> Within London itself, Cypriot settlement is quite closely contained. According to Oakley again, in 1971 the boroughs of Haringey, Islington, Hackney, Enfield, Southwark, Lambeth and Barnet had the highest frequency of Cypriot born inhabitants.<sup>37</sup> There is Greek-Cypriot life outside London, however, and the growth in provincial communities has been a feature of the past three decades, fuelled in part by secondary migration from the London area; the West Midlands, and Birmingham in particular, house the second largest regional concentration of the Greek-Cypriot population outside London.

There are several good overview articles considering the Greek-Cypriot community in Britain, covering a wide range of themes from migration to community experiences.<sup>38</sup> While there are plentiful articles, however, actual monographs are less prevalent, with Floya Anthias' work being the most notable.<sup>39</sup> More than for the

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<sup>34</sup> Figures from Oakley, *Changing Patterns*, p.5.

<sup>35</sup> Oakley, *Changing Patterns*, pp. 4-5; see also M. Storkey, *Identifying the Cypriot Community From the 1991 Census* (London: London Research Centre, 2000).

<sup>36</sup> Oakley, *Changing Patterns*, p.5.

<sup>37</sup> Oakley, *Changing Patterns*, p.10.

<sup>38</sup> See P. Constantinides, "The Greek-Cypriots: Factors in the Maintenance of Ethnic Identity" in J. Watson, ed., *Between Two Cultures*, pp. 269-300; V. George and G. Millerson, "The Cypriot Community in London", *Race* VIII 3 (1967), pp. 277-292; R. Oakley, "The Cypriots in Britain" *Race Today* 2 4 (1970), pp. 99-102; R. Oakley, "Family, Kinship and Patronage: The Cypriot Migration to Britain" in V. S. Khan, ed., *Minority Families in Britain: Support and Stress* (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 13-36; J. Rex and S. Josephides, "Asian and Greek Cypriot Associations and Identity" in J. Rex, D. Joly and C. Wilpert, eds, *Immigrant Associations in Europe* (Aldershot: Gower, 1986), pp. 11-41. See also, S. Kyriacou and T. Papathanasiou, *The Greek-Cypriot Community in London* (London: The Ethnic Communities Oral History Project, 1990).

<sup>39</sup> Anthias, *Ethnicity, Class, Gender and Migration*.

other two groups, gender has been a significant area of research, with issues of masculinity, femininity and cultural values included in most published work on the community and more studies appearing that concentrate on this specifically.<sup>40</sup> Unlike the Polish and Italian populations, the transnational connections of the Greek-Cypriot community have received some attention, although there is still scope for more research in this area.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps the biggest area of neglect within the existing literature is the study of Greek-Cypriot communities outside of London: most Cypriot research is extremely London-centric.

This thesis rests on research undertaken into the Polish, Italian and Greek-Cypriot populations of Leicester, a city which has been transformed by New Commonwealth migration movements, attracted in part by the hosiery and boot and shoe industries.<sup>42</sup> While home to a diverse migrant community, it is the migration from South Asia which has attracted the most attention: Martin and Singh note that, 'in popular imagination Leicester is most commonly associated with its Asian community.'<sup>43</sup> As Table 6 illustrates, the arrival of New Commonwealth migrants altered the ethnic make-up of the city dramatically, superseding the European communities in the city, of which the Polish group was the largest, as the most significant foreign born minorities.<sup>44</sup> Enumerating only those born in New Commonwealth countries, the 1991 census found that over 16% of the city's total population were first generation New Commonwealth migrants. In the national press Leicester has been heralded as the first British city to have a white minority by 2011, and local heritage publications, too, focus on the city's Asian population.<sup>45</sup> The Asian

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<sup>40</sup> See for example F. Anthias, 'Sexual Divisions and Ethnic Adaptation: the case of Greek-Cypriot women', in A. Phizacklea (ed.), *One Way Ticket*, pp. 73-94; C. N. Phellas, *The Construction of Sexual and Cultural Identities: Greek-Cypriot Men in Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

<sup>41</sup> See M. Georgiou, "Beyond the Domestic: Constructing Ethnic Identities and Media Consumption in the Public Ethnic Space - the Case of the Cypriot Community Centre in North London", available from: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/EMTEL/Minorities/Article%20Myria.doc> [Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> February 2002].

<sup>42</sup> See D. Nash and D. Reeder, eds, *Leicester in the Twentieth Century* (Stroud: Sutton, 1993).

<sup>43</sup> J. Martin and G. Singh, *Asian Leicester* (Stroud: Sutton, 2002).

<sup>44</sup> The figure for Irish immigrants is unknown, and could be higher than that for the Polish migrants.

<sup>45</sup> "Side by Side", *The Guardian - G2 Supplement* 1.1.01., p. 6; see for example, Martin and Singh, *Asian Leicester*; C. Hyde, S. Vadnerkar and A. Cutting, *Parampara: Continuing the Tradition - Thirty Years of Indian Dance and Music in Leicester* (Leicester: Leicester City Council Living History Unit, 1996).

community, furthermore, is responsible for extremely strong transnational connections back to India, most visibly centring on links with the Bollywood film industry.<sup>46</sup> With an urban identity so closely aligned to migration and ethnic diversity, it is surprising that there have not been more serious studies of migrants in the city: the most notable monographs are Valerie Marett's research into the Ugandan Asian population, and Lorna Chessum's more recent study of the city's African Caribbean community.<sup>47</sup>

Census Year	European foreign born population <sup>48</sup>		(New) Commonwealth born population	
	Total number	% of city population	Total number	% of city population
1951	3705		1178	
1961	3920		2815	
1971	4275	1.5	23280	8.2
1981	3582	1.3	41459	15.0
1991	3005	1.1	43348	16.3

**Table 6.** European and New Commonwealth born populations in Leicester, 1951-91.<sup>49</sup>

With the Asian community in Leicester undeniably the dominant force in the city's migration profile, the Polish, Greek-Cypriot and Italian populations are very small in

<sup>46</sup> See for example: Indian Cinema Research Project, "Linking India's Creative Industries with the UK's East Midlands Region", available from: [http://www.em-media.org/images/uploads/Indian\\_Film\\_and\\_Television\\_Project.doc](http://www.em-media.org/images/uploads/Indian_Film_and_Television_Project.doc) [Accessed 11<sup>th</sup> August 2003].

<sup>47</sup> V. Marett, *Immigrants Settling in the City* (London: Leicester University Press, 1989); L. Chessum, *From Immigrants to Ethnic Minority: Making Black Community in Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

<sup>48</sup> European foreign born population figures exclude those born in the Republic of Ireland due to incomplete census figures. Cyprus, Gibraltar and Malta are included in the New Commonwealth population.

<sup>49</sup> 1951 figures extracted from General Register Office, *Census 1951: England and Wales County Report - Leicestershire* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1954), table 20; 1961 figures from General Register Office, *Census Report 1961: England and Wales County Report - Leicestershire* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1964), table 10; figures for 1971 from Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Census 1971: England and Wales County Report - Leicestershire, Part I* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1973), table 14; for 1981 from Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Census 1981: County Report - Leicestershire, Part 2* (London: HMSO, 1982), table 51; and for 1991 from Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *1991 Census: County Report - Leicestershire (part 1)* (London: HMSO, 1992), table 51.

comparison. Small, however, does not necessarily equate to 'insignificant': these three groups have been selected for a variety of reasons. Firstly, there is a danger of Leicester, and other similar cities, becoming so closely associated with South Asian migration that the diversity of the urban migrant population is underplayed. While the most numerous, the South Asian groups cannot represent Leicester's migration profile in its entirety: the city has an important history of European migration and is also home to more recently arrived refugee groups. Secondly, the contrasting migration routes behind the Polish, Greek-Cypriot and Italian presence in Leicester ensure that each group has a distinct history and a different set of experiences associated with it, thus allowing for interesting comparisons, particularly concerning economic and forced migration. Thirdly, this is a small-scale study. Any findings from a study of three such groups in an English provincial city would have important ramifications for other cities and towns not so readily recognised as places of migration. As the census figures illustrate, even in the Greek-Cypriot case a significant proportion of these populations are located outside Greater London, settled in towns and cities throughout Britain. If Leicester is connected through migrant networks and individual memories to Poland, Cyprus and Italy, then numerous other places will be similarly tied to other countries. Finally, as already discussed, there is still significant scope to draw new insights into all three groups more generally, especially regarding national identity and transnationalism.

Census Year	Poland		Italy		Cyprus	
	Total number	% of foreign born population	Total number	% of foreign born population	Total number	% of foreign born population
1951	1000	13.5	163	2.2	5	0.07
1961	1509	13.8	455	4.2	90	0.8
1971	1505	4.3	660	1.9	145	0.4
1981	1172	2.2	528	1.0	170	0.3

**Table 7.** Polish, Italian and Cypriot-born individuals resident in Leicester, 1951-81.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> General Register Office, *Census 1951*, table 20; General Register Office, *Census Report 1961*, table 10; Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Census 1971*, table 14; Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Census 1981*, table 51.



As Table 7 shows, local figures for the three first generation populations mirror the national picture. The Polish group is the largest, reaching over 1,500 in 1961 and 1971; both the Polish and Italian groups have experienced a decline in first generation numbers since 1971 - the Italian group partly from return migration; and the Greek-Cypriot community, although the smallest, has the youngest age profile. As already discussed, while the Polish community constituted nearly 14% of the city's foreign born population in 1961, by 1981 this statistic had dropped to just over 2%. In comparison with the other minorities in the city, the Greek-Cypriot community barely registers statistically. Of course, with all census figures, these numbers account only for those born overseas: the actual size of each community, though impossible to calculate, would be significantly higher. The Greek-Cypriot priest, for example, estimated in 2001 that there were approximately 650 to 700 members of the Cypriot community in Leicester.<sup>51</sup>

Census Year	Poland		Italy		Cyprus	
	Total county population	% resident in city of Leicester	Total county population	% resident in city of Leicester	Total county population	% resident in city of Leicester
1951	3214	31.1	368	44.3	21	23.8
1961	2883	52.3	1158	39.3	172	52.3
1971	2750	54.7	1685	39.2	320	45.3
1981	2320	50.5	1509	35.0	579	29.4
1991 <sup>52</sup>					576	28.0

**Table 8.** Polish, Italian and Cypriot-born individuals resident in Leicestershire and Leicester, 1951-91.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Greek-Cypriot priest, Leicester, 29.6.01.

<sup>52</sup> Polish and Italian born individuals are not specifically enumerated in the 1991 census for Leicestershire.

<sup>53</sup> General Register Office, *Census 1951*, table 20; General Register Office, *Census Report 1961*, table 10; Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Census 1971*, table 14; Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Census 1981*, table 51; Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *1991 Census*, table 51.

There are further Polish, Italian and Greek-Cypriot born individuals in Leicestershire who reside outside of the city borough - the figures are, in fact, quite high. As illustrated in Table 8, the Polish group is the most urban orientated, with just over half of the total numbers enumerated in Leicester. Less than one third of the Greek-Cypriot group, in contrast, live in the city. Living outside the city borough, however, does not necessarily exclude individuals from belonging to the urban community. Suburbanisation has been a demographic feature of these groups, just as it has the wider population, and as a result many of those who would consider themselves to be a part of Leicester's community live in places such as Wigston, Blaby, Anstey and Syston. Loughborough, a town to the north of Leicester, has its own Italian and Polish communities. But, once again, this reinforces one of the central themes of the study: that experiences of international migration can be found in towns and villages, as well as in the metropolis.

## Methodology

The research for this study rests predominantly on a series of oral history interviews. Other sources such as census returns, newspaper archives and existing interviews have been used as background material, but the primary focus of the thesis has been biographical research and the collection of individual life experiences and perceptions through in-depth interviews.<sup>54</sup> The merits of using oral history in historical research have been extensively discussed, in particular its usage for uncovering memories which might otherwise be sidelined or forgotten. While official archives recount dominant histories, oral history allows other narratives to be reconstructed: as Paul Thompson notes, 'oral history is a history built around people.'<sup>55</sup> Portelli is especially positive about the opportunities that oral history presents for understanding alternative perceptions:

But the unique and precious element which oral sources force upon the historian and which no other sources possess in equal measure (unless it be

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<sup>54</sup> Newspaper sources have been useful for the Polish group: *Leicester Mercury*, *Illustrated Chronicle*, *Village Voice* and *Kingston Mail*; interview with Mr. Kidacki, 18.10.94. (Highfields Remembered Oral History Project Archive); interview with Mr. Dobski, 9.1.95. (Highfields Remembered Oral History Project Archive); BBC Radio Leicester interview with Mr. Dobski, 1995.

<sup>55</sup> P. Thompson, "Voice of the Past: Oral History" in R. Perks and A. Thomson, eds, *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 28.

literary ones) is the speaker's subjectivity: and therefore, if the research is broad and articulated enough, a cross-section of the subjectivity of a social group or class.<sup>56</sup>

Of course, oral history as a research technique is not unique to history: as Roberts illustrates, qualitative methodologies in the social sciences share common ground and a strong cross-disciplinary interest with oral history.<sup>57</sup> The interview processes of oral history in particular are similar to the interviewing methods used in social science qualitative research.<sup>58</sup> While history and the social sciences may share a methodological background, however, their applications remain quite distinct: according to Roberts, '... within sociology the focus is on the uncovering of the meanings attributed to personal and social relationships and situation, whereas in oral history the concern can be said to be the individual's interpretation of past experiences ...'<sup>59</sup> It is perhaps this situation which has led to Grele's critical stance on the development of oral history, depicting the field as a 'movement without aim' which has failed to become a 'tool for a serious analysis of culture'.<sup>60</sup> There is no reason, however, why oral history cannot be used for investigating both individual experiences of the past and the meanings of personal and social relationships. The interviews undertaken in this research, therefore, have a dual focus: to reveal past experiences and individuals' interpretations of their own histories, but also to consider the importance of these histories for the meanings later attributed to social and territorial relationships.

As Table 9 illustrates, a total of 55 individuals were interviewed, 29 from the Polish community, and 15 and 11 from the Greek-Cypriot and Italian groups respectively.<sup>61</sup> The study, therefore, concentrates on Polish experiences to a greater

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<sup>56</sup> A. Portelli, "The Peculiarities of Oral History" *History Workshop* 12 (1981), p. 99.

<sup>57</sup> B. Roberts, *Biographical Research* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002), p. 15.

<sup>58</sup> See for example, K. F. Punch, *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches* (London: Sage, 1998), pp. 174-178.

<sup>59</sup> Roberts, *Biographical Research*, p. 22.

<sup>60</sup> R. J. Grele, "Movement Without Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems in Oral History" in Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, p. 42.

<sup>61</sup> In all, 53 interviews were undertaken, but with three incidences of second interviews and several double interviews, the total number of people interviewed is 55. 55 is a realistic number for a three year study, though the number of interviews carried out in different studies varies greatly. Mary Chamberlain, for example, interviewed 85 individuals over a four year period, but did so with the

extent than those of the other two groups, reflecting both the larger size of the community and the complexity of Polish migration. With the patterns of migration themselves being an important focus in the study, this sample allowed for an almost 50:50 split between representatives of forced and voluntary migration experiences.

	Polish		Greek-Cypriot		Italian		Total individuals by gender
	1 <sup>st</sup> Gen	2 <sup>nd</sup> Gen	1 <sup>st</sup> Gen	2 <sup>nd</sup> Gen	1 <sup>st</sup> Gen	2 <sup>nd</sup> Gen	
Male	10	0	5	4	3	0	22
Female	13	6	2	4	6	2	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>		<b>15</b>		<b>11</b>		<b>55</b>

**Table 9.** Gender and generational characteristics of interviewees.

As with all oral history studies, actually finding people to interview was the most time consuming stage. Amassing contacts worked through 'snowballing', starting at the different churches and clubs, and working outwards through the friends and families of initial respondents. The inevitable difficulties associated with arranging interviews, however, unfortunately prevented a completely representative sample from being taken: as Table 9 highlights, a gender imbalance is evident, especially among second generation respondents. It was also quite difficult to arrange interviews with first generation Greek-Cypriot women, as Table 9 shows. Access to first generation Greek-Cypriot women, in contrast with the Polish and Italian groups, could in most cases be secured only through a husband, brother or son, and often the request to interview somebody's wife was met with the comment that her story would be the same as her husband's. A further problem arising with the Greek-Cypriot interviews was the working patterns of the potential respondents - many individuals were too busy to be interviewed for more than an hour. Interviews, clearly, could only be held with willing participants, although efforts were taken to ensure a diversity of interviewees and to avoid allowing the principal community

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support of a transcriber - see M. Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile and Return*, pp. xi, 7-8. In his research into the Ukrainian community in West Yorkshire Robert Perks was part of a team which interviewed 'over fifty' respondents - R. Perks, "Ukraine's Forbidden History: Memory and Nationalism", *Oral History* 21 1 (1993), pp. 43-53. As part of her post-doctoral research, Louise Ryan has interviewed 10 Irish migrants - L. Ryan, " 'I'm Going to England': Women's Narratives of Leaving Ireland in the 1930s", *Oral History* 30 1 (2002) pp. 42-53.

figures to 'self-select' all of the respondents. For all three groups, for example, interviews were held with the main community leaders, but also with individuals who were less heavily involved in community activities. Five of the Polish respondents, furthermore, had migrated to Britain in the last twenty years, adding another dimension to the collected testimonies.

Roberts identifies three types of oral history interview: topical interviews, biographical oral history based on individual experiences, and autobiographical interviews, covering the course of an individual's life.<sup>62</sup> The interviews undertaken with the 55 respondents were a combination of the first two approaches, joining a strong biographical element with more focused questioning. Each respondent was asked similar, though not prescriptive, questions about their migration experiences, their relationship with the homeland, and life in Leicester, but only after they had been invited to talk about their lives, and in particular how and why they had migrated to Britain. In the social sciences this approach would equate to the semi-standardised interview.<sup>63</sup> Grele, however, describes these types of interviews more accurately as 'conversational narratives', recognising the reciprocal nature of exchanges made in an interview situation.<sup>64</sup> In fact, all of the interviews undertaken were relaxed and conversational in style, using open questions and allowing the interviewees to set their own pace, as advised by Morissey.<sup>65</sup> As Anderson and Jack illustrate, proficient interviewing is more about listening than talking.<sup>66</sup>

The interviews themselves for the most part were highly successful, a result of both the informal atmosphere created and the time spent in preparation beforehand. Any fears that the respondents may have had were allayed by being told what kind of questions the interview would begin with, and the promise of anonymity. In many cases the most important part of the interview was the preliminary unrecorded chat, allowing time for any queries to be raised, and a mutual trust to be built. Typically,

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<sup>62</sup> Roberts, *Biographical Research*, p. 95.

<sup>63</sup> B. L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods For the Social Sciences* 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Allyn and Bacon, 2001), pp. 70-1.

<sup>64</sup> Grele, "Movement Without Aim", p. 44.

<sup>65</sup> C. T. Morissey, "On Oral History Interviewing" in Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, pp. 109-110.

<sup>66</sup> K. Anderson and D. C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses" in Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, pp. 157-171.

interviews lasted between one and two hours with the longest stretching to four hours, and the shortest 30 minutes. The location of each interview varied, most often held in the homes of the respondents, but sometimes carried out in one of the community buildings. Those interviews undertaken in the interviewees' homes were undoubtedly of a better quality, not only ensuring a greater freedom of expression, but also situating the respondents in their own environment, surrounded by the material symbols of their life stories. In fact, as Tonkin suggests, 'a good way for an interviewer to stimulate recall is to bring out old photographs, or even objects which were current in the interviewee's youth'.<sup>67</sup> Certainly the interviews were aided by the presence of private, family and individual mementoes, with references to material artefacts such as books, magazines, photographs, and television often incorporated into the conversations. After each interview, the recording was transcribed in full, a lengthy but invaluable process.

Despite being a success overall, however, several difficulties did emerge during the interviewing process, including the issue of language and translation which will be considered shortly. While some interviewees were keen to recount their life stories, making it quite awkward to ask any questions, not all respondents were comfortable speaking at length about their lives and needed continual attempts to reassure them that their experiences were relevant and worth sharing. Although the questioning itself was kept deliberately unstructured, furthermore, there were times when I found myself unintentionally asking leading questions. The transcriptions of the interviews, for example, illustrate that asking the respondent how 'important' something is to them, such as religion or the family, influences the response which inevitably repeats the word 'important'. For the Polish survivors of forced migration, the interview process was complicated further by issues of memory and trauma. On several occasions the tape recorder had to be turned off to allow the respondent to regain composure and after one interview in particular I left wondering whether it was ethical to ask people about such painful memories. As David Jones has noted, interviewing about distressing topics can have a negative emotional impact on both

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<sup>67</sup> E. Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 94.

the respondent and researcher, although there are also possible therapeutic benefits of asking people to recount their traumatic pasts if they are willing to do so.<sup>68</sup>

Oral history interviewing is a controversial historical methodology. Firstly, oral testimonies are often accused of being an unreliable source material for reconstructing the past. Although key facts, dates and circumstances can clearly be verified and checked if likely or possible, such an accusation shows a deep seated misunderstanding of the real value of oral history. As Roberts notes, the counter-argument to such accusations is that, 'oral history is not merely interested in "facts" but in the respondent's perception of what is "true"'.<sup>69</sup> In the words of Portelli, 'the credibility of oral sources is a *different* credibility ... the importance of oral testimony may often lie not in its adherence to facts but rather in its divergence from them, where imagination, symbolism, desire break in'.<sup>70</sup> Secondly, the fallibility of human memory is often pointed to as evidence of the weakness of oral history, but as Lummis illustrates, memory is not a straightforward function.<sup>71</sup> Oral testimonies are significant not because they reveal a series of accurate memories, but because they illustrate how these memories have been presented, what has been included, what has been omitted and where the emphases have been placed. The dominance of the migration process in Polish accounts, for example, is testament to the influence that these experiences have had on individual lives.

Using oral history to research migrant groups brings its own set of difficulties and criticisms, notably issues of language and translation. In some cases, interviewing people in a language other than their native tongue can raise problems, as Temple argues, particularly when there are key concepts which cannot be easily translated.<sup>72</sup> In my interviews, which were all conducted in English with the use of a translator in three, there were certainly occasions when the use of English made the communication of experiences more difficult, and there is a strong possibility that some interviewees found their expression inhibited by not speaking in their first

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<sup>68</sup> D. W. Jones, "Distressing Histories and Unhappy Interviewing", *Oral History* 26 2 (1998) pp. 49-56.

<sup>69</sup> Roberts, *Biographical Research*, p. 106.

<sup>70</sup> Portelli, "The Peculiarities of Oral History", p. 100.

<sup>71</sup> T. Lummis, "Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence" in Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, pp. 273-283.

<sup>72</sup> B. Temple, "Watch Your Tongue: Issues in Translation and Cross-Cultural Research", *Sociology* 31 3 (1997), pp. 607-618.

language. The use of a prominent figure in the community as a translator for two Polish interviews introduced further issues regarding the accuracy of the interpretation and the impact the translator herself had on the freedom of the interviewees to be frank and open. Not being able to speak the first language of the respondents is therefore undoubtedly a disadvantage in some cases. However, sometimes crossing language barriers in interviewing brings its own rewards: the true significance of culturally embedded concepts can only be fully realised when there *are* attempts to translate their meanings. In several interviews, prior research ensured that questions could be asked about exact words and phrases, allowing the respondents to interpret them at length. Had the interviews been conducted in the first language of the respondents, the unique meanings of these phrases would have been lost. Moreover, even the complete lack of a common language does not necessarily prevent other means of communication, as discovered by Molly Andrews in her research in Germany.<sup>73</sup> English was the common language between the interviewees and myself, and while for the majority of the respondents English is their second language, it is one spoken fluently. It should not be overlooked that in many cases English has been the language of the working environment and public life for the past 60 years.

Researching migrant communities brings with it a further issue of 'insiders and outsiders'. While there are undoubtedly some disadvantages in being an outsider, with the subtleties of language being the most apparent, the benefits can outweigh the drawbacks. As an outsider, for instance, it is easier to ask obvious questions, and to encourage the respondents to illustrate their testimonies more fully.<sup>74</sup> For example, it would be difficult for a Polish person to ask another Polish person why they had migrated to Britain, for an Italian to ask another Italian about the differences between north and south, or for a Greek-Cypriot interviewer to ask a Greek-Cypriot respondent to explain the concepts of honour and shame, as this type of knowledge would already be assumed. As Susan Burton found in her research with Japanese

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<sup>73</sup> M. Andrews, "A Monglot Abroad: Working Through Problems of Translation", *Oral History* 23 2 (1995), pp. 47-50.

<sup>74</sup> Morissey, "On Oral History Interviewing", p. 111.



women, it is also often easier to open up to an outsider.<sup>75</sup> An impartial interviewer puts less pressure on the respondent to reply or behave in a certain way. For some, as already mentioned, the promise of anonymity was a determining factor in taking part in the interview at all: had the interview been arranged with a community member instead, it would not have taken place. To respect this, the respondents have not been named, and neither have their residential locations been disclosed, as such information would be enough to identify people in a small community. For others, however, speaking to an outsider is viewed as an opportunity to commit the experiences of the individual and a community to a wider public arena. As Grele comments, 'when we interview someone, he not only speaks to himself and the interviewer, but he also speaks through the interviewer to the larger community and its history as he views it.'<sup>76</sup> Even under the promise of anonymity, there is a strong desire to have important experiences shared and recorded.

It is important to acknowledge my own position in the interviewing process, as it is likely that despite being an outsider with no personal links with the three groups, I was not the 'impartial interviewer' that I had hoped to be. It has been argued that academic research immediately distorts qualitative interviewing, introducing issues of power into the relationship struck up with the respondents.<sup>77</sup> As an academic researcher it could be reasoned that I was representing an elite social institution and bringing new issues of social hierarchy into the interviewing arena. However, as a young female student researcher, in most cases I was viewed more as a student than an academic representative. The strong commitment to education amongst most of the respondents created the situation where they felt that *they* were helping *me* with my studies. Being so young - the interviews were carried out between the ages of 22 and 25 - I was also able to relate to the different respondents in different ways. Some told me that I reminded them of their granddaughters, while I was able to strike up good rapport with the second generation women in particular. By sharing information about my own life and family I was able to interview about sensitive

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<sup>75</sup> S. K. Burton, "Issues in Cross-Cultural Interviewing: Japanese Women in England", *Oral History* 31 1 (2003), pp. 38-46.

<sup>76</sup> Grele, "Movement Without Aim", p. 44.

<sup>77</sup> Positionality and reflexivity in interviewing are discussed in G. Rose, "Situating Knowledges: Positionality, Reflexivities and Other Tactics", *Progress in Human Geography* 21 3 (1997), pp. 305-320.

topics in a friendly, unthreatening way. While these aspects of my own position proved to have positive implications, it is clear that I was not a neutral entity during the interviewing process.

## **Summary**

Overall, then, this thesis seeks to bring together the close reading of current debates about migration and national identity with an analysis of the testimonies of the 55 respondents in order to investigate everyday experiences of nation and migration, and add to existing knowledge and understanding of the Polish, Greek-Cypriot and Italian populations in Britain, and the migration history of Leicester. Stressing the importance of researching smaller, lower profile migrant groups in Britain, this study seeks to illustrate four distinct but overlapping themes: how migrants represent and interpret their own migration histories; how national consciousness is maintained away from the homeland; the extent to which the relationship with the national territory changes with migration; and the ways in which community ties are established and sustained in the new locality.

## Chapter One

# Putting the Migration Back into Immigration

### Introduction

The sensible place to start with any research into migrant groups has to be with the migration process itself. Too often migrants are seen only in terms of their immigrant status, with their experiences as emigrants sidelined in favour of the consideration of settlement and integration into the host society. For the Italians, Greek-Cypriots and Poles studied in Leicester the migrant journey long predates arrival in Britain, and the nature of the migration experience carries a legacy that reaches forward to influence subsequent generations. This chapter aims to redress this imbalance by focusing on the significance of migration as a process in itself, and emphasising the contrasting ramifications of 'economic' and forced migration, providing a context where these two very different types of experience can be compared.

At the heart of most debates surrounding migration lies a preoccupation with structure and agency and the relationship between the two. Is international migration a result of macro, structural forces, such as industrialisation, globalisation, even war, or can it be best explained by decisions made at a micro level, with migrants acting as autonomous agents, rationally choosing to move for themselves, for whatever reason?<sup>1</sup> Theories of migration have ranged considerably between these two vantage points, moving on significantly from the push and pull model advocated by Ravenstein in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Broad discussions of international migration

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<sup>1</sup> An excellent overview of these varying positions on migration can be found in D. Massey, J. Arango, G. Hugo, A. Kouaouci, A. Pellegrino and J. E. Taylor, "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal", *Population and Development Review* 19 3 (1993), pp. 431-466.

<sup>2</sup> E. G. Ravenstein, "On the Laws of Migration", *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 48 2 (1885), pp. 167-235. Very useful edited collections of key debates can also be found in the International Library of Studies on Migration series, specifically R. Cohen, ed., *Theories of Migration* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996), R. Cohen, ed., *The Sociology of Migration* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996), and V. Robinson, ed., *Geography and Migration* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996).

since 1945 in particular have tended to play down the role of individual agency, preferring to place migration in the context of changing market forces, emphasising a new era of mass migration where supplies of migrant labour gravitate towards the industrialised 'west' in response to increased economic demands. Stephen Castles, for example, while acknowledging that not all movements of people can be seen strictly in terms of economic migration, asserts that, 'all of these types of population movement are symptomatic of modernisation and globalisation.'<sup>3</sup> Forced migration in particular is often used as an example of the occasionally overwhelming role of structure in population movement, highlighting the limitations of individual agency in migration.<sup>4</sup> Others have gone even further, suggesting that structural forces orchestrate all migrant choices, with forced migration being only an extreme example of the constraints already placed on individual autonomy.<sup>5</sup>

It is becoming increasingly clear, however, that new approaches to migration need to reconcile these tensions between structure and agency, macro and micro, and concentrate more on their mutual interdependence. To focus too much on one is to neglect part of the story; as Massey et al argue, 'we are sceptical both of atomistic theories that deny the importance of structural constraints on individual decisions, and of structural theories that deny agency to individuals and families.'<sup>6</sup> Even with forced migration, where outside pressures seem to be entirely responsible for ensuing population displacement, there has to be room to consider individual agency, room to explore the limited decisions that migrants can and do still make.

One way of combining an appreciation of individual agency within wider structural forces is acknowledging the role of family and personal networks both in influencing migrant behaviour, and in turn changing the structural environment around them. As Monica Boyd has argued, this perspective reasserts the role of individual and family agency without disregarding the significance of structural forces as facilitators and

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<sup>3</sup> S. Castles, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> For example, see Rainer Baubock's brief consideration of forced migration in his overview chapter, "The Crossing and Blurring of Boundaries in International Migration: Challenges for Social and Political Theory" in R. Baubock and J. Russell, eds, *Blurred Boundaries: Migration, Ethnicity, Citizenship* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> See A. H. Richmond, "Sociological Theories of International Migration: The Case of Refugees", *Current Sociology* 36 2 (1988), pp. 7-25, reprinted in Cohen, *The Sociology of Migration*, pp. 331-349.

<sup>6</sup> Massey et al., "Theories of International Migration", p. 455.

constrainers.<sup>7</sup> Evidently this type of approach is particularly useful for research into the type of chain migration often associated with Italian and Greek Cypriot population movements. Perhaps less obviously, this emphasis can also be used to offer an insight into the importance of support networks set up by migrants in the face of forced migration. In both cases, migration and the continuation of human survival within the migration process are profoundly affected by social networks.

Clearly the nature of the research undertaken into migration reflects the theoretical stance taken. In this case, where in-depth oral history interviews constitute the major resource, individual and family agency is naturally highlighted. Here the perceptions of the migrants themselves are the focal point, and the main aim of the research is to understand, from the point of view of the migrant, why they moved, what the different influences affecting their actions were, and how they feel about that decision. As A. M. Findlay and F. L. N. Li maintain, the best starting point for this type of research has to be with the recognition of 'human beings as pro-active, socially embedded, intentional agents who influence and are influenced by the social worlds in which they are located'.<sup>8</sup> With her study of Bengali elders in East London, for example, Katy Gardner has managed to present her interviewees as active agents making decisions within the parameters of the global labour market, but as active agents nevertheless.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Gardner's research exemplifies the move away from debates over structure and agency, towards a greater concentration on the lived experiences of migration and how it is subsequently remembered, an approach often taken in historical research and oral history.<sup>10</sup>

Accepting migrants as agents automatically opens up research into the complexity of decision making that surrounds migration. By asking people about their lives and their reasons for migrating it is easier to recognise that there are often

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<sup>7</sup> See M. Boyd, "Family and Personal Networks in International Migration: Recent Developments and New Agendas", *International Migration Review* XXIII 3 (1989), pp. 638-670, reprinted in Cohen, *The Sociology of Migration*, pp. 296-328.

<sup>8</sup> A. M. Findlay and F. L. N. Li, "An Auto-Biographical Approach to Understanding Migration: The Case of Hong Kong Emigrants", *Area* 29 1 (1997), p. 34.

<sup>9</sup> See K. Gardner, "Narrating Location: Space, Age and Gender Among Bengali Elders in East London", *Oral History* 27 1 (1999), p67.

<sup>10</sup> This point is highlighted in C. B. Brettell and J. F. Hollifield, "Introduction: Migration Theory - Talking Across Disciplines" in C. B. Brettell and J. F. Hollifield eds, *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 3-4.

multiple factors behind the decision to move, and that the standard perception of 'economic' migrants searching for a better life can often hide other influences and reasons. As Paul Thompson argues, 'though economic pressures often influence migration decisions, personal testimony reveals the complex weave of factors and influences which contribute to migration and the processes of information exchange and negotiation within families and social networks.'<sup>11</sup> Keith Halfacree and Paul Boyle suggest therefore, that 'rather than look for one or two relatively self-contained reasons for migration we must expect to find several, some relatively fully-formed, others much more indefinite.'<sup>12</sup>

Interviewing migrants also allows the migration process to be viewed as a journey through time as well as through space, highlighting that although migration is often seen as a definitive break from the past in the life story of the migrant, it is not necessarily accurate to assume that moving is a 'one off' event which separates migrant lives into 'before' and 'after'. Halfacree and Boyle in particular argue that a better understanding of migration can be reached if a broader temporal perspective is taken, allowing the whole biography of the migrant to be considered.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, remembering the migration process also becomes important in itself, with subsequent narratives of migration potentially forming collective memories able to either strengthen or fragment group cohesion long into later generations.<sup>14</sup>

More recent research emphasises the importance of the temporal dimensions of migration, stressing that alongside the physical action of moving countries there is a metaphorical and emotional journey to be travelled. Migration, as argued by Nikos Papastergiadis, 'is an ongoing process and needs to be seen as an open voyage', not a movement with clearly defined starting and finishing points: the psychological repercussions of migration, for example, always out last the physical disruption.<sup>15</sup> Benmayor and Skotnes support this idea, criticising existing literature for neglecting

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<sup>11</sup> P. Thompson, "Moving Stories: Oral History and Migration Studies", *Oral History* 27 1 (1999), pp. 24-37.

<sup>12</sup> K. H. Halfacree and P. J. Boyle, "The Challenge Facing Migration Research: The Case for a Biographical Approach", *Progress in Human Geography* 17 3 (1993), p. 339.

<sup>13</sup> Halfacree and Boyle, "The Challenge Facing Migration Research", p. 337.

<sup>14</sup> See particularly M. Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile and Return* (London: Macmillan, 1997), p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> N. Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 4.

such an obvious, but nevertheless important point: 'the dominant tendency, both in popular thinking and in much of the literature, is to define migration as a single movement in space and a single movement in time.'<sup>16</sup> The ramifications of the 'voyage' of migration for migrant identity have consequently become the focal point for much qualitative research into migration.<sup>17</sup> Migrant emotions and the impact of migration on perceptions of 'home' and belonging are now entrenched in migration discussions, from Salman Rushdie's personal experience of alienation from India and Trinh T. Minh-ha's autobiographical account of being in 'the in-between place', to Geraldine Pratt's and Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson's assertions that 'home', like migrants, is a mobile, transportable concept.<sup>18</sup> In fact, so much attention has been given to the emotional consequences of migration that the ancient and ordinary process of moving away from the country of birth is in danger of being unnecessarily dramatised and romanticised. Migration is not new, nor is it a deviant activity: enough people have moved throughout time to ensure that mobility is a well established facet of human life. Inevitably migration can be an unsettling process, but there will always be migrants who find the whole experience resolutely unremarkable and undramatic.

One thing migration undoubtedly does impact upon is national identity and subsequent relationships with the homeland. It is easy to have a strong national consciousness while living within the boundaries of the national territory. Most theories of nationalism recognise that an awareness of the national homeland is an integral part of national identity, whether it is the perception of land as a primordial link with past ancestors, or simply the significance of living in a nationally regulated

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<sup>16</sup> R. Benmayor and A. Skotnes, "Some Reflections on Migration and Identity" in R. Benmayor and A. Skotnes, eds, *Migration and Identity: International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories* Volume III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Again see Benmayor and Skotnes, *Migration and Identity*.

<sup>18</sup> S. Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta, 1991), pp. 9-10; T. T. Minh-ha, "Other Than Myself/My Other Self" in G. Robertson, M. Mash, L. Tickner, J. Bird, B. Curtis and T. Putnam, eds, *Traveller's Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 9-26; G. Pratt, "Gleaning the Home", Paper presented to the Geographies of Home Conference, University College London, 8<sup>th</sup> November 2000; N. Rapport and A. Dawson, "Home and Movement: A Polemic", in N. Rapport and A. Dawson eds, *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), p. 32.

and controlled space, continually influenced by national institutions.<sup>19</sup> Once outside this space, however, national consciousness has to be sustained in new and different ways, both through memories and stories, and the establishment of transnational links and networks.<sup>20</sup> Whatever happens after migration, national identity is one 'identity' that can never remain unaffected.<sup>21</sup> It is in the context of these approaches to migration that the experiences of Italian, Greek-Cypriot and Polish migrants in Leicester have been considered.

## The Decision to Migrate

Italian and Greek-Cypriot migration to Britain have predominantly been understood in the context of 'economic' migration. While economic motivations were unquestionably important in driving these migratory flows, all decisions to migrate involve a range of influences and emotions that too much emphasis on the 'primary' reason can overlook, as highlighted by Halfacree and Boyle.<sup>22</sup> In fact, Mary Chamberlain summarises this well in her study of Caribbean migration:

The motive for migration may have had as much to do with maintenance of the family and its livelihoods, with the enhancement of status and experience, within a culture which prized migration *per se* and historically perceived it as a statement of independence, as to do with individual economic self-advancement. Migrants, in other words, had their own agenda which ran parallel with, but did not necessarily conform to, the demands of international capital and the pressures of domestic policy.<sup>23</sup>

In comparison, Polish migration to Britain appears much more clear cut. Here, the decision to migrate was not taken by the Poles themselves, but was inflicted by the

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<sup>19</sup> A good overview of theories of nationalism can be found in U. Ozkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000). For a more in-depth discussion of territory and nationalism see G. H. Herb and D. Kaplan, eds, *Nested Identities: Nationalism, Territory, and Scale* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999).

<sup>20</sup> A good introduction to the ideas surrounding transnationalism and transnational networks can be found in L. Basch, N. Glick Schiller and C. Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Post-Colonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (Basel: Gordon and Breach, 1994).

<sup>21</sup> It is recognised that 'identity' is a problematic concept. For an introductory discussion on identity generally see A. J. Kershner, "Introduction: A Question of Identity" in A. J. Kershner ed., *A Question of Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 1-21.

<sup>22</sup> Halfacree and Boyle, "The Challenge Facing Migration Research", p. 337.

<sup>23</sup> Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile and Return*, p. 27.



outside forces of war and invasion. Even within forced migration, however, there are signs that some decisions can still be made at an individual level, and that some autonomy can be retained. This section therefore aims to explore the assumptions behind these three different strands of migration and illustrate that the 'typical' migration scenarios associated with these groups hide a complex range of experiences that defy generalisation.

## The Italian Experience

It is widely accepted that Italian emigration is, and always has been predominantly orientated towards the search for a better life. Anne-Marie Fortier, for example, depicts the Italians now in Britain as having 'fled' from the severe post-war economic conditions, while in their consideration of the Italian population in Bedford, King and King stress the hopelessness of the situation in the south in the aftermath of the war, focusing particularly on the regions of Campania and Sicily that witnessed huge scales of post-war emigration.<sup>24</sup> Both discussions almost seem to suggest that in the case of post-war Italian emigration, the individual choice of the migrant was subservient to the prevailing structural economic situation, and that people were literally forced to move by poverty and difficult conditions. Poor living standards and economic opportunities in the south were certainly discussed in the interviews as a compelling reason to move away for those who made their living from the land, as illustrated by the account of one woman from a southern village:

We didn't have a lot, that's for sure. We had two rooms, one you slept in, one you did all your cooking and everything else there. That was it, that was your house really. It was probably only a couple of years before we came to England before we had electricity, otherwise we didn't even have that ... When you work on the land, let's say you get rain when you are not supposed to have rain, the crops are wasted, you can't sell nothing, so your money is limited ... People from the south, they know what it's like to do hard work, it's not like now when you've got tractors, there people used to have to do things by hand, dig the land, chop the grain, all by hand. And then perhaps the land they had was miles away so they had to cart all their fruits and things back home, with donkeys or whatever. They know what it was like to have the hard

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<sup>24</sup> A. Fortier, *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), p. 29; R. L. King and P. D. King, "The Spatial Evolution of the Italian Community in Bedford", *East Midland Geographer* 6 7 (1977), pp. 337-345. See also T. Colpi, "Origins and *Campanilismo* in Bedford's Italian Community" in L. Sponza and A. Tosi, eds, *A Century of Italian Emigration to Britain 1880s-1980s*, Supplement to *The Italianist* 13 (1993), pp. 59-77.

work and get no money from the end of it. At the end of it they probably had flour, potatoes, all that to see you through the winter but you didn't see the cash ... When someone has got a family you have got to see how you are going to feed them, that's why people move. In our villages, if we were all left in our villages we would never be able to live.<sup>25</sup>

Although poor economic conditions in the post war period are closely associated with the south, those in the north were also affected. 'Economic' migration was not an exclusive movement from Italy's southern regions, as a woman who emigrated from Rimini in 1954 showed: 'You've got to consider Italy after the war was a great devastation. If only we had been patient, you see 1954 was really, the wages wasn't enough really, you live week by week, waiting for the next wages.'<sup>26</sup>

Post-war problems in Italy, therefore, ensured that large scale emigration was inevitable. For those living in the smaller villages movement of any type was considered necessary for economic survival, whether it was to the larger cities, or away from Italy completely. One woman for example, when asked if she ever thought about what her life would have been like if she had not have migrated, replied that, 'I don't suppose I would have stayed in my village anyway because I don't suppose we had much to do there anyway. I don't know, I would probably have ended up in another big city anyway, in Italy.'<sup>27</sup> Emigration therefore was perceived almost as an extension of internal migration, and no greater risk than moving to an unknown region within Italy itself. As another respondent recalled: 'I thought I had no future at all in Italy. I'm Sicilian. My life went through misfortune, that is my family ended up with nothing and emigrated up to the north of Italy, but I felt it wasn't for me.'<sup>28</sup> In fact, movement outside Italy seemed preferable in many cases. Living in the large cities brought its own expense and inconvenience. As another man explained: 'In a big city like Milan, if you live on the outskirts you have to travel, and for an ordinary worker it is not possible to live in the city because the flats, the

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with first generation Italian woman, Leicester, 5.7.01.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with first generation Italian woman, Leicester, 7.2.01

<sup>27</sup> First generation Italian woman, 5.7.01.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with first generation Italian man, Leicester, 2.7.01.

apartments are too expensive. So most of the people live outside but then spend a lot of time going backward and forward.'<sup>29</sup>

While Britain was not necessarily an obvious choice of destination, as Terri Colpi points out, the bulk recruitment schemes adopted by the British government after the war were successful in attracting Italian workers.<sup>30</sup> Several of the people interviewed in Leicester came to Britain as part of these programmes, seeing them as an opportunity to escape poverty. As one woman explained, 'there had been an agreement I think with the Italian government because they needed people to come and work, in England I think they needed people in hospitals, cleaning, that sort of job.'<sup>31</sup> As another woman remembered, 'at that time we used to be very poor, we've got no work and we were in a small village, and I came here by contract work, and do four years domestic work ... I went to work in a hospital, you can go to a hospital and it is still domestic work.'<sup>32</sup> Leicester in particular offered farming employment opportunities, as one man recalled:

Another reason for people coming from [my village] to Leicester are farming. A few of them they came with a work permit to work, there was a company not far from here, Blaby, the Blaby Rose Gardens, and they were looking for labour in the 50s and 60s, they used to recruit directly from Italy, and they actually recruited a few farmers from [my village].<sup>33</sup>

While these movements were clearly part of the structural changes in the global labour market, for all the Italians interviewed the decision to move was still perceived to have been of their own making. Even if 'forced' to move by economic circumstances, Italian migrants had extensive choices open to them about when, how and where to move to, and who to go with. Additionally, the existence of government recruitment schemes did not compel them to migrate, but merely facilitated movement if the intention was already there.

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with first generation Italian man, Leicester, 26.1.02.

<sup>30</sup> See T. Colpi, *The Italian Factor: The Italian Community in Great Britain* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1999), p. 134.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with first generation Italian woman, Leicester, 29.6.01.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with first generation Italian woman, Leicester, 1.8.01.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with first generation Italian man, Leicester, 10.7.01.

Economic migration, however, can only partly explain the motivations behind the emigration of the people interviewed. While in most cases the opportunity for economic betterment was clearly an important factor, other influences had a significant impact on the final decision. Rather than work, one woman, for example, moved to Britain to marry her fiancé:

I came here to get married to an Englishman I met after the war, during the war he was in the airforce. So the war finished but they were still in Italy, the Allies ... My mother sent me the money for the journey. Perhaps I was one of the lucky ones, because I didn't come here to work. Perhaps those who had to work they found it difficult, to work in hospitals, on farms, men on farms. There was no need for me to do that.<sup>34</sup>

The same woman also had her own theory about the migration plans of the Italian hairdressers in the city:

There was a group of Italian hairdressers at the time, in the 60s, anyway it was compulsory to do the army service in Italy. To escape they all came to England with the view that as soon as we reached, I think it was thirty years old, when we are thirty years old we can go back to Italy without having to do the service. I think it was twelve months they had to do it and they didn't want to do it. But most of them remained here, because they met girls and girls were mad about these Italians, it was the time of the Latin Lover. So most of them stayed.<sup>35</sup>

Other people recounted a desire to see more of the world, and even to learn English. While one man commented that, 'always I had a sort of sympathy towards, a liking, I like England, I don't know why', another man spoke about the excitement he felt at moving, claiming that 'it was an adventure for me when I came, because I wanted to find out more about how people live here, and it was something new, something different. When you are young you want to experience a new way of life.'<sup>36</sup> Movement away from Italy brought more than exclusively economic attractions. British society in particular offered greater opportunities to socialise, as the same man continued:

It was cheaper. It was much cheaper in eating, in entertainment. It was a much freer society because you could go out and meet girls and boys in the

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<sup>34</sup> First generation Italian woman, 29.6.01.

<sup>35</sup> First generation Italian woman, 29.6.01.

<sup>36</sup> First generation Italian man, 2.7.01.; first generation Italian man, 26.1.02.

same numbers, while in Italy you didn't see any girls going out in the night, to a disco or anything like that, especially on their own, obviously.<sup>37</sup>

For those migrating from the south, movement outside Italy seemed more inviting than internal migration to the north. The perception that the northerners were not welcoming towards southerners was widespread, and reinforced by family experiences:

I think that the northerners don't like the people from the south. People from the south to Turin, Milan, Rome, they go there and work because they want to buy, even if it is only a flat it is their own, and they want to buy it, they save their money. People from there don't have to because that is their own town and they resent it. My auntie now lives near Florence, she says the people that are born there they don't like us coming from the south.<sup>38</sup>

Pasquale Verdicchio particularly stresses this point, claiming that for many of the southerners emigration was a release from the ongoing national depiction of people from the south as less civilised and racially inferior to people from the north. Only by moving away from Italy completely could the southerners escape this 'othering' of the south, and feel free to follow regional dialects and customs, rather than national cultural practices: 'Emigration provided for many Italians the first opportunity to express their culture outside the confines of a nationally sanctioned official language and tradition.'<sup>39</sup> In addition, these pronounced regional differences within Italy lessened the impact of moving to another country. As one man explained: 'I left the college at sixteen so I was in the position to find myself a decent job, but when it came to it, the choice was either in-migrate or emigrate. For example if I chose to go from my village to Milan, to me Milan was like a foreign land.'<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps more importantly than anything else, the interviews illustrated that underlying all the decisions to move was an embedded culture that both accepted the necessity of emigration, and admired those committed to improving their circumstances. As one man pointed out, migration away from Italy was hardly historically unprecedented:

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<sup>37</sup> First generation Italian man, 26.1.02.

<sup>38</sup> First generation Italian woman, 5.7.01.

<sup>39</sup> P. Verdicchio, *Bound by Distance: Rethinking Nationalism through the Italian Diaspora* (London: Associated University Presses, 1997), p. 51.

<sup>40</sup> First generation Italian man, 10.7.01

The Italians migrated for necessity. At the turn of the century before the First World War a lot of Italians, from the south mainly, migrated to America. I think they were really poor, they were really desperate, desperate to emigrate. And a lot of people emigrated from the north east of Italy, from the Veneto region, because they were desperate.<sup>41</sup>

Being successful in migration was a guaranteed way of securing the respect of family and friends and raising personal status, and seemed to have become to be regarded as a particularly 'Italian' trait. As one woman commented,

Italians always want to better themselves which is good, in every way, business, profession, everything ... And they used to go from Leicester, from England, they used to go [back to Italy] every summer in their English cars thinking oh we have done well ... If you are poor you don't, even if they are relatives, you don't want them do you, because what can you offer? But when they started going and really making a position, social position and financial for themselves they wanted their relatives to see.<sup>42</sup>

Another respondent voiced similar views:

The Italians they have always been survivors. They need to be challenged to achieve success. They work very hard to achieve it and I am very proud of the Italian community in Leicester. The majority of the Italians, they are people who came over here with nothing, some of them could not even write or read, but I think they have been a good asset to this country. I think you would find it very difficult to find an Italian on the dole, just because of the pride, they are very proud.<sup>43</sup>

Migration was therefore seen as the ultimate exercise in improving social mobility, particularly when it brought with it wealth and security that would be very visible to those who had remained in Italy. Not only that, the very act of moving away was something familiar, something other people had done, and was therefore considered to be a rational, ordinary, even anticipated undertaking. As Donna Gabaccia argues, emigration is an established part of Italian heritage, and no worse an experience than staying in deprived areas would have been:

In the years between 1870 and 1940, three generations of Italy's poor saw their lives transformed by repeated experiences of migration, life abroad, and return. Migration was a normal dimension of everyday life for the poor wherever they lived; it was no more of a crisis, nor was it accompanied by

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<sup>41</sup> First generation Italian man, 26.1.02

<sup>42</sup> First generation Italian woman, 29.6.01.

<sup>43</sup> First generation Italian man, 2.7.01.

more intense discomforts, than any of the many hardships that poor peasants and labourers faced.<sup>44</sup>

Of course, not all Italians in Britain and Leicester fit into the category of economic migrants; according to Colin Holmes 1,000 Italian POWs held in Britain during the war remained in Britain, working in the agricultural sector.<sup>45</sup> While no POWs were found in Leicester to be interviewed, one man confirmed that there had been several Italian POWs in Leicester, and that their migration to Britain had occurred in very different circumstances:

A lot of people in Leicester came for working reasons, and a lot of people stayed after the war because a lot of them were prisoners of war, and they stopped here. A lot of them must be dead by now. They stayed here and they worked in farms, again most of them from the south, because there was nothing to go back to really in Italy. Italy was destroyed, the economy was destroyed. It was better for them to stay here. So it was not emigration, it was a forced emigration, they were forced to come here and they stopped here. At least they knew what they were facing. If they went back to Italy they didn't know what they were going to face.<sup>46</sup>

## The Greek-Cypriot Experience

As with Italian post-war migration to Britain, Greek-Cypriot population movement is generally perceived as economic migration. Floya Anthias, for example states that, 'Greek-Cypriot men and women were "migrant labour" like other New Commonwealth migrants', adding that 'all Commonwealth immigration is characterised by being economically motivated (the Cypriots are no exception) and was built up predominantly in areas where unskilled labour supply was shortest.'<sup>47</sup> The economic motivation behind migration to Britain was apparent in the accounts of the Leicester interviewees. When asked why he had moved one man replied, 'we

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<sup>44</sup> D. R. Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (London: UCL Press, 2000), p. 81.

<sup>45</sup> C. Holmes, *John Bull's Island: Immigration and British Society, 1871-1971* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 211. See also B. Moore, "Turning Liabilities into Assets: British Government Policy towards German and Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War", *Journal of Contemporary History* 23 1 (1997), pp. 117-136; L. Sponza, *Divided Loyalties: Italians in Britain During the Second World War* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 183-293.

<sup>46</sup> First generation Italian man, 26.1.02

<sup>47</sup> F. Anthias, *Ethnicity, Class, Gender and Migration: Greek-Cypriots in Britain* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992), p. 2, 5.

came for a better life, because in those days things were different in Cyprus. We didn't have much jobs, we were poor, and we came for a better life.'<sup>48</sup> Another man responded with a very similar answer: 'I came to England in October 1953. The reason I came to England is because the circumstances at the time back home, they were not very good, no prospects at all.'<sup>49</sup> The Commonwealth connection with Britain made it an obvious choice, as Anthias confirms:

Cypriots who migrated tended to choose England or Australia with England being preferred during the 1950s. The choice of England was linked to a variety of factors including familiarity with the colonial power, the economic situation in Britain and the establishment of an early settlement of Cypriots in the 1930s.<sup>50</sup>

While not everybody interviewed alluded to the significance of the colonial links in encouraging migration to Britain, the attraction of British jobs was a recurrent theme. When asked why his parents had migrated, for example, one second generation man responded, 'The promised land. I suppose every person came here for the same thing. Golden streets the usual story ... Poverty. Being part of the Commonwealth there were plenty of jobs. There wasn't much jobs out there, and the jobs there were hard.'<sup>51</sup> Another respondent commented on the convenience of migration to England that colonial ties offered: 'Most Greek-Cypriots came to England because of the 50s when they were under the English and they didn't need any visas or anything to travel, they just came.'<sup>52</sup>

Like Italian migration, however, economic reasons can again only partly explain Greek-Cypriot migration to Britain. As Anthias suggested, Britain's attractions went further than simply offering better jobs. Migration to Britain had been taking place throughout the 1930s, although on a smaller scale, and this, coupled with the inevitable cultural and linguistic legacy of colonial links helped would be post-war emigrants consider Britain as a natural choice. As the local priest commented, 'I knew some English when I came here, because Cyprus was a British colony, and in

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 9.3.01.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 19.3.01.

<sup>50</sup> Anthias, *Ethnicity, Class, Gender and Migration*, p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 3.7.01.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 28.6.01.



elementary school we used to learn English.<sup>53</sup> As with Italian migration, for those who came to Britain the prospect of internal migration to the cities, a potentially disruptive process economically, culturally and psychologically, proved less attractive than emigration. In some cases, Britain was considered to be a more secure destination than the rapidly changing larger towns of Cyprus.<sup>54</sup>

Once again, like Italian migration, emigration from Cyprus fitted into a wider cultural context of expectations of male behaviour and improvement in social mobility. George and Millerson, for example, assert that,

It was not the impoverished and apathetic section of the population with no drive to cut away from their dormant environment, but the disgruntled, frustrated and enterprising who could not see their ambitions being fulfilled within the socio-economic framework of their community that formed the ranks of the post-war immigration to the United Kingdom.<sup>55</sup>

Young men on the threshold of adulthood had always been encouraged to travel in order to display their honour, courage and freedom, and migration can be seen as an extension of this.<sup>56</sup> As one woman illustrated in her description of her brother, these values associating mobility with manliness have proved to be enduring: 'I've got my oldest brother in London, he knows what he is doing, he's been to university, he's travelled well, Europe, lived in Athens, lived in Cyprus, back in England moved to London. He's got a really good job, doing really well.'<sup>57</sup> Working hard for the good of the family guarantees respect, and several interviewees were keen to highlight that 'the Greek-Cypriots are a proud nation, a proud people, hardworking people.'<sup>58</sup> Moving to improve, and prove, the economic welfare of the family was therefore a powerful social and cultural statement.

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Greek-Cypriot priest. Leicester, 29.6.01.

<sup>54</sup> The impact of urbanisation in Cyprus is mentioned in V. George and G. Millerson, "The Cypriot Community in London", *Race* VIII 3 (1967), pp. 277-292.

<sup>55</sup> George and Millerson, "The Cypriot Community in London", p. 278.

<sup>56</sup> See R. Oakley, "Family, Kinship and Patronage: The Cypriot Migration to Britain" in V. Saifullah Khan, ed., *Minority Families in Britain: Support and Stress* (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 13-36; see also P. Panayi, "One Last Chance: Masculinity, Ethnicity and the Greek-Cypriot Community of London" in P. Kirkham and J. Thumini, eds, *You Tarzan - Masculinity, Movies and Men* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993), pp. 146-152.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 8.7.01.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 28.6.01.

In addition, Greek-Cypriot emigration was heavily affected by political upheaval in Cyprus; as Vic George and Geoffrey Millerson argue, 'the political unrest in Cyprus, with the inescapable violence, curfews, economic stagnation and psychological frustration, added its own share in contributing to the number of immigrants.'<sup>59</sup> Tensions between EOKA, the armed group advocating *enosis*, (union with Greece), the Turkish separatists, and British colonial rule were in evidence long before the Turkish invasion of northern Cyprus in 1974, increasing in intensity as early as 1955. Despite independence from Britain and a new constitution in 1960, the violence continued with profound effects for the civilian population. Vangelis Calatychos highlights how the number of 'mixed' villages in Cyprus, where Turks and Greeks lived side by side, decreased dramatically before the invasion as a direct result of these tensions. While in 1891 there had been 346 mixed villages, in 1931 this had dropped to 252, 1960 to 116, and by 1964 had reduced to just 48.<sup>60</sup> Although only a small number of those interviewed cited the political disruption as a reason for moving, it undoubtedly encouraged emigration. As one second generation woman commented, in her view the reasons for coming to Britain were not entirely for work opportunities:

No it wasn't just for work, it was more uncertainty. There was something brewing for a while and people wanted to get away from it, so people left before it happened to be even more sure, and others left when it was happening. At the end of the day you don't just leave a country to go and work do you? There is always a reason behind it. Obviously you want a better life but there has got to be something pushing you. That's just not a reason, to work.<sup>61</sup>

Furthermore, the invasion of 1974 itself cemented the decision to stay in Britain, in addition to encouraging and in some cases even forcing others to emigrate. While Anthias cites that fewer than 3,000 refugees remained in Britain out of the 12,000 generated by the 1974 invasion, the impact of 1974 was felt keenly by the Greek-Cypriot population both in Cyprus and in Britain, including Leicester.<sup>62</sup> One

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<sup>59</sup> George and Millerson, "The Cypriot Community", p. 279.

<sup>60</sup> V. Calatychos, "Interdisciplinary Perspectives: Difference at the Heart of Cypriot Identity and Its Study" in V. Calatychos, ed., *Cyprus and Its People: Nation, Identity and Experience in an Unimaginable Community, 1955-1997* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), pp.5-7.

<sup>61</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 8.7.01.

<sup>62</sup> Anthias, *Ethnicity, Class, Gender and Migration*, p. 6.

respondent, for example, was on holiday in Britain at the time of the invasion, and never went back: 'My mother and father were here. I was brought up in Cyprus by my grandparents. I have been in England since 1974. My parents have always been in England, and we came for a working holiday in 1974 and then the invasion happened so we stayed here in England.'<sup>63</sup> Many hopes of eventual return were shattered by the invasion, as the Leicester parish priest illustrated:

In England, if it wasn't for the trouble in 1974, I would say about 90% of the Cypriots would have gone back if it wasn't for that. I remember in the 60s, 68, 69, everybody was getting ready to go back because they were selling their properties here, and they were building houses there, or buying sites there. Unfortunately a lot of them, after the trouble happened, they lost their money, they had been working here for a few years, they lost it in a split second.<sup>64</sup>

While there is no way of substantiating this 90% claim, it is undeniable that the impact of 1974 has had profound practical and psychological repercussions for the Greek-Cypriots in Britain and Leicester, curbing return migration and making settlement in England a more permanent prospect. At least in Britain there was little prospect of war. As another man argued: 'I find it a securer, safer place to live. It has an excellent educational system, very good national health care. You feel safe here, there is no wars, there is no earthquakes.'<sup>65</sup>

## **Networks, Family, Gender and Migration**

While these individual accounts illustrate the role of agency in international migration, it is important that they are not taken out of the wider context of network influence in migration decision making. Migration is rarely undertaken in isolation, and none of those interviewed emigrated without the involvement of family and friends at different stages in the process. Even those who cited economic reasons for migrating, or spoke of wanting an adventure, disclosed that their movements had been aided by family or friends. As Monica Boyd has argued, decisions made at the

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<sup>63</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 28.6.01.

<sup>64</sup> Greek-Cypriot priest, 29.6.01.

<sup>65</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 28.6.01.

micro level are inextricably linked to the networks surrounding migrants.<sup>66</sup> Winters et al in particular develop these ideas in their research into Mexican migration to America, claiming that the existence of family and wider 'community' networks are a crucial component in both establishing and assisting migration.<sup>67</sup> Douglas T. Gurak and Fe Caces also point to the varying intensity of networks, arguing that the 'weak' ties found through acquaintances and the wider 'community' play just as significant a role in migration as the 'strong' - often kinship - relationships.<sup>68</sup> Networks can take many forms, can overlap and can clearly change over time, but whether they are informal and family orientated, supported outside kinship ties by co-villagers, friendship and acquaintance connections, or whether they are institutionalised through government policies, networks are responsible for the passing of information and risk reduction strategies that migratory flows rely on.

In the case of Greek-Cypriot migration, until 1959 population flows from Cyprus were dependent on the formal requirement of a willing patron already in Britain, the 'affidavit' system. This patron would pay for flights to Britain, guarantee employment and help with accommodation arrangements, and could offer such aid to more than one migrant. In the same way that migration itself was highly esteemed, the patron who facilitated this movement was widely respected, making such a role an attractive option for established migrants already in Britain. The reliance this system generated on family and personal ties to enable migration, however, ensured that only those with such available networks would be able to move. In fact, as Robin Oakley comments, 'it effectively limited the opportunity of migration to those who already had a close kinsman or co-villager in Britain, who was in a position to provide the necessary guarantees.'<sup>69</sup> Even after the affidavit system was abolished, similar patterns were perpetuated, with family and friends in Britain acting as informal patrons for new arrivals. The prevalence of these networks were very clear in the testimonies of the Greek-Cypriot interviewees in Leicester, with almost all the

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<sup>66</sup> Boyd, "Family and Personal Networks in International Migration", p. 645.

<sup>67</sup> P. Winters, A. de Janvry and E. Sadoulet, "Family and Community Networks in Mexico-US Migration", *Journal of Human Resources* 36 1 (2001), pp. 159-184.

<sup>68</sup> D. T. Gurak and F. Caces, "Migration Networks and the Shaping of Migration Systems" in M. M. Kritz, L. L. Lim and H. Zlotnik, eds, *International Migration Systems: A Global Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p161.

<sup>69</sup> Oakley, "Family, Kinship and Patronage", p. 32.

first generation migrants mentioning the role of close family in determining their move. As one man commented, 'I had an uncle in London who came to Cyprus and said I want to take one of my nephews with me, so he took me to England'. Another mentioned that 'my sister was here, so I decided to join her and her husband', while another man claimed:

I married my wife, she had brothers and her mother was here, so we decided to sell the business, so we came to England where my mother-in-law and brother-in-laws were. My brother-in-law had a cafe there, a restaurant cafe. We stayed with him. It was accommodation at the time.<sup>70</sup>

One second generation woman also confirmed that her parents' migration had been connected to the presence of well established extended family in England: 'She [my mother] had sisters that were here but her parents were in Cyprus. But she had a lot of cousins that have moved over at the same time when she moved and my father's family again he had a lot of cousins and aunts and uncles moved over as well.'<sup>71</sup>

It was these types of networks that established a Greek-Cypriot presence in Leicester particularly. When asked why people came to Leicester, the answer was either the prospect of setting up a business in the city area, often as a movement of secondary migration after a period of time living in London, or more usually because a relative was already there. Finding the starting points of the different chains in Leicester was not possible through the interviews undertaken, but the evidence supporting the existence of networks leading to Leicester was decisive, as the following testimonies illustrate: 'Leicester, I have relatives here, my brother was coming here, that's why I came to Leicester'; 'I was three years in Bedford working as a hairdresser, and then my brother-in-law, they got a cafe in Leicester, on London Road near the station, and I joined them there as a waiter.'<sup>72</sup>

Similar networks can be seen in the pattern of Italian migration to Leicester. Although government recruitment schemes can account for the presence of Italian workers in and around the city, something Donna Gabaccia sees as fundamentally changing the nature of Italian migration by reducing the traditional importance of

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<sup>70</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 2.7.01.; first generation Greek-Cypriot man, 19.3.01; interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 13.6.00.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 11.7.01.

<sup>72</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot man, 9.3.01; first generation Greek-Cypriot man, 19.3.01.

kinship and village ties, the personal testimonies collected still indicate the strength of informal links in securing migration flows.<sup>73</sup> One first generation woman, for example, spoke of the role her family played in encouraging her move:

First of all we got relations, years and years ago I remember we had a granddad, and his brother and family, another family when we came here, relations. And just after the war, five years later, we like to emigrate, to see something different. Our uncle he came to Italy to meet us after the war, and then we asked if we could come. And he said yes, and we came, he had an ice-cream business, and we worked there for a little while.<sup>74</sup>

Another respondent cited the role of friends in assuring his emigration:

I came in 1965, and I came to visit some friends from a region called Tripoli, and they were friends of my tailor in Milan. One day I said to this friend, I would like to visit England, and he said I have some relatives there. He got in touch with them and arranged for me to meet them.<sup>75</sup>

The series of networks leading migrants to Leicester from Italy varied considerably from the main centres of Italian settlement in England such as Bedford and Peterborough. While King and King have found that most Italians in Bedford originated from Campania and Sicily, the geographic heritage of the Leicester Italians is far broader, lessening the likelihood of almost entire villages eventually being transplanted through chain migration resting on kinship and village ties.<sup>76</sup> Only in Evington, an area within the city, is there any evidence of close village and family orientated chain migration, concentrating people from the same villages together. As one interviewee explained:

In Evington for example, they all come from a certain part of Italy, more inland, and because they were close in Italy, southern Italy and inland towards the mountains, and so there were little villages where they all knew each other, and if one went and said 'oh this is good here', more went, and they started coming from those villages. Everyone else comes from more or less all over Italy.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas*, p. 158.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with two first generation Italian women, Leicester, 2.8.01.

<sup>75</sup> First generation Italian man, 26.1.02.

<sup>76</sup> King and King, "The Spatial Evolution of the Italian Community in Bedford", p.338

<sup>77</sup> First generation Italian woman, 29.6.01

Another respondent, from Rimini, confirmed that outside this circle the Leicester Italians have diverse backgrounds:

We've got people from Sicily, not many though, very few, a few from Sardinia, but quite a few, then as you come up you get people from Puglia, Lazio from around Roma, and then as you come up people from Calabria, Tuscany, not so many from Tuscany, then you get people from my area, and then again from Lambarti. Here I can say for sure that we have got representatives from every part of Italy.<sup>78</sup>

Rather than one or two large family and village centred networks determining a large scale emigration programme, several smaller flows have been established alongside government policies, linking Leicester with villages and towns throughout Italy.

Whatever form these networks take, however, they all play a crucial role in supporting migration flows, communicating information about the prospect of moving, and most importantly reducing the potential economic and psychological risks associated with emigration.<sup>79</sup> As several respondents testified, the promise of a job at the other end transformed the option of migrating into a more rational, safer choice. As the Italian man who had relied on the family of a friend commented:

Because this friend had relatives here in Leicester, so it was much easier for me to come, because if I didn't know anybody here I wouldn't have come, because I had a job in Milan, it wasn't a very good job but I wouldn't really risk my job to come here and not know anybody. Knowing somebody, I went to live with them in their house for a few days until I got accommodation.<sup>80</sup>

Having family to move to inevitably lessened the cultural and emotional disruption of relocating to a different country: for example, one Italian woman recalled that, 'when we came we lived with these relations, and they were talking Italian, that was better. We didn't feel a stranger because we had our family there, relations.'<sup>81</sup> In the cases where there is an absence of family members on arrival, the practical and psychological implications of migration become much harder to bear, as one Greek-Cypriot woman found:

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<sup>78</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

<sup>79</sup> See D. Massey, "The Social and Economic Origins of Immigration" in S. H. Preston, ed., *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Volume 510 (London: Sage, 1990), p. 69.

<sup>80</sup> First generation Italian man, 26.1.02.

<sup>81</sup> First generation Italian woman, 2.8.01.

I got my husband and two brothers from his side, no family from my side ... I worked very hard because I've got five kids as well, and nobody to help me, from my family. I found it very difficult because I don't speak good English ... Very difficult, if you emigrate and no one you know is coming here, it's very difficult.<sup>82</sup>

When close kinship networks are successful in underpinning migration flows there is an added assurance that the family unit will survive to offer an important continuity with the past in what would otherwise be an unsettling process. As illustrated, wider family structures, and in many cases immediate family households, are kept together throughout the migration process.<sup>83</sup> Greek-Cypriot culture, for example, which is particularly family orientated, has managed to withstand migratory transition through the placement of the family unit at the centre of the migration process; as Oakley argues, 'the act of migration is integrally bound up with the characteristic structure and developmental cycle of the Cypriot family.'<sup>84</sup> This survival of the family and household structure is closely aligned to the transmission and sustenance of cultural norms and national identities after migration. Everyday practices can be continued, and familiar relationships, routines and traditions are more likely to surround migrants if family and close friends have moved as well, thus reducing again the potentially disturbing aspect of migration and rendering it a more 'normal' act.

Closely related to the family is the significance of gender in migration patterns; how does gender affect the decision making process, and does the strength of kinship orientated networks work to perpetuate traditional gender roles? It is tempting to assume that given the 'macho' qualities already seen to be closely associated with male Italian and Greek-Cypriot movements, migration is a male dominated practice, where men have more sway in making decisions than women. As Katie Willis and Brenda Yeoh hint, too much emphasis on networks and the household as a single unit can hide inequalities in 'intra-household power relations', particularly where decision making is concerned.<sup>85</sup> There is plenty of evidence from

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 9.3.01.

<sup>83</sup> Again see Boyd, "Family and Personal Networks in International Migration", p. 643.

<sup>84</sup> Oakley, "Family, Kinship and Patronage", pp. 17-18.

<sup>85</sup> K. Willis and B. Yeoh, "Introduction" in K. Willis and B. Yeoh, eds, *Gender and Migration* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2000), p. xiii.



the testimonies collected that the 'traditional' practice of the male deciding to migrate, moving alone and then sending for the wife and family when established, underpinned a substantial number of interviewees' experiences. As one second generation Greek-Cypriot woman commented:

My father came over when he was very young, and that's due to my grandfather coming over here and finding work. Well not finding work, they were OK in Cyprus but he found it a lot better over here for himself so he sent for my father's mum and my father, that's how he got to be over here.<sup>86</sup>

A second generation Italian woman spoke of a similar experience: 'My dad came over first and came to suss things out. They were already married and mum was living in Italy with the other four children, there's five of us in total ... So my dad came over, sussed things out and then sent for my mum, my brother and my three sisters.'<sup>87</sup> In this type of situation there is almost an accompanying assumption that the husband and father made the decision to migrate. For example, another Greek-Cypriot woman maintained that, 'my mother had come over because my father wanted to come over. It was because my father came, she came', and the same second-generation Italian woman asserted that, 'in them days you followed your husband wherever, and you just did what you were told basically. I don't imagine there was much discussion about it.'<sup>88</sup>

Migration is not always a male dominated arena, however, and although in some cases the decision to move would have been made by the man, it seems unlikely that this would have occurred without some degree of input from and compromise with the female partner. Additionally, although Oakley asserts that Greek-Cypriot girls were much less likely to migrate independently, and that migration would have been frowned upon for unmarried females without close family supervision, Anthias argues that Greek-Cypriot women did not necessarily migrate as dependants, but also moved for an array of reasons, ranging from economic motivations to improved marriage prospects and family commitments: 'Female migration from Cyprus needs to be seen as a form of labour migration which was also linked to the material

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<sup>86</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 11.7.01.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with second generation Italian woman, Leicester, 5.7.01., a.m.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 3.7.01.; second generation Italian woman, Leicester, 5.7.01., a.m.

relations of the dowry, of marriage, and the family.<sup>89</sup> For the Italian women who moved in response to government recruitment schemes, migration both enabled independent decision making and brought the opportunity for economic self-sufficiency. As Fortier has pointed out, more women than men were involved in these schemes in the 1950s, thus changing the nature of Italian emigration considerably, and shattering any myth that women do not play an active role in international migration in their own right.<sup>90</sup> In fact, it could be argued that traditional kinship networks, while promoting the opportunity to move, can actually work to inhibit female migratory autonomy by perpetuating customary male authority, while state recruitment policies offering new opportunities to move outside the family structure liberalise women migrants from family expectations.<sup>91</sup>

A further dimension to networks and decision making should be the consideration of a group that has almost no opportunity to exercise any choice in migration, those who migrate as children but are hidden as individuals by their existence within autonomous household units. While research into migration is careful to pay attention to any significant gender implications, there is more scope for the consideration of the impact of voluntary migration on children.<sup>92</sup> The testimonies collected from Italians and Greek-Cypriots in Leicester included accounts from parents who had left their children behind, and also recollections of those who had moved at a young age. For example, one Italian woman spoke of the unhappiness she had felt in leaving her son behind while she and her husband made the necessary preparations for him to join them: 'The only emotional thing was that as soon as we arrived we wouldn't risk, because we didn't know if we would like it and would stay, I left my son, who was born in 1951 with my sister. That was hard. After

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<sup>89</sup> Oakley, "Family, Kinship and Patronage", p. 21; Anthias, *Ethnicity, Class, Gender and Migration*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>90</sup> A. Fortier, "Historicity and Communitarity: Narratives about the Origins of the Italian 'Community' in Britain" in J. R. Campbell and A. Rew, eds, *Identity and Affect: Experiences of Identity in a Globalising World* (London: Pluto, 1999), p. 209.

<sup>91</sup> The impact of migration on gender roles in the new environment will be considered in later chapters.

<sup>92</sup> See L. Ackers, "From 'Best Interests' to Participatory Rights: Children's Involvement in Family Migration Decisions", *Child and Family Law Quarterly* 12 2 (2000), pp. 167-184; M. F. Orellana, B. Thorne, A. Chee and W.S.E. Lam, "Transnational Childhoods: The Participation of Children in Processes of Family Migration", *Social Problems* 48 4 (2001), pp. 572-591.

a while we settled we brought him with us. That was the only sad thing.<sup>93</sup> Another perspective was offered by an Italian woman who had come to Britain at the age of thirteen:

My father made that choice to bring us all to Britain, for a better life really. When I was in the village I was probably thinking it was exciting, but when I got here I didn't like it. I couldn't understand anything, that's probably the main reason. But when you first hear about it it's exciting isn't it, you are going somewhere new. But when I got here, if I'm honest, I didn't like it ... It took me a little while because I couldn't speak English anyway so I had to learn all that, so I had to be in a classroom with all other foreign children. Then I had to take two years to get up to the group of children of my own age ... My mum didn't like it. My other sisters [found it] not as hard because they were smaller I suppose. My brother was only five anyway so for him I don't think it was as hard. I don't think they found it as hard as I did. I just didn't like it.<sup>94</sup>

Therefore there are two caveats to keep in mind: family relationships can actually be disrupted in economic and kinship orientated migration, and 'agent friendly' approaches to the analysis of migration are in danger of marginalising the experiences of child migrants, as they concentrate instead on gender and household relationships.

## The Polish Experience

Polish migration to Britain occurred in very different circumstances from Italian and Greek-Cypriot migration. While it is safe to assume that the Italian and Greek-Cypriot movements were generally voluntary migrations, is very clear in the interviews undertaken with the Polish population in Leicester that this migration process was forced and unwelcome, with the strongly held perception that there was no opportunity for any autonomous decision making either with regard to the initial movement away from Poland, or the subsequent failure to return. Here there is no need to ask who decided to migrate and why, because the answer is the same for all the Poles who arrived in Britain at the end of the Second World War.<sup>95</sup> German and Soviet aggression orchestrated Polish military and civilian emigration, and nobody

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<sup>93</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.; unfortunately the son was not interviewed.

<sup>94</sup> First generation Italian woman, 5.7.01.

<sup>95</sup> Entirely different narratives of migration were recorded from the five individuals who had emigrated from Poland in the 1980s and 1990s, but these are not the focus of the study.

came to Britain and stayed through any sense of free choice. In addition, while Italian and Greek-Cypriot migration was able to utilise family ties and personal networks, Polish forced migration worked to undermine and destroy family connections, and instead led to the establishment of new networks resting on a completely different code of shared experience and a strong national identity.

The outbreak of war in 1939 and the ensuing invasions and occupations of Poland by German and Soviet troops directly resulted in widespread population movements that would never have taken place otherwise. As an example, many of the Poles interviewed who had been living on the eastern side of Poland as war broke out had only been settled there since the early 1920s, having been part of an earlier migratory move encouraging loyal Polish veterans of the First World War to inhabit previously Russian territory. While making these Poles obvious targets if faced with Soviet aggression, such recent arrival ruled out any consideration of further migration, with the Polish military settlers and their families still working hard to consolidate livelihoods with their new land. As one woman recounted:

My father came from the centre of Poland and after the First World War, my father because he was in Pilsudski's army, got some land in eastern Poland. It is a very poor district, the land is very poor. They went there in 1923 and they worked very hard to build themselves up. My mother made friends with the Belarussians, as it is now Belarus.<sup>96</sup>

Even if there had been the intention to migrate it is unlikely that Britain would have been chosen as the eventual destination. As one man explained, knowledge of and interest in English and Britain were limited: 'Generally there were few of us who mastered the English, or had some knowledge of the English before. English was not very popular in Poland before the war. French, German, Russian perhaps ... But before the war, English was far away.'<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, those who willingly joined the Polish army did so with the hope and expectation that at the end of the war they would at least be able to return to their homes and continue with their lives as before, not considering the possibility that movement from Poland with the armed forces would lead to permanent settlement abroad.

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<sup>96</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 16.2.01.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Mr. Dobski, 9.1.95. (Highfields Remembered Oral History Project Archive).

The shock and disruption brought about by German and Russian invasion therefore cannot be over-emphasised. For all the Poles interviewed the war is perceived to be the pivotal changing point in their lives, or the lives of their families, and memories of migration are inextricably caught up with images of the early years of foreign occupation. Among the 29 Polish respondents the most common experience, although not representative of everybody, was of forced deportation to Siberia by Russian troops in 1940. In fact, it is estimated that three quarters of all Poles who came to Britain after the Second World War endured Soviet deportation, a statistic that certainly seems to be reflected in Leicester.<sup>98</sup> One man from the eastern side of Poland remembered the outbreak of war:

After the war [my father] was awarded some land. He lived on this farm just north of Lwow. We were there when war broke out in 1939. Poland was a country until Germany attacked her from west and Stalin from the east ... The Germans came first, then the Russians came in September 1939. They put a curfew, nobody could move anywhere, they closed all the schools and I stopped going to school, I was eleven. And then about four months later the deportations started. On February 10th 1940 they arrived ... Our relatives, we lost 26 members of the family.<sup>99</sup>

The recollection of deportation typically centres on a detailed depiction of the night of the arrival of Russian troops at the door, as this Polish man remembered:

Then in 1940 when the Russians occupied our area, we slept in our house, and in the middle of the night, about one-o'clock in the night time, the Russians came to our house and started banging with the guns on the door. We had to get up quick and they told us what to do. We had one hour to take everything we could, because we were going to different places in Russia. We didn't know where they were going to take us. In one hour we packed everything we could, then they put us on the sledges, to the railway station. That night and that winter was very cold, about twenty eight degrees below zero, it was very, very cold. They brought us to the station and they put us in the wagons. There were about thirty eight people there, it was very crowded. We travelled to Siberia for about two weeks.<sup>100</sup>

A similar experience was recounted by another respondent:

It was very snowy, the snow was over a metre deep, frost very severe, 10th February 1940. They were getting ready and the partisans and the Russian

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<sup>98</sup> M. Winslow, "Polish Migration to Britain: War, Exile and Mental Health", *Oral History* 27 1 (1999), p. 58.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 26.2.01.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 28.2.01., a.m.

soldiers came with the guns, with the rifles. They gave my mother half an hour to get ready, that was at 4 o'clock in the morning. I was awake. They came in and told us to take warm clothes, nothing else but warm clothes. Unluckily we had no bread because my mother was going to make it, so we couldn't even take any bread. My brother took a knife and killed some chickens and we put them in a sack. We didn't know where we were going, but it came out that it was Siberia. We had two solid weeks going by train in the cattle trucks to Siberia.<sup>101</sup>

Several of the accounts give the same date, February 10th 1940, and the credibility of these testimonies is corroborated by Keith Sword's research:

Deportations began in the second half of January 1940 and continued until June 1941, but four 'peaks' of activity can be identified. In the first major deportation, which began during the night of 9-10 February 1940, the largest group of victims were Polish military colonists as well as forestry workers from the state and private sector. The deportees came from throughout the former Polish territories and in many cases whole families were taken.<sup>102</sup>

The conditions of deportation are further supported by Lebedeva's assertion that, 'people were transported in temperatures of 25-30 degrees of frost in badly heated railway carriages and with little to eat.'<sup>103</sup> While it is important to verify the accuracy of these accounts, the real value of these testimonies lies in the way these memories have been presented. In striking contrast to the Italian and Greek-Cypriot recollections, Polish migration is remembered in great detail, with the exact date of deportation etched into the consciousness of the respondents. Memories of deportation, furthermore, are multi-dimensional, combining the horror of being confronted with armed soldiers with accounts of the domestic setting, and the material concerns of food and warm clothes. While the physical experience of forced migration is vividly recreated, however, the written testimonies cannot fully relay the emotion behind the words, which in the interviews was communicated through long pauses, facial expressions and body language.

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<sup>101</sup> First generation Polish woman, 16.2.01.

<sup>102</sup> K. Sword, *Deportation and Exile: Poles in the Soviet Union, 1939-48* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 15; see also N. S. Lebedeva, "The Deportation of the Polish Population to the USSR, 1939-41" in A. J. Rieber, ed., *Forced Migration in Central and Eastern Europe, 1939-1950*, special issue of *Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 16 1 and 2 (2000), pp. 28-45.

<sup>103</sup> Lebedeva, "The Deportation of the Polish Population", p. 34.

The ordeal did not end upon arrival in Siberia, but marked the beginning of a period of forced labour designed to augment the war resources of the Soviet Union. As another respondent recalled:

After we arrived in Siberia we were just thrown out of the train onto the snow and were told by the Russians, 'here you live and here you die', which to me it meant nothing. But I realised what they meant, because there was no food, no shelter, people were freezing to death, and one third from the transport, about a third died off. And the Russians sent everybody to the working camps.<sup>104</sup>

The same man who had recounted being disturbed in the middle of the night also continued:

When we got there they just chucked us out at the barracks and we stayed there, and about one week after that everybody had to go to work, cutting down trees and pulling them to the railway station. I was at that time thirteen years and I had to work as well. Once I was sick and they took me to the management, and they said if I was not going to work they'd crucify me, I'd be killed. After that I managed to do the work.<sup>105</sup>

Those who were too young to work have their own memories of the time in Siberia, as this woman who was deported at the age of three remembered:

I remember a little bit when we first came to Russia, because I was placed in a nursery, and I remember the boredom. I was three years old and we weren't allowed to move about, we were told to sit, I think it was something like a bed, a cot, and you couldn't run around, had to sit all the time.<sup>106</sup>

Eventually, an amnesty with the Russian government in 1941 allowed the release of the Polish deportees in the Soviet Union, resulting in the formation of the Second Polish Corps under general Anders, and the movement to civilian camps throughout India, Africa and the Middle East of those unable to join the forces. For the latter, the overland journeys out of Russia were as arduous and traumatic as forced labour in Siberia had been. As Sword comments, 'by a sad and tragic irony this second, 'voluntary' translocation probably resulted in the deaths of more people than the

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<sup>104</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 23.8.99.

<sup>105</sup> First generation Polish man, 28.2.01., a.m.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 22.11.00.

enforced uprooting which had brought them to the Soviet Union up to two years earlier.<sup>107</sup> Again, these journeys feature heavily in the collected memoirs:

In 1941 we had an amnesty, General Anders. We managed to come out of Siberia, the four of us, my mother, my two brothers and myself, somehow we survived, perhaps we come from good healthy stock. From Siberia to Caucasus, it took three months, we were travelling three months in the cattle trucks. It was full of lice, full of lice, in Siberia there were so many bedbugs ... When we arrived my brother joined the Polish army. It was severe winter, very, very severe winter. We had typhoid there ... At the beginning of August the Polish army came and took us, I remember this, this how we left Russia. On the 6th of August we crossed the border, we went to Karachi, to Mombassa, then we landed in the jungle in Uganda.<sup>108</sup>

Arrival at the Polish civilian camps brought relief from the uncertainty, hunger and exhaustion that had plagued the early years of the war. Memories of the time spent in these camps have generally proved to be less painful than the recollections of Siberia, but are just as significant and specific, as the following woman's testimony illustrates. Even in the face of the trauma of such upheaval, detailed memories of everyday life and the surroundings of the camps have survived; in this account the African flowers found around the camps almost seem to symbolise calmer times:

My first memory was when we got to Africa, that was two or three years later [than Siberia]. In the meantime we had gone through Persia and so on, where we were better fed and taken care of, and I remember when we came to Africa we were taken to a place, and my first memory was of these beautiful flowers, pink, they are still my favourite flowers, the exotic. I always remember, they have stayed with me, the flowers that are a part of my childhood ... As a child we had a simple life but very adequate, lots of countryside, freedom to run around. The houses we stayed in were sort of very similar to the natives were in east Africa, but there was plenty of food, we were well fed, we had to walk everywhere, it was like going back. There was no modern cons, the electricity or the modern water, you had to fetch your water from the taps ... We stayed in Africa for nine years, so virtually all my childhood was spent there. I always look upon it as a very good time, because it was simple. What we had was adequate.<sup>109</sup>

The 1941 amnesty indirectly ensured that the experiences of the rest of the war were dictated very much by gendered divisions. While women, children and those unable to fight spent the rest of the war in these type of camps, the remainder of the

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<sup>107</sup> Sword, *Deportation and Exile*, p. 44.

<sup>108</sup> First generation Polish woman, 16.2.01.

<sup>109</sup> First generation Polish woman, 22.11.00.



deportees, predominantly male, were recruited into the Polish Second Corps and eventually fought at Monte Casino in Italy. One man remembered trying to join the Polish Second Corps, but being prevented by his age from fighting:

They took us to Palestine and I joined the army. I went to Egypt. After that they brought us to Italy. I was in Italy for one year as an instructor for the soldiers. I was going to go to Monte Casino, to the fighting, but the officer looked at me and said, 'you are very young and we don't want you to get killed, so we have given your place to somebody else older and you are going to stay here'.<sup>110</sup>

Another man was visibly moved when he commented that, 'there was a tremendous battle by Monte Casino where many Polish troops were killed during the attacks. I lost a lot of my friends there.'<sup>111</sup>

Despite the dominance of these experiences among the Poles interviewed, not everybody had lived in eastern Poland and survived deportation to Siberia, either joining the forces or staying in the camps. In the testimonies collected one woman had been sent to a German labour camp, another had fled to Czechoslovakia, and three of the first generation men had originated from western and central Poland and had joined the Polish forces at the outbreak of war. Furthermore, two second generation women spoke of how their fathers who had been living in the northern and western areas of Poland formerly under German partition, had been forced to join the German army during the war, only later managing to find the Polish forces in France:

My dad comes from the north of Poland which was under the German partition. When the war started they were left alone, although he had a sister whose husband was called up into the German army ... They lived on a farm. In the middle of the war they were taken to do forced labour in Germany, then somehow he was called up into the German army, I think that's why he never talked about it. Then somehow he was in France with the German army, and he was taken to hospital in the Alps. When he was in hospital the French resistance took over France from the south and somehow he joined the Polish unit in the British forces.<sup>112</sup>

The second woman told of a similar situation:

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<sup>110</sup> First generation Polish man, 28.2.01., a.m.

<sup>111</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 28.2.01., p.m.

<sup>112</sup> Interview with second generation Polish woman, Leicester, 9.2.01.

[My dad] came from the north, near the Polish-German border. During harvest time in the few years before the war, my granddad and my dad used to go over to Germany to work as labourers on the land and get paid for it, and this is what happened in 1939 so they were stuck there. My dad joined the German army, but he eventually joined the Polish corps in the British army.<sup>113</sup>

What all the different post-war routes out of Poland have in common, however, is the shared experience of forced migration; whether it was through Siberia, with the armed forces, or into Germany, nobody interviewed had wanted to leave their homes. Additionally, regardless of the passage taken out of Poland, the respondents were united in their perceptions of themselves as exiles after return to the homeland was effectively ruled out at the end of the war. Whatever the balance of power in Europe in the aftermath of war, none of the Poles interviewed could accept that the installation of communism in Poland was a legitimate development, rather seeing it as an Allied betrayal at the Yalta conference and the result of western reluctance to protect eastern Europe from Soviet aggression. Furthermore, the westward shifting of Polish borders at the end of the war conceded vast tracts of land to the east to Russian control, later becoming Belarus and the Ukraine, leaving all those who had been sent to Siberia with literally no homes to go back to. As one man explained:

All of us, with the exception of one or two percent were from eastern Poland which is now in Russia, the southern part is Ukraine, the upper part in Belarus. We couldn't go back there, so to go back to a Poland that we hardly knew, that wasn't an option really. Nobody had a house ... because nobody had that so there was no reason to go.<sup>114</sup>

The inability to return to the homeland brought obvious emotional trauma, as the following account reflects:

When I was in Siberia I was planning in my head to run to Poland, because in Poland at that time I was enjoying my time very nicely. Siberia was terrible. We had no food. I was dreaming to go back to Poland, I would have gone on foot. At the end of the war I was hoping we would go back to Poland, because the war finished. But at that time my territory was occupied by the Russians. Well who wants to go back to the Russians when they gave me so much suffering in my lifetime, who wants to go to Poland when the Russians were occupying. If Poland was free I would have gone back when the war finished.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Interview with second generation Polish woman, Leicester, 12.2.01.

<sup>114</sup> First generation Polish man, 26.2.01.

<sup>115</sup> First generation Polish man, 28.2.01., a.m.

Whether return was possible or not, nothing could sway the widespread perception that going back would be dangerous. As one ex-member of the Polish air force explained, it was assumed that returning would lead to certain death:

Some went back to Poland, but as you know when the war finished, Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin signed an agreement at Yalta, and part of Poland has become under Russian occupation, and there was a Polish Communist government. Only a few went, of those in the airforce who had fought for Britain, about one hundred people went back, and they were exterminated in Poland when they went there, they were just murdered and went to prison. All knowledge of them disappeared, even today we don't really know what happened to them. Many officers were murdered by the secret police.<sup>116</sup>

As this further recollection demonstrates, after the horror of war and deportation, safety had to be the priority:

[My mother] never wanted to go anywhere else but back to Poland. When we were in Africa my father was in the British army, and he was writing letters saying you will be able to come and join us, he was in Italy. He was saying that we are going to England so you can come and join us, so my mother was saying no I want to go back to Poland, so my father put his foot down and he said 'send me one letter of one person who went back to Poland and wrote back'. Whoever went back that time, they were either arrested, or sent back or were too scared to write. So my father said, we went through all that, we are not going through all that again. We've got to stay where it is safe. It was his choice, and he said if you go you are not taking the children. So we stopped.<sup>117</sup>

The alternatives to the unattractive and unpredictable option of going back to Communist Poland were either to emigrate elsewhere, such as America or Australia, or settle in Britain for the foreseeable future, until a return became possible. Since the Polish armed forces had fought with British troops and were already based in Britain by the end of the war, the different units were demobbed throughout the country, with family members still in transit camps in Africa and the Middle East being offered the chance to join them.<sup>118</sup> At first the Poles in Britain lived in specially designated camps, but when movement out of these became possible Leicester became one of many destinations for both the airmen already demobbed in the

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<sup>116</sup> First generation Polish man, 28.2.01., p.m.

<sup>117</sup> First generation Polish woman, 26.2.01

<sup>118</sup> For information on these arrangements and the accompanying Polish Resettlement Act see particularly J. Zubrzycki, *Polish Immigrants in Britain: A Study of Adjustment* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956), pp. 54-61, 87-98.

region and further afield and civilians arriving from the Middle East and Africa in the late 1940s, offering employment opportunities in the hosiery and boot and shoe factories. The end of the war therefore did not necessarily mark the end of the migration process: whether in the forces or in the Red Cross camps, more travelling was needed before the moving could stop, as the following accounts illustrate:

My mother was in a camp which was outside Leicester, Ashby, and my father arrived in Glasgow, and came straight down to Leicester and got a job in a factory, he was a tailor before the war, so he got a job in a factory and was there for years and years. My mother also worked from the camp, and she worked in hosiery.<sup>119</sup>

Two other women also recounted their arrival: 'We came to England in 1948, together with many other Poles who were arriving from Tanganyika, and we joined our families, many people had fathers or husbands who were in the Polish Second Corps, and we settled here in England'; 'We arrived in Southampton in 1948, on the 4th of June, and we were allocated into camps, it was like army barracks. That was where we started. We were then located in Husbands Bosworth, there was airforce there and a barracks.'<sup>120</sup> For these people, the migration process had taken nearly ten years.

### **Autonomy, Networks and National Identity**

Although it is quite clear that Polish migration can be labelled 'forced migration', as Elisa Mason argues, the bi-polar view of migration flows fitting neatly into 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' categories is too simplistic.<sup>121</sup> Not all voluntary migrants can claim to be completely in control of their movements and decisions, and at the other extreme involuntary migrants will also have some way of exercising degrees of autonomy, however slight. Even in the face of war and deportation, the accounts collected from the Poles in Leicester depict situations where individual choices were made: forced migration does not necessarily undermine human agency. One of the

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<sup>119</sup> Interview with second generation Polish woman, Leicester, 31.8.99.

<sup>120</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 26.8.99., p.m.; first generation Polish woman, 26.2.01.

<sup>121</sup> E. Mason, "Forced Migration Studies: Surveying the Reference Landscape", *Libri* 50 4 (2000), p. 241.

strongest reflections of this is in the memories of the fight for survival in Siberia and after, where independent acts are remembered as clearly as the initial deportations. In the following testimony, a Polish woman recalls the part she played in keeping her family alive in the Caucasus:

I could tell you something but it could be a bit shocking. There is an incident in my life, I have robbed a hanged man. We were again thrown into a sheep sty, there was no comfort whatsoever, you live or you die. It was springtime and my mother wanted me to get something to eat, I was collecting wild grown garlic. There was another woman and she told me that a man had hanged himself in the next hut, and she said to me to go and see if he has any money in his pockets. I was eleven then. You don't have to be told twice when you are fighting for your life. The grass was taller than me perhaps, and through the little path I went to that dilapidated hut, and saw the man hanging up, he had hanged himself. I looked at his eyes, his eyes were right out. But I didn't care, I did not care, because you adjust yourself to the situation you are in. I saw the wallet was sticking out in the jacket, and I took his wallet and ran back. After that my mother had some money.<sup>122</sup>

A sense of collective autonomy was achieved through the supportive networks that underpinned the Polish civilian camps during the war. While these camps were set up with state sponsorship, it was the deportees themselves who ran them and turned them into temporary homes, rather than just transit camps. Instead of simply waiting for the war to end, the camp organisers managed to provide sufficient facilities to enable everyday life to continue, in particular in the form of schooling and church services, making use of whatever was available. Even within forced migration, therefore, there were opportunities for individuals and groups to influence the surrounding environment. The same woman remembered her time in the African camps:

In that camp there were over 4,000 Polish women and children, there wasn't very many men at all, only disabled men. I started schooling there, with nothing, no teachers nothing. Very quickly Brownies and Guides were organised, but there were no professionals. Whichever woman was educated or had experience in teaching, they were organising the school for children ... We had no text books, nothing at all ... We did sport, there were just balls.<sup>123</sup>

Forced migration inevitably weakened networks based on family ties, in many cases breaking up family units. As one woman explained, few of the Poles who

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<sup>122</sup> First generation Polish woman, 16.2.01.

<sup>123</sup> First generation Polish woman, 16.2.01.

arrived in Britain came with any extended family: 'Very few Polish people had the extended family, because having gone through the hard times in Russia, Siberia, the eldest were dying, so really very few people had the grandparents.'<sup>124</sup> As another woman commented, surviving the war was easier for those who had not lost, or been separated from their families:

I think there was always security in my case, I had my mother, and my two brothers who survived. But it was much tougher for people who didn't have anybody. There were plenty of children who spent their time in orphanages, and I know some of them are still deeply affected by it.<sup>125</sup>

Where family networks were undermined, however, new networks were established in their place, drawing on the shared experiences of war and a common goal of survival. Those who had faced deportation in particular relied on the new friendships formed in Siberia and in the camps, and these links are still strong, as one woman illustrated:

There is a woman who I know from the beginning, right from the beginning we have gone through practically everything, when we were going through Russia. There's quite a few of us from Africa, quite a few, I've got a few who are still friendly, we know them from Africa, five and a half years is a long time. I knew many of them. When you are young people's names sink in your brain and you remember them for the rest of your life.<sup>126</sup>

Agency, therefore, was protected by groups powerfully bound together by shared experiences, fears and hardship.

Underlying these new networks, and uniting all the Polish migrants, was an enduring commitment to Polish national identity. Throughout Siberia, in the Red Cross camps, and within the ranks of the Polish forces, nobody was allowed to forget that the individual struggle for survival went hand in hand with the quest for freedom for the Polish homeland. Although organised by the British forces, the Polish troops fought under the Polish flag, wearing uniforms bearing the national military insignia, and motivated primarily to fight for the liberty of their nation. As one man commented, 'we had the Polish wings, but it was under the British command,

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<sup>124</sup> Interview with two first generation Polish women, Leicester, 24.2.00.

<sup>125</sup> First generation Polish woman, 22.11.00

<sup>126</sup> First generation Polish woman, 16.2.01.

as was the Navy.<sup>127</sup> The civilians in the camps, meanwhile, sustained a strong national consciousness through education in Polish history and geography, and the practising of the Catholic faith. When asked what was taught in the camps, one woman replied, 'history, geography, literature, [even though] there were no books for literature. They were very strict. For this camp for 4,000 people there was only one priest ... religiously they kept us in good shape.'<sup>128</sup> Even those too young to remember Poland personally grew up in a sufficiently Polish environment in the camps to 'feel' Polish and to learn about Polish traditions. One woman, for example, shared her favourite childhood memory from living in Africa - the Christmas Eve mass:

I remember when we were in Africa as a child and that was the only time of the year when you were allowed outside, with a group of people, and you walked to church which was quite a distance, you had to walk through the jungle in a group of people. And the nights were quite light, I remember it was always something quite dramatic, being out at 12 o'clock at night. And I still like that midnight mass.

Rather than weakening national consciousness, the Second World War heightened awareness of the fragility of Poland's past, assigning those affected by forced migration to the historic ranks of Polish exiles forced to flee by earlier occupations, and joining people in a common national goal who might otherwise have been divided by regional or class differences.<sup>129</sup>

## Evaluating the Migration Experience

It is evident that the migration processes experienced by the Polish and Italian and Greek-Cypriot interviewees were very different. The episodes of migration themselves are also remembered and presented in different ways, as are the levels of awareness and interest shown by subsequent generations in their family's migration narratives. While the differences between the two types of migration -

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<sup>127</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 26.1.01.

<sup>128</sup> First generation Polish woman, 16.2.01.

<sup>129</sup> The link between Polish national identity and forced migration will be considered in detail in the next chapter.

forced and voluntary - are immediately apparent, however, migration of any kind leaves behind legacies that run through the lives of the migrants, their children and grandchildren.

For the Poles, the ordeal of forced migration and the accompanying turmoil of the Second World War dominated the oral testimonies that were offered. Initial questioning about the Polish 'community' in Leicester and their lives in Britain was met with surprise: this was not considered to be an accurate representation of what it meant to be Polish in Leicester. Being Polish in Britain instead could be best explained in terms of the forced migration process that everybody had endured, and an understanding of the Polish 'community' could not be found until the nature of their migration was recounted. In the interviews, therefore, memories of the war and deportation constituted by far the largest section, temporally prevailing over later evaluations of life in Britain. A period that lasted less than ten years was presented as more important than the fifty years since. Michelle Winslow has made comparable observations from her research, finding that, 'a substantial part of an average two hour interview has frequently been spent recalling the train journey to Siberia and subsequent events preceding arrival in Britain.'<sup>130</sup> Similarly, Bogusia Temple has also found that, 'for many British Poles, their significant life changes centred around the events that led to and followed from their expulsion from Poland at the beginning of the Second World War'.<sup>131</sup> As she later adds, for her respondents, as for mine, 'the loss of their 'space' in the world made the time around that loss important to their identity.'<sup>132</sup> Therefore, while remembering the war was clearly painful for those interviewed, the majority were prepared to go into great detail, in an attempt to ensure that the gravity of the experiences could be recorded faithfully as they perceived them. Within the accounts of those who had been deported, furthermore, the act of the Russian soldiers arriving to take them away in the middle of the night was given precedence, portrayed as the most significant

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<sup>130</sup> Winslow, "Polish Migration to Britain", p. 61.

<sup>131</sup> B. Temple, "Time Travels: Time, Oral History and British-Polish Identities", *Time and Society* 5 1 (1996), p. 88.

<sup>132</sup> Temple, "Time Travels", p. 94. Vieda Skultans has found a similar situation with Latvian life stories, which also show a strong personal identification with a particular historical era - V. Skultans, "Remembering Time and Place: A Case Study in Latvian Narrative", *Oral History* 26 1 (1998), pp. 55-63.



episode of the whole experience and encapsulating the fear and upheaval associated with migration.<sup>133</sup>

This approach contrasted greatly with the reactions of the Italian and Greek-Cypriot respondents to similar interviewing techniques. While the Polish interviewees for the most part would talk at length about their migration histories unprompted, the Italian and Greek-Cypriot respondents were far less inclined to recall their migration stories in any depth. Typical ripostes to the question 'why did you come to Britain?', included a Greek-Cypriot woman's comment that, 'I came to England to find a better life, that's all.'<sup>134</sup> It was more important for her to speak about how much she missed Cyprus, and how hard she has had to work in Britain. In a similar vein, one Italian woman initially gave a very brief summary of her life story:

At that time we used to be very poor, we've got no work and we were in a small village, and I came here by contract work, and do four years domestic work before I went to a factory. And then I got married and had a family. My husband was from Leicester, he was Irish, he has passed away now. That's all there is.<sup>135</sup>

These responses do not indicate a general reluctance to talk, but illustrate that not all migrants view the migration process as the defining point in their lives, and therefore the most significant period to recount in detail when interviewed. For several of the interviewees, their working lives and family life cycle changes were presented as having greater personal significance than the act of migrating.<sup>136</sup>

Similar observations can be made regarding the general level of consciousness displayed about the migration process among the second generation. In the same way that the first generation Polish respondents emphasised their experiences of forced migration as the focal point of their life histories, the second generation Poles, and those who had been too young to remember the war in any detail, still showed a strong awareness of how and why they or their families had migrated. The collected testimonies suggest that even if memories of deportation in particular could not be

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<sup>133</sup> Again, deportations also figure strongly in Latvian life narratives - Skultans, "Remembering Time and Place", pp. 57-9.

<sup>134</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 9.3.01.

<sup>135</sup> First generation Italian woman, 1.8.01.

<sup>136</sup> Again this is something Katy Gardner particularly explores with regard to Bengali elders in East London, in "Narrating Location", pp. 67 & 71.

remembered personally, the memory could still be passed on, and validated with the recollections of others if necessary. The following account is from a woman who was deported as a baby; even though she could not possibly have recounted this from her own memory, she almost describes the deportation as if she can remember it, and has clearly tried to substantiate her experiences with other people's stories:

It was just my mother, my three year old brother and myself, I was eighteen months old. In the middle of the night they came and told us to pack the things, and they were quite nice because I have heard other people weren't allowed to take anything. My mother even took all the photos, the ones where my father wasn't in uniform, and personal things like the most treasured possessions, and I even had my birth certificate which later I found out is a rarity. So we went to Russia, I don't remember that at all.<sup>137</sup>

Detailed knowledge of the deportations was also found in the accounts of the second generation. For example, the following second generation woman's lengthy description of her mother's experiences show how she has been raised on stories of the war, and as a result knows exactly what her parents had suffered before coming to Britain:

My mum comes from the eastern side of Poland, which is now Belarus ... the Russians invaded, and they came to do those mass transits in February 1940. There are lots and lots of stories ... They came and took my grandmother and my mother and her brother. One of the stories she used to tell us was how they locked them in the hen house while they rampaged their house. They didn't dare come out of the hen house in case they were shot. She was about nine I think ... When I had my own children she used to get really annoyed when I bathed them every night, because she used to say I was mollycoddling them, because on these transports the children who had been wrapped up were the ones that died first. I think they would have to leave their bodies at the next station ... They ended up in Siberia, there are all these stories about how they never had enough to eat, and they used to collect potato peelings to make soup out of, anything they could get hold of. We were literally brought up on 'well if you'd been through what we've been through, you'd eat you dinner up!' The women all had to work hard physical labour.<sup>138</sup>

Clearly in this family horrific stories of deportation have been incorporated into everyday life, with ordinary practices continually being related back to the extraordinary experiences of wartime. In cases like this the second generation could grow up surrounded by the memories of forced migration, absorbing them naturally

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<sup>137</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 26.2.01.

<sup>138</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 9.2.01.

and taking them on almost as their own. For other families, however, the gravity of wartime trauma was treated differently, with parental memories kept hidden and away from the shared forum of family life. Here the second generation had a vague awareness of what had happened and realised the significance of it, but felt that it was a taboo subject that could not be broached easily. One woman, for example, did not really discover her father's past until she was older:

He was a very private man and he didn't use to divulge an awful lot, unless you asked, but when I was at college I had to do a special exercise at the end. I chose to do about my father, I was about twenty, and I learnt then more about him than I had known up until then, you know because I really had to sit down and talk to him, and it was fascinating. I felt quite ashamed really that he had had such a fascinating life and experiences that seemed really quite incredible, and things that I had never experienced and probably never would experience, and experiences that were way beyond the norm, and that I didn't know about them. He had stories. I think the worst one was probably when war broke out he was on the other side of Poland, he was about 18, and he had to make his way back to his home town which is quite near to the Russian border ... In the night the Russians invaded and his father was a policeman, and they started with the intelligentsia and they went round the houses, first of all they arrested all the police and they came to his house, got everyone down, all downstairs in one room and took his father away, and he has never seen his father again. Now that is quite a horrible thought, someone coming here in the night and taking [my husband] away, and not seeing him again, never hearing from him.<sup>139</sup>

Whether circulated freely, or kept more private, these wartime memories also hold a central place in the life narratives of the second generation; all of the second generation Poles who were interviewed knew about the past, how it had affected their families, and subsequently were aware of the impact it had had on their own childhoods.

Once again, while it would be misleading to claim a lack of interest among the Italian and Greek-Cypriot members of the second generations about the migration of their parents, the interviews generally revealed that second generation knowledge of the migration process was vaguer than that of the Polish respondents. While stories about the homeland, war and life before migration had been passed down, less emphasis was put on the migration process itself. The daughter of an Italian woman who had migrated as a child revealed that although she knew that her mother and grandparents had moved from Italy to find work, she did not know about this episode

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<sup>139</sup> Interview with second generation Polish woman, Leicester, 3.7.00.

in great detail, and it was not something deemed significant enough to talk about in any depth:

I asked them once [why they came over], and it was just a very vague your granddad came over, because I know my granddad came over to get work because there was no work where he was. He came over and they followed, that's all I know, they settled their life here. It's not something that we majorly talk about, apart from that I don't know. But I think most people came from Italy to England because of the work, there wasn't much in Italy.<sup>140</sup>

The first and second generation interviewees within each group seemed to subconsciously reproduce the same emphases in their testimonies: for the first and second generation Poles the forced migration process was hugely significant, but for the Italian and Greek-Cypriots the migration act itself was almost universally depicted as just one small part in the narrative of family, work and homeland contact. Perhaps it is only when migration is so inextricably bound up with trauma and disruption that the physical act of moving takes on heightened importance and is remembered and transmitted so carefully.

### **Legacies of Migration**

Whether the migration itself is considered to be generally a negative or a positive experience, it is inescapable that certain legacies will endure, resulting directly from the decision, forced or otherwise, to move to a different country. While it has been shown that Italian and Greek-Cypriot motivations to migrate were more complex than simple economic considerations, the abiding legacy of these movements has undoubtedly been economic. Where the Poles stressed forced migration, the Italian and Greek-Cypriots generally focused on the economic legacies of migration, with male and female respondents both emphasising hard work and economic success. The legacy of migration for the Poles, however, proved to be quite different, in many cases causing emotional and psychological problems that have lasted into old age.

In the accounts of all the people interviewed there was no disguising how difficult moving to Britain had been, with economic insecurity and extensive working hours. Several of the Greek-Cypriots interviewed had set up family catering businesses - typically fish and chip shops open seven days a week - requiring the labour

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<sup>140</sup> Interview with second generation Italian woman, Leicester, 5.7.01., p. m.

commitments of most members of the family of working age. For the women respondents in particular this new lifestyle marked a big change from the lives they would have followed in Cyprus, adding long working hours in the shop to their existing family duties, although their roles within the family itself remained largely unchanged. As Anthias points out, working outside the home, or for the family business, (more typical in Leicester) was done alongside the childraising and housework responsibilities, both still considered to be a predominantly female area. She consequently found in her research into Greek-Cypriot women in London that a typical woman, 'may return home exhausted, tend to her children and husband, do her housework and shopping and then collapse in bed', adding that, 'it is not surprising that women are some of the most dissatisfied members of the community and suffer from ailments and depressions frequently.'<sup>141</sup> Very similar responses were offered from the Greek-Cypriot women interviewed in Leicester. When asked if she missed Cyprus, one first generation woman replied, 'yes, very much. I worked very hard, because I've got five kids as well, and nobody to help me from my family.'<sup>142</sup> Another woman was also very open about her feelings about being in England:

Well really I had a better life there [Cyprus] ... I haven't been happy, I tell you the truth. It's not very nice to say that but I haven't been happy in England because, I don't know, it was a different life there, I miss all my friends ... Because everyone I met they really want to go home, because back home they don't work as hard as here, even the ones that work. Here we work, work, work, work, my God. It's very bad.<sup>143</sup>

The second generation were also very aware of the hardship their parents had suffered. One woman, talking about her parents, claimed that, 'it has been very difficult for them, and they have worked very hard. My mum used to work seven days a week in a very busy shop, standing there. She had us to look after as well.'<sup>144</sup> Another woman voiced a similar impression: 'I think that the first generation

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<sup>141</sup> F. Anthias, "Sexual Divisions and Ethnic Adaptation: The Case of Greek-Cypriot Women" in A. Phizacklea, ed., *One Way Ticket: Migration and Female Labour* (London: Routledge, 1983), p. 89.

<sup>142</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 9.3.01.

<sup>143</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 13.6.00.

<sup>144</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 8.7.01.

struggled. They had to go without a lot of things to get on, to have a roof over their head, to save. The beginning was hard.<sup>145</sup>

Similar tales of hard work were found among the Italian respondents, and while a much smaller proportion of those interviewed had set up their own businesses, the long hours worked by the first generation did not go unnoticed by their children, as one second generation woman demonstrated:

My parents have always worked really hard. They've come here and they just worked non stop to make ... My mum used to work in a factory with socks, pairing up socks and that, and my dad was a gardener, well he is a gardener, always done gardening privately and worked in nurseries. They've always worked really hard to get what they've got today and they are still in that mode even though they are in their seventies. I feel they don't know how to enjoy themselves really. My mum does a little bit because she's got us, we sort of track her round, but my dad is work, work, work. I think they find it hard to relax. My dad has a day off, he doesn't know what to do with himself and he tends to fall asleep a lot, probably because he is so exhausted from it.<sup>146</sup>

In her research into the Italian 'community' in Britain, Fortier stresses the level of sacrifice made by the first generation Italian men and women who came to England, arguing that, 'sacrifice becomes the recurring image of the plight of Italian immigrants and, by virtue of its iteration, a constitutive force of a collective referent of identification.'<sup>147</sup> While this is undoubtedly true of the Italians and Greek-Cypriots questioned, there is also another narrative within both groups which requires the hard work and sacrifice to be played down, and the fruits of the labour to be highlighted. As Louise Ryan asserts in her consideration of Irish emigrants, drawing on earlier observations by Alistair Thomson, 'migration is frequently presented, especially by older people, as a journey of improvement, a success story.'<sup>148</sup> By underemphasising the hard times of economic insecurity and doubt, migrants are able to justify their decision to move more easily. As Thomson points out, 'we "compose" memories which help us to feel relatively comfortable with our lives,

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<sup>145</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 28.6.01.

<sup>146</sup> Second generation Italian woman, 5.7.01., a.m.

<sup>147</sup> Fortier, "Historicity and Communalilty", pp. 214-5.

<sup>148</sup> L. Ryan, "'I'm Going to England': Women's Narratives of Leaving Ireland in the 1930s", *Oral History* 30 1 (2002), p. 51; see also A. Thomson, "Anzac Memories: Putting Popular Memory Theory into Practice in Australia" in R. Perks and A. Thomson, eds, *The Oral History Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 300-310.

which gives us a feeling of composure.<sup>149</sup> In the interviews, therefore, while the hard work was talked about openly, it was usually accompanied by a reminder of what had been achieved in the end. For example, one of the first generation Greek-Cypriot women who had spoken about the long hours she had worked, went on to justify her move to England by claiming, 'I came from a very poor family in Cyprus so there still would have been a lot of suffering, a lot of hard work. I wouldn't have been as successful if I had stayed over there.'<sup>150</sup> Several of the first generation men were also keen to show how their business had succeeded and their decision to move had been the right one: 'So in the end we succeed, we work long hours. We work seven days a week, me and my wife, and then we become self employed, and now I've got a fish shop, doing well.'<sup>151</sup> Another man shared his reflections:

We had a lot of business. And I had a manager as well, it was big business. And we do very well, for twenty five years we do beautiful business, and then until the time it comes to retire, we sell the business in 1984, and since then we retire ... So you think why I want to come to England in that way, it's for my family, to educate my sons here, my family, and I have done. And that is the reason we really came here, a better life, you know. And I worked for twenty two years, I never went back to Cyprus for twenty two years ... They used to have a good time, my children, they never missed anything. Anything they wanted. We had money. Everything I touched turned to gold. I was very energetic, I make business, I meet people.<sup>152</sup>

In the conversations with the Italian respondents, the negative aspect of hard work was generally played down even more, and the success of the Italians in Leicester became a recurrent theme throughout the interviews, as this woman's testimony shows:

In Leicester the big and most important hairdressers, they are Italian. There is this big one, Grecos, then there is Mancici, and then in St. Martin's Square there is Alberico. There is another one at the bottom of Belvoir Street, so there is many. Ice-cream, patisserie, hairdresser, then there was the mechanics, there was another two Italian garages, they did very well. Restaurants! There is so many I lost count. So they did well, the Italians.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Thomson, "Anzac Memories", p. 301.

<sup>150</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 9.3.01.

<sup>151</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot man, 9.3.01.

<sup>152</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot man, 13.6.00.

<sup>153</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

It is clear that although it was never voiced openly, there was a tremendous economic and psychological pressure on these respondents to be successful and prove that migration had been a sound choice. As a consequence, not only did the Italians and Greek-Cypriots interviewed have to make personal sacrifices and work extremely hard, but the reflections that they have made on the migration process later in life have consciously sought to justify the move by emphasising the positive outcomes.

Inevitably the legacies of forced migration have been different in nature. Economically, the Polish refugees literally arrived with nothing - no money made from previous businesses and no family members or extended networks to ease the economic burden of starting a new life in a new country. Here economic pride and success were far less important than survival, and several of the testimonies collected emphasise the difficulties of the early years in Leicester. As one woman explained, 'you had to start from the beginning, you didn't have anything passed on to you from anybody, because nobody had anything, and so you had to start from nothing, from scratch.'<sup>154</sup>

The principal legacy of forced migration for the Poles, however, has been the psychological effects of deportation and enforced exile. As Winslow's research suggests, as a consequence of the nature of their migration the Poles in Britain, along with the Russians and Ukrainians, have an incidence of mental illness that is four times higher than that of the 'native' British population, something that has been acknowledged by the national Polish Ex-Combatants Association and the British Medical Association.<sup>155</sup> In addition, her most recent research demonstrates that the mental health problems of the Poles generally have been exacerbated by the ageing process, and the accompanying difficulties of failing physical health and social isolation.<sup>156</sup> The Poles interviewed in Leicester confirmed that even after sixty years the impact of the wartime experiences can still be felt physically and emotionally. When asked if the war ever gets discussed, one woman replied, 'sometimes, when

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<sup>154</sup> First generation Polish woman, 22.11.00.

<sup>155</sup> Winslow, "Polish Migration to Britain", p. 59.

<sup>156</sup> M. Winslow, "War, Resettlement, Rooting and Ageing: Oral History and Polish Émigrés in Britain" in P. Stachura, ed., *From Betrayal to Assimilation: The Poles in Britain, 1940-2000* (London: Frank Cass, forthcoming).



we talk. But some people say I don't want to even think about it, it was so horrible. But now most of them have trouble with their health, that is after being in Russia, rheumatism, when it was so cold and hard.'<sup>157</sup> Another woman responded to a similar question: 'No, it hurts. It hurts. I remember but to be honest we don't talk. Perhaps we do, but it brings us bad memories.'<sup>158</sup> The following testimony is from a woman who, like many others, cannot forget her harrowing experiences of being orphaned in the war:

It has affected you, because I remember in Africa, coming to the Polish school, there were three orphanages, and I have some memories of that. The orphanages were not very good. I was a very small child. I was frightened, I was hiding. They thought I was dumb because I didn't speak to anybody. I just kept quiet. Not knowing, probably not understanding what had happened to me, losing everybody, and just feeling lost completely lost. I was the youngest there, others were pushing me about. It was very hard ... So my memories of Africa, some older people managed, they have nice memories, but my memories at the beginning, are dreadful. Then we moved to another orphanage, and I was made to take part in things. Even going to school there I felt different from the others, because at least they had mothers. Some of them had lost their fathers in the war, Monte Casino, Siberia, but at least they had their mothers, and I had no one. I was different to them. Nobody close to love, and to be loved. And that stayed with me. I had no one I could really express myself with. Everything changed for the better when I got married, because my husband was from an orphanage in India. I met him in Leicester. Having children as well. But after I lost my husband that feeling of not knowing anything about my past came back. It never leaves you. It just stays with you for your life. People say, oh you will forget about it, but you don't.<sup>159</sup>

Alongside these painful memories, forced migration has brought the issues of 'home' and belonging to the fore. A long period of living in transit camps, or moving around Europe with the armed forces has left many of the Poles interviewed still feeling very unsettled. As one woman explained, years of moving around has made the concept of 'belonging' quite elusive:

I think we were more determined, because of our background, we were more determined to find a place of our own, because we didn't fancy living in somebody else's place, or move about. I think it's still important to me, the feeling of being in my own place, having something of my own. I think the difficulty was with moving around like we did, in my childhood. I remember

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<sup>157</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 2.2.01.

<sup>158</sup> First generation Polish woman, 16.2.01.

<sup>159</sup> First generation Polish woman, 2.7.01.

being in so many different places that eventually you feel you don't know where you belong. You don't know where your roots are ... There is still this sense, I think it is like a tree, it needs to have deep roots, and we have been transplanted in too many places really to feel that you belong somewhere.<sup>160</sup>

For the Poles in particular, the experiences of forced migration and exile have become a dominant part of individual and national psychology.

## Conclusion

This concentration on the different migratory routes of the Italians, Greek-Cypriots and Poles in Leicester has highlighted some important points. Firstly, looking beyond the grand theories of migration and focusing on individual experiences adds a much needed qualitative dimension to the study of migration, particularly illustrating the difficulties with applying catch-all labels such as that of 'economic' migration: voluntary migration is underpinned by a range of overlapping motivations and influences. Additionally, speaking directly to different migrants highlights the personal nature of migration. Within any 'group' the migration narratives of individuals vary greatly, and do so not only along the lines of gender and age, but also according to geographic origin, family situation and personality. These narratives are not static and will alter over time, sometimes realigning the past to fit more comfortably with the present, and sometimes drawing on the reminiscences of others to consolidate personal memories.

Perhaps the most striking revelation has been the diversity of experience recounted by the 55 people interviewed. The different migration processes have ranged considerably from the perception of migration as an exciting adventure, to a necessary action in the face of abject poverty, to traumatic experiences of forced deportation. For some, migration was felt to be an ordinary occurrence, something familiar that had always taken place, and was cushioned by the social networks of family, friendship and 'community'. For others, migration was considered to be an extraordinary experience, the defining moment in their life histories and something that continues to live with them. For others still, the migration process is remembered with some ambiguity, not exactly forced, but not necessarily an

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<sup>160</sup> First generation Polish woman, 22.11.00.

enjoyable, positive experience. The distinction between voluntary and involuntary migration, however, remains quite clear. While the Italians and Greek-Cypriots followed a course of migration that was culturally approved of, and materially and emotionally aided by extensive networks that are still very strong, the Poles faced a type of migration that broke down their traditional support systems, and took them away from familiarity. These different legacies have had a considerable impact on the lives the migrants interviewed: it can be no coincidence, for example, that the family links that aided Greek-Cypriot and Italian migration have survived to remain a core part of the cultural lives of these groups.

Migration is an ongoing experience, both predating emigration and outlasting the physical journey of movement and settlement. In fact, while it is impossible to literally go back to the time and place of migration, links with the old country are never severed, and memories of lives before migration are never forgotten. Migration, however, is a powerful force of change and opens up new questions of identity, nation and community that may never otherwise be confronted. In a sense it raises more questions than it answers, and this is where the following chapters will lead. How does moving outside the nation affect national identity? What sort of 'communities' does migration create, and just how strong are the ties that link both first generation migrants and their children back to the homeland?

## Chapter Two

# Remembering the Nation

### Introduction

Analysing nationalism and national identity is not straightforward. Although debates surrounding the origins and nature of nationalism and national identity have crossed disciplinary boundaries, drawing on historical, sociological, political, anthropological and geographical influences, a comfortable meeting point has yet to be found, with the question 'what is a nation' still lingering on contested ground. While some argue that nations are a product of modernity, others highlight the ethnic origins of nationalism.<sup>1</sup> With many different interpretations of both nationalism and national identity available, and with new appraisals appearing all the time, it is surprising that the consideration of migrant national identity specifically has been left largely uncovered, taken up almost exclusively by the burgeoning field of diasporic studies. Ethnicity and changing ethnic identities continue to be the recognised parameters for the study of 'immigrant' communities, while the analysis of national identity predominantly concentrates on those living within 'their' nation.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this chapter is to use the current debates surrounding nationalism to consider specifically

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<sup>1</sup> See particularly E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986). A good and comprehensive overview of theories of nationalism can be found in U. Ozkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Overview* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> For example see T. Modood, S. Beishon and S. Virdee, eds, *Changing Ethnic Identities* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1994). Notable exceptions to this trend are Z. Skrbis, *Long-Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), and Robert Perks' consideration of Ukrainian national identity in West Yorkshire - R. Perks, "Ukraine's Forbidden History: Memory and Nationalism", *Oral History* 21 1 (1993), pp. 43-53. There has also been considerable research undertaken into British national identity overseas - for example see C. Bridge and K. Fedorowich, "Mapping the British World", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 31 2 (2003), pp. 1-16.

the national identities of the Polish, Greek-Cypriot and Italian respondents in Leicester.

### **Why national and not ethnic?**

Before continuing further, the decision to focus on the national identities of the respondents, rather than their ethnic identities or ethnicities, needs to be explained. Firstly, there is a considerable overlap between the varying definitions of a nation and an ethnic group. Indeed, Anthony Smith argues persuasively that modern nations have ethnic origins, and that notions of ethnicity can simultaneously be used to justify and legitimate the nation.<sup>3</sup> Both ethnicity and nationalism rely, as most accounts seem to agree, on a sense of common history, a shared territorial attachment, and at least some degree of common cultural characteristics. Even those who stress the invented, modern nature of the nation have to acknowledge that some appeal to a common ethnic heritage, however fabricated, helps to cement the stability of the nation, and encourages a wider and more emotional association with it from its members. But even though there are considerable overlaps, there is still an important difference; as Thomas Eriksen asserts, 'the distinguishing mark of nationalism over ethnicity is its relationship to the state.'<sup>4</sup> Nationalism is inextricably entwined with political power and at the beginning of the twenty-first century remains the primary distinguisher of sovereign states, while ethnicity - understood as a shared set of cultural characteristics - is more commonly associated with minorities and groups without a state of their own. Although he places greater emphasis on the importance of ethnicity in national identity, Smith is persuasive when he notes that modern nations have 'come to blend two sets of dimensions, the one civic and territorial, the other ethnic and genealogical, in varying proportions in particular cases'.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Again see Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*; A. D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991); A. D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> T. Eriksen, "Ethnicity, Race, Class and Nation" reprinted in J. Hutchinson and A. D. Smith, eds, *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, p. 15.

For the three groups interviewed, the ethnic identities of the first generation migrants had been originally formed through the arena of the nation-state, blurring the boundaries between the two so that the recognition of the state as a political construction is held alongside the identification of the same nation-state as a natural home for those of the same ethnic group. The identities this chapter seeks to analyse, therefore, could be described as 'ethno-national', as the consideration of 'national identity' includes any sense of common ethnicity in addition to any identities that relate to the modern state and all its emblems, myths and territorial and administrative boundaries. Because the groups researched are from the 'majority' ethnicity of their nation, i.e. the Poles from Poland, the Italians from Italy, and less straightforwardly, the Greek-Cypriots from Cyprus, the types of national identities displayed have inevitably become a mixture of the two. Therefore, far from neglecting the significance of ethnicity, this approach to the study of nationalism takes the nation as a whole, considering its modern implications alongside its ethnic roots, but keeping the focus firmly on the nation as a state, however an imperfect union they produce. Clearly this approach is tailored to the study of those whose ethnicity is more or less congruent with their nationality: if the research had focused on Jewish Poles, for example, more emphasis would need to be placed on the tensions between the two identities, rather than assuming a degree of mutual compatibility. It is the symbols of nationalism and the nation specifically, rather than the markers of ethnicity, which form the focus of this chapter.

## **Personal Nationalism**

'National identity', like any other type of identity, is both constant and flexible. In certain circumstances it can incorporate civic and ethnic attachments simultaneously, and can offer an almost umbrella-like quality in its ability to extend to members of the nation regardless of their age, gender, class, and in some cases ethnic origin. It is also a type of identification that, despite its obvious collective implications, is very effective on an individual basis. Although the prevailing rhetoric regarding national identity is to view it as a shared phenomenon, a common participation in an imagined national community, the continuing success of nationalism as a modern ideology is perhaps due in part to its resonance with

members of the nation at a personal level.<sup>6</sup> Even though the role of the individual in supporting the nation is considered in most of the theories of nationalism - from Renan's 'daily plebiscite' to Billig's 'flagging' of the nation - Gutierrez still feels able to argue that, 'national identity is not a phenomenon which can be constructed and experienced differently by every individual'.<sup>7</sup> It is therefore left to Anthony Cohen to further the debate surrounding the juxtaposition between the nation and the individual.<sup>8</sup> As he argues, individuals cannot be seen merely as members of a collective: 'To see identity as being derivable from membership of a nation or a group - be it an ethnic, kinship, or descent group, a sect, class, gender, initiation cohort, or whatever - is implicitly to deny that individuals construe their membership and their selves in very different terms.'<sup>9</sup> Instead, the resilience of nationalism is ensured because the collective characteristics of the nation can, to a certain extent, be interpreted in different ways, and can signify different things to different people. The power of a collective identity such as national identity, therefore, lies in its ability to be both shared and personal.

This argument is important for this chapter. While the strength of collective identity and 'community' will be considered later on, as with the discussion of migration the purpose of this section is to focus on personal experiences and perceptions. Individual national identities do not always accurately mirror the 'official' nationalism that is projected outwardly and institutionalised internally. Dates and traditions remain confused or even unknown and national languages go unspoken as the myths and ambiguities of nationhood become obvious. With this unravelling of the endorsed images of the nation it becomes clear that the real essence of collective identity is less about knowing facts, than acknowledging the individual parts played in a shared past, and the shared 'truths' of that past. For national

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of nationalism and the collective imagination see B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 6-7.

<sup>7</sup> E. Renan, "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" reprinted in J. Hutchinson and A. D. Smith, eds, *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 17; M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995); N. Gutierrez, "The Study of National Identity" in A. Dieckhoff and N. Gutierrez, eds, *Modern Roots: Studies of National Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> A. Cohen, "Personal Nationalism: a Scottish view of some rites, rights and wrongs", *American Ethnologist*, 23 4 (1996), pp. 802-815.

<sup>9</sup> Cohen, "Personal Nationalism", p. 803.

identity to endure, and in particular to survive the dislocation of migration, a strong sense of personal identification with the nation has to be present, however jumbled it may appear. National consciousness moves with the migrant: there may be useful structures in place to aid a continuing national connection, but ultimately it is up to the individual migrant to remember their national identity in their new nation, where any 'flagging' of their homeland is likely to be non-existent or confined to migrant circles that are not always easily accessible.

### **National Identity in Evidence**

From a reading of the principal theories of nationalism it is possible to create a checklist of what is considered to constitute a national identity. Anthony Smith again is particularly helpful with this, providing a possible blueprint for what to look for in a typical national identity, that is recognition of a common territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture, shared legal rights and duties and a shared national economy.<sup>10</sup> Awareness of and participation in the legal and economic components of the nation, however, may fade in intensity as a result of migration and the taking up of a new civic code, relying on a certain degree of transnational contact to be actively maintained. Specifically tied to the physical and administrative structure of the nation, these aspects of national identity are less easy to transport than culture, myths and memories, ensuring that in migration it is the part of the nation that is most successfully internalised, primarily the national culture, that is sustained most readily without constant contact back again. National culture itself can be broken down into a series of 'categories' which will vary in relevance and intensity from nation to nation, resting on common myths and history, traditions, rituals and symbols, language, religion, belonging and 'otherness'. It is the small-scale translation of these aspects of national identity to Leicester that will provide the focus for this chapter.

At first glance, the Polish, Italian and Greek-Cypriot interviewees in Leicester displayed a straightforward and highly developed consciousness of their national cultures. The most obvious outward recognition of national identity came with the widespread collective and individual adherence to national traditions. As Eric

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<sup>10</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, p. 14.



Hobsbawm asserts, while such traditions may have been invented to encourage a standardised relationship with the nation, the ritualistic quality of traditions undeniably cements national bonds, allowing physical participation in what Gellner sees as the 'worshipping' of the nation.<sup>11</sup> In keeping with Anderson's imagined community, involvement in traditions and celebrations, particularly those for specific times and occasions, enables a sense of simultaneity to be felt with fellow nationals. Stretching this idea further, this phenomenon works especially well for migrants: since the nation is imagined anyway, following traditions from abroad on the same days and in the same ways allows for a similar connection. Culture and traditions provide the means of channelling the national imagination, and of course of excluding those without the required implicit national knowledge.

As anticipated then, national traditions and celebrations were prominent in the accounts of the Leicester respondents. National days were one type of occasion receiving widespread and active recognition. As one Italian woman recounted:

Last year for example we celebrated the Italian national day. 1966 we founded the club, over the years we celebrated the Italian national day, which is the second of June, and very often we invited the Italian consul from Manchester, because our jurisdiction is Manchester, so that is another lovely thing, we put our flag on and things.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, the Polish national day on the third of May, among other important days, has always been celebrated, as one second generation Polish woman commented:

We have these celebrations at specific times of the year, like there's one on the third of May, and a lot of what my father was involved in was organising these festivities, there was always a sort of concert, and he was very good at reciting poetry, he had all this poetry which was either about Poland or written, it was all in Polish, or written by famous Polish poets.<sup>13</sup>

Other events and traditions were also revealed to be important to the continuation of the national culture. The same Italian woman, for example, spoke of other significant times marked in Leicester:

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<sup>11</sup> E. Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions" in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1-14.; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 56-8.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with first generation Italian woman, Leicester, 7.2.01.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with second generation Polish woman, Leicester, 3.7.00.

We celebrate Mothering Sunday, and we start with our children, we teach them poems, that's my side, and there is another lady who teaches them dancing. It's for the mothers and the children perform all their poems in Italian, and the lovely dances ... Other things we do, for example, when it is the World Cup football, at our club we hire a huge screen if Italy goes to the final, it happened over the years a couple of times, so we had a big screen and we put our flag on, and then we all look, and if they win, big celebration with food and drink.<sup>14</sup>

Another Polish woman recounted another notable day in the Polish calendar, the June 24<sup>th</sup> midsummer celebrations:

... our traditional midsummer, on the river bank. It's traditional in Poland, young people making flowery wreaths and putting a candle in the middle, and putting it on the river to float. The boys would wait and try to catch, and if they do it, it means they will marry very quickly. If it stops somewhere among the reeds for example, it means it won't take place so soon. If it goes smoothly down the water it means they will marry soon, and it will be successful. It's tradition, since ancient times, it's the same day as St. John's ... It is certainly dying down now, but the very first people, they did it on the River Soar. It's just lovely, something that English people never did, and you were able to do it and it was lovely.<sup>15</sup>

The most popular national events proved to be those related to religious celebrations. Predictably, the relationship between nationalism – arguably a secular phenomenon - and religion is complicated. Some nations manage very well without an official religion, but for others religious adherence and a special relationship with God are an integral piece of the national puzzle. As Billig comments, 'God may be cited as a justification for the nation's specialness, but the deity, unlike the claim to a special place, is an optional extra.'<sup>16</sup> For the three groups interviewed, religion was viewed unequivocally through a national prism. Although nobody made an exclusive national claim over their specific religion, for most of the respondents it was perceived to be difficult to be a 'genuine' national without adhering to the religion of the homeland to some degree. While you could be Catholic without being Polish or Italian, for example, being Polish or Italian automatically presupposed some sort of link with the Catholic religion. Likewise, while it was acknowledged that the Orthodox

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<sup>14</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with two first generation Polish women, Leicester, 24.2.00.

<sup>16</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p. 77.

church is found in countries other than Greece, Greek-Cypriot national identity was projected as being closely related to the Greek Orthodox Church.

The legitimacy of the connection between God and nation was strongly projected by the interviewees, in particular through the collected accounts of the historical roots of the Greek Orthodox and Polish Catholic churches. While the Greek-Cypriot priest stressed the perceived antiquity of the Greek church, one Polish man was similarly keen to accentuate the apparent special historical relationship between Poland and Mary:

I don't know why they put 'Greek Orthodox Church', I think that it is because they used to speak the Greek language. When Jesus was born, in that era, even the Romans, most of the educated people used to speak Greek, they used to write in Greek. The Bible was written in Greek. St. Mark was from Cyprus. Barnabas is Cypriot. They were Jewish but they were from Cyprus. When they went to Cyprus Barnabas became the first archbishop of Cyprus. Luke was from Greece. Out of the Bible, it was only Matthew, the others wrote in Greek.<sup>17</sup>

Mary holds a special place in Poland, again the Pope passed a law on it, Poland is the only country allowed to use it, Mary Queen of Poland, because during those battles Poland always say that they pray to her health, good grace during the war. Poland uses it quite often. The litany always finishes Holy Mary, Queen of Poland.<sup>18</sup>

It also appears that this intertwining of nation and religion has been successfully translated to Leicester, as the observations of two Polish women, one first and one second generation, demonstrate:

With the Polish community naturally the church keeps us together. Always if you are Polish, if you are genuine Polish, the church keeps you together ... we celebrate Corpus Christi day very religiously. It's ten days after Whitsunday, and in Poland this day is so beautifully religiously celebrated, it is out of this world, because Poland is supposed to be Catholic ... Everyone wears the national, beautifully coloured costumes, the bell rings all the time. It is not only Polish, everybody else who is Catholic does it. We do it inside the church in Leicester, there are four different altars so as we only have one, we build up the other three.<sup>19</sup>

I think the community that I experienced [in Leicester] revolved around the church. I think religion was really important, the religion was something that

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot parish priest, Leicester, 29.6.01.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 24.1.00.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 16.2.01.

defined you as Polish. I always remember being told that something like 96% of the Polish population was Catholic. Church was really important, it was the figurehead that everybody congregated around. If you had a special day then you would always go to the mass and people would turn up with their flags, banners, standards.<sup>20</sup>

Religious traditions and festivities, therefore, have provided an opportunity for the interviewees to celebrate God and nation simultaneously. The dual significance of events such as Easter and Christmas as both religious and national occasions ensured that these were the days where the traditional rituals were upheld with the most care. As one Italian woman commented, 'the younger generation, they never miss Easter or Christmas, they like to keep tradition, because I think even the younger generation they look to keep tradition. Like coming to the Italian dance, that's tradition.'<sup>21</sup> Clearly the use of the word 'tradition' here implies that Easter and Christmas as experienced within the family are specifically *Italian* traditions, even though the rituals followed are not necessarily uniquely national. Several respondents recounted their different religious preparations in great detail; one Greek-Cypriot man, for example, shared the following account of Easter:

Easter is our biggest celebration. Christmas is one, but Easter is the biggest one, because Jesus rise from the dead. Easter is the biggest, everybody makes kebabs, we celebrate. We go to the church at night and say the Bible when Jesus arrived, there are fireworks and everything, we celebrate. Christmas is good, but number one, the biggest is Easter. Some people they fast before Easter for fifty days, eating but not eating meat. They don't eat meat for fifty days.<sup>22</sup>

The intricate Polish Christmas Eve celebrations also featured heavily in the Polish accounts collected, as one woman explained:

Christmas must be celebrated as normal in Poland, fasting on Christmas Eve, the evening is family dinner, and the family dinner is without any meat. First we always share bread, wafer, and there was a man who had no family and we always sent one of our sons to bring him back for that family dinner, or leave a space, leave a chair for an unexpected guest. And then everybody

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with second generation Polish woman, Leicester, 9.2.01.

<sup>21</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 9.3.01.

has presents as normal. The presents were under the tree, after the dinner everybody was getting the presents, and singing the carols.<sup>23</sup>

Another man went into even greater detail:

Christmas has got even more tradition than Easter ... the Christmas itself we celebrate it on the eve of Christmas, when the first star appears ... there is a twelve course tradition, a twelve course meal, no meat ... they begin with the soup, borsch, clear soup, three or four different kinds of fish ... but before they start there is a tradition, on the table it should be white linen, under that they put a few bits of straw to remind that Christ was born in stable and straw. And then the head of the family, they start with wafer and they wish each other first and then they go around the guests and the family, you break a bit off and wish all the best health, and then they start eating ... then the carols, and then the youngest members of the family have under the Christmas tree their presents ... then obviously there is midnight mass ... that's our Christmas, and it lasts until the sixth of January.<sup>24</sup>

Jointly religious and national practices such as name days and naming traditions, further underline the close and mutually reinforcing association between church and nation. Although many Greek names predate Christianity and are formed from concepts and place-names, the following account is emphatic in its perception of the centrality of religious considerations within naming patterns:

All Greek people give their children Greek names because of the saints. They all have saints names, when they are Christened they have to be named after a certain figure of the church, otherwise they won't Christen them. And because they are Greek Orthodox they have to be like that. In England you have names that are things, ornamental things, ours are always living saints. On the name days when it is your day we go to church and take a loaf of bread and a candle for thanksgiving for my life and the name of the saint. It is like a birthday celebration.<sup>25</sup>

The logical extension of this testimony points to the potential automatic exclusion from church life and the religiously punctuated lifecycle celebrations, should there be any deviation from the traditional naming pattern.

There are many other national customs and traditions that are without the elevated status of religious commemorations. Most of the reminders of national consciousness operate on a daily basis, ingrained in everyday practices. A typical example of this is the ongoing use of national languages, particularly within the

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 26.8.99., p.m.

<sup>24</sup> First generation Polish man, 24.1.00.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 28.6.01.

home. Language learning and usage were found to be integral to national identity, and consciously perceived as denoting an obvious national identification.<sup>26</sup> As one woman commented, 'we speak Italian among us, and when we meet friends, so we haven't lost our roots at all. I haven't lost my accent, my Italian accent.'<sup>27</sup> Even the speech patterns of the national languages were deemed to have their own 'special' characteristics, working further to reinforce the connection between language and national culture and identification. Although similar assertions were voiced across all the interviews, the respondents were keen to point out what was 'unique' about their own style of language and expression. Perfectly placed to draw out these distinctions were the second generation interviewees, who grew up measuring the language of their home and family life against the English language spoken in public. The following words are from a second generation Greek-Cypriot man:

The language is very exaggerated, just the words are. People would speak, it's a bit more over the top, the way they speak, the way they act. People gesture, they are very expressive, things are expressed in a magnified way, so if they are not very well, it's 'I'm dying' or 'I'm dead today', things like that. It's a very strongly expressed language, they wouldn't use cautious language really. It's more full blooded.<sup>28</sup>

## **History and National Identity: Polish National History in Exile**

Possibly the most significant building block of national identity has to be the widespread recognition of a shared national history; while different approaches to the origins of nationalism might debate the form and reliability of national histories, their central importance to national identification is rarely questioned.<sup>29</sup> A common history, of course, is generally considered to be a fundamental part of any collective

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<sup>26</sup> For a good introductory discussion of language and nationalism see J. Fishman, "Language and Nationalism" reprinted in S. Woolf, ed., *Nationalism in Europe 1815 to the Present: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 155-170.

<sup>27</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 14.6.00.

<sup>29</sup> Edensor, however, has challenged the emphasis placed on history as a central part of national identity. See T. Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), pp. 9-11.

identity, national or otherwise.<sup>30</sup> As Wallerstein argues, 'pastness is a central element in the socialization of individuals, in the maintenance of group solidarity, in the establishment of or challenge to social legitimation.'<sup>31</sup> While the interest in and awareness of national history varied amongst the interviewees, a definite sense of a shared heritage was tangible in many of the accounts. The significance of history for the Italian and Greek-Cypriot interviewees, however, was eclipsed by the central role that Polish national history has demonstrably continued to play in the national associations of the Polish respondents. While Greek-Cypriot national history highlights the ambiguous historical relationship between Cyprus and mainland Greece, something that will be considered shortly, Polish history provides arguably the single most unifying force behind the maintenance of a strong national identity outside the homeland.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Poland, formerly part of the powerful Polish-Lithuanian empire, had embarked on such a dramatic decline that the Polish state was effectively removed from the European map through a series of partitions undertaken by Russia, Prussia and Austria in 1772, 1792 and 1795.<sup>32</sup> These defeats were so emphatic that, despite the growth of a powerful national consciousness in the nineteenth century, a Polish state was only revived with the redrawing of Europe's boundaries at Versailles at the end of the First World War. Acting almost as a precursor for the later invasions of the Second World War, this prolonged period of occupation has become the defining era for the modern Polish state, dominating a Polish national imagination preoccupied with matters of freedom and independence. Without exception, every Polish person interviewed exhibited an

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<sup>30</sup> See for example P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); J. R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); J. Llobera, *The Role of Historical Memory in (Ethno) Nation-Building* (London: Goldsmiths Sociology Papers, 1996).

<sup>31</sup> I. Wallerstein, "The Construction of Peoplehood: Racism, Nationalism, Ethnicity" in É. Balibar and I. Wallerstein, eds, *Race, Class and Nation* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 78.

<sup>32</sup> See particularly A. Bloch, ed., *The Real Poland – An Anthropology of National Self-Perception* (New York: Continuum, 1982); P. Brock, "Polish Nationalism" in P. Sugar and I. Lederer, eds, *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), pp. 310-372; John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993) pp. 115-122; A. Coleman, "Language as a Factor in Polish Nationalism", *Slavonic and East European Review*, 37 (1934), pp. 155-172; N. Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland; Volume II: 1795 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); N. Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

intricate, and for the most part factually accurate, knowledge of Poland's modern history and an emotional empathy with the historical fate of the Polish nation.

Polish history has managed to encapsulate all of the elements of Polish national identity; religious affiliation, territorial attachment, language and culture, and an unending desire for nation-state standing. In many of the conversations the history of Poland in the nineteenth century was raised unprompted, often as a means of explaining more contemporary Polish developments, or as a way of illustrating the combined national importance of the Catholic church, Polish language and literature. The particular perception that the church, the family and Polish language, literature and culture together formed the currents of resistance to occupation that enabled Poland to survive at all and be reinstated as a nation-state was clearly evident in the collected interviews. While there is an obvious danger that claims such as these, held in the popular arena, are open to exaggeration - for example in the inference that *all* Poles were part of the national struggle - the real significance lies in the strength and sincerity with which they are believed.<sup>33</sup> One woman noted:

The older generation grew up with this trying to regain the freedom, and I think we feel generally very uncomfortable under the occupation of different countries, and so Poland became occupied with Catherine the Great, and partitioned by the neighbours so that it ceased to exist. It was the Polish culture and language and everything was very suppressed. Before that Poland was quite a large country in the Middle Ages in Europe, and it was forever trying to regain the freedom, there were three different uprisings, but they were never successful ... It's surprising really the language survived and the history survived, because under each occupation they were learning different cultures and languages, and the language was passed on with some sort of classes where they pretend to do something else like sewing or things like that, and they had their books underneath. They had to be very careful they were not spotted teaching the language. I'm sure that religion was very important in the fact that it survived, the Polish history, the Polish identity.<sup>34</sup>

Another man spoke about the role of the church in the partitions era, drawing parallels with the activities of the Polish priests under occupation again in the Second World War:

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<sup>33</sup> Davies in particular discusses the tensions between church and nation during the nineteenth century that are not a part of the national narrative, Davies, *Heart of Europe*, pp. 275-8.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 22.11.00.



Religion got us through all the troubles in history, it was religion. We hold on to religion. When the Polish language was forbidden and the priests and nuns were teaching the children in secret they paid with their lives, were tortured for that. So religion is the thing, the backbone. Luckily all our kings were religious. The whole thing turns around religion, around the church ... The priests in Auschwitz and places, in secret they still managed to say masses and have confession, and they were starved to death but they still managed out of that bread ration to make a wafer thing to pass around. And the religion got them through.<sup>35</sup>

Alongside the church, the distinctive relationship between gender and nation was secured during the partitions era. While men were more likely to be fighters, resisters, writers and political exiles, women took on the task of safeguarding Polish national identity in the private sphere, educating children about Polish customs and culture, generally being 'Matka Polska', simultaneously Polish mothers and representatives and guardians of 'Mother Poland'.<sup>36</sup> In the accounts of life under the partitions, for instance, it would have been the women who were secretly teaching the national culture, under the pretence of sewing.

It is clear that this phase in Polish history has elevated the pursuit of freedom and independence to a national goal, making Poland's more recent history of World War Two and the Communist era more poignant. In the collected narratives, for example, Polish history is recounted predominantly in terms of the national struggle, charting Poland's record of wavering between freedom and occupation. As Billig points out, stories of the national history tend to be recounted in a typical format: 'the narrative structure of these stories can be well known, with citizens easily able to summarize the story in conventional forms.'<sup>37</sup> This is very apparent in the following Polish accounts, with the same dates and events being emphasised:

Poland regained its independence in 1918 to 21, after being occupied by Russia, Prussia and Austria for over one hundred and thirty years, so at the end of the First World War Poland managed to organise itself and regain its freedom. It was only free for about twenty years and the Second World War happened ... It regained independence in 1920, 1918 to 1920 was fighting yet

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<sup>35</sup> First generation Polish man, 24.1.00.

<sup>36</sup> This issue is debated in B. Pietrow-Ennker, "Women in Polish Society: An Historical Introduction" in R. Jaworski and B. Pietrow-Ennker, eds, *Women in Polish Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 11-12; *Forum Polek – Polish Women's Forum* (London: Forum Publication Group, 1988); see also N. Yuval-Davis and F. Anthias, eds, *Woman-Nation-State* (London: Macmillan, 1989); Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997).

<sup>37</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p. 70.

again until independence, but it was a very fragile independence, because we know that as soon as the First World War there were already plans for the Second World War within Germany. Then of course there was the Communist occupation for fifty years.<sup>38</sup>

The Germans took the west part, the Russians took the east part and the Austrians took the south part of Poland. Well it was a very difficult period for Poland. We had been invaded by Muslims, by Tartars, Turks, and eventually Poland became so weak that other people took advantage of our country. The second partition came in 1773 and the third on in 1775. Poland stopped existing as a country ... in 1918 Poland became a country again. In 1920 the Russians tried to invade Poland again. In 1920 there was a very bloody battle just outside Warsaw, and the Russians were defeated. That's how we lasted until 1939, it wasn't very long, then the Second War came. Poland is a country in a very difficult geographical position. The Germans were always greedy to take part of Poland, the Russians invaded Poland, we just couldn't cope with all that.<sup>39</sup>

As this last quote also demonstrates, a further common depiction of Poland displayed throughout the testimonies is the image of the nation as helpless in the face of aggression, its fate determined by its geographical position. While this territorial placing may be considered as the cause of Poland's problems, that this was rightfully Polish land, the 'natural' home of Polish people, was firmly believed:

Well you see Poland unfortunately lies in the centre of Europe, which means that any expansion of the West to the East goes through Poland, and any expansion again from the East to the West, if it was Genghis Khan or any other power, Poland is more or less the gate to Europe or from Europe. So we are unfortunately placed in Europe, but we can't help it. We would rather prefer to be like Spain or Italy, to be surrounded by sea, or England for that matter, but we have been placed there by our forefather and that is where we are going to stay.<sup>40</sup>

As Anna Wierzbicka has noted, even the actual words 'wolność' (freedom) and 'niepodległość' (independence) themselves have developed an increased significance in Polish public life and literature as a direct legacy of the partition era, just as 'solidarność' (solidarity) has since the 1980s.<sup>41</sup> In the two centuries since the start of the partitions, wolność, for instance, has carried moral and political

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<sup>38</sup> First generation Polish woman, 22.11.00.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 28.2.01., p.m.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 26.1.01.

<sup>41</sup> A. Wierzbicka, *Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words: English, Russian, Polish, German and Japanese* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.148-152, 176-197.

overtones, closely associated with oppression and occupation, and now an unsuitable word for use in more everyday settings: as Wierzbicka notes, 'it seems obvious that the moral and public (national) character of the present-day meaning of this word has developed in the course of the last two centuries, during which Poland's history was dominated by uprisings, and other forms of struggle for national freedom.'<sup>42</sup> Similarly, *niepodległość* has a very specific meaning of *national* independence, encompassing the ideals of national freedom and sovereignty. These words and what they symbolise have become a highly recognisable part of Polish national identity, as the following testimony shows:

Wolność is freedom. It is very patriotic in Poland. The soldiers, when they fight on their standards they have 'God, Country and Freedom'. It is very important. Niepodległość, sovereignty, freedom. Those are the words that got us through, because in the eighteenth century Poland was divided and partitioned into three, Russia, Prussia, Austria. You were forbidden to use your own language, and yet the most famous Polish writers came during that period when it was suppressed. It was all underground, parents taught their children at home in secret, Polish language, Polish literature. And those words kept us going. They are so basic like bread and water.<sup>43</sup>

As the continuation of this conversation also highlights, this historic struggle for freedom, and the language associated with it, appear to have provided a resource for Solidarity and the opponents of Communism in Poland to draw on, and a discourse for the communication of their aims:

From this Solidarity came, it brought the classes together. Since the Pope came to Poland for the first time, the Communists didn't want it and Russia threatened Poland 'don't let him in', and he came to the square, it is now Pilsudski Square. When he came out with the cross and said 'don't be afraid, come out, don't be afraid', and they did, and that's when they united and Solidarity, and the Communist empire started to crumble away. It's thanks to those words, you could see on the things they carried was wolność, freedom. They wanted to be independent. Those are very important words to every Pole.<sup>44</sup>

The past cannot be divorced from the Polish present. Even the romantic literature of the nineteenth century, the most notable contributor being Adam Mickiewicz, has endured as a reminder of the plight of the Polish homeland, both in

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<sup>42</sup> Wierzbicka, *Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words*, p.150.

<sup>43</sup> First generation Polish man, 24.1.00.

<sup>44</sup> First generation Polish man, 24.1.00. – continuation.

Poland and outside.<sup>45</sup> While the Polish community Saturday schools in Britain and Leicester teach this literature as part of the core curriculum, Solidarity was in turn inspired by the romantic writings of the nineteenth century. As Davies notes, during the period of Solidarity the upsurge in national consciousness resulted in the writing of poetry in the style of the Romantic poets on the shipyard walls in Gdansk.<sup>46</sup> The entire ethos of resistance under the partitions was called upon to support the anti-Communist movements in the 1970s and 1980s in Poland, once again using the Catholic Church and Polish culture to defend the nation, this time with the aid of a Polish Pope.<sup>47</sup>

For the Polish exiles living away from the homeland the legacy of the nineteenth century appears to have had an even greater and more personal significance. The very presence of a Polish population in Britain is testimony to Poland's history of foreign invasion and occupation, creating a situation where the survivors of forced migration and exile from Poland feel that they themselves have become a part of the homeland's suffering. Their experiences of the Second World War appear to echo those of Poland in the nineteenth century, so much so that in the interviews comparisons were continually drawn between the two situations, particularly the deportations to Siberia which also occurred during the partitions era, and the suppression of language and culture that accompanied them. The lasting impression of the homeland is of a vulnerable country open to foreign invasion, and the personal experiences of the war only serve to reinforce this. Furthermore, for the people interviewed modern Polish history is living history, relevant to Poland's present and future, and to individual lives and memories. Several people recounted their families' experiences of life under partitions, illustrating that not only has this become a central part of official history, but also holds an important place in family memory:

After the third partition there was a lot of uprising, people tried to free themselves but they were defeated and many of these people were sent to

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<sup>45</sup> See particularly S. Helsztyński, *Adam Mickiewicz, 1798-1855: Selected Poetry and Prose* (Warsaw: Polonia, 1955); C. Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 195-280.

<sup>46</sup> Davies, *Heart of Europe* pp. 382-6.

<sup>47</sup> The actual extent of the Church's role in opposition to communism is examined in S. P. Ramet, *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Meaning of the Great Transformation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), pp. 155-172.

Siberia. My grandfather and his family were sent to Siberia as well. When Poland became a country and we started fighting for freedom they returned from Russia. My father was in Marshall Pilsudski's army who were really fighting for a free Poland. He told me a lot about it and I found out more from books.<sup>48</sup>

One of the legacies of partitioned Poland has been the creation of a guide to safeguarding Polish national identity when there is no state to protect it. Just as Poland in the nineteenth century depended on the determined and often gendered transmission of culture, religion, literature, as already noted, so the people interviewed viewed these areas as the key to continuing Polish consciousness in Leicester. Traditional celebrations and customs provide a direct link with the past, and while men take on a public role in community life, women are responsible for the 'dom Polski', and the private continuation of Polishness, particularly the education of children.<sup>49</sup> The fact that Poland's most esteemed figureheads of the nineteenth century were exiles themselves further reinforces the psychological connection between Poland then and Polish émigrés now.

Inevitably, within the Polish diaspora the association of Poland as an anguished nation has become bound up with the 'impotence of exile'. While the people interviewed had experienced the horrors of German and Russian invasion in 1939 for themselves, and survived, the new development of the Communist take-over was something that could only be observed from afar. The keen awareness of Polish history, therefore, coloured attitudes towards Communist Poland and its allotted role as yet another foreign occupation; the only aim could be for freedom from further tyranny, and the Ex-Servicemen's Clubs across Britain were established with this ethos at their centre. As one ex-serviceman described about the club in Leicester, 'the aim was for freedom, for liberty. It was a crusade, a fight to pass down the generations'.<sup>50</sup> From outside Poland, it appears that only the terrible aspects of life under Communism were visible. Those who visited returned with tales of telephone bugging and listening devices in hotel walls, and of family members too frightened to

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<sup>48</sup> First generation Polish man, 28.2.01., p.m.

<sup>49</sup> Pietrow-Ennker, *Women in Polish Society*; see also B. Temple, "'Gatherers of Pig-Swill and Thinkers': Gender and Community amongst British Poles", *Journal of Gender Studies* 4 1 (1995), pp. 63-72. These issues were raised in several interviews, most notably: Interview with two first generation women, Leicester, 27.8.99.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 16.9.99.

speaking frankly. One man spoke of the 'lost generation' he encountered on his visits, almost alienated from the past, a generation who 'just cannot think properly...it will take time for the two generations to come to the idea of democracy and the way of living as Poland used to be.'<sup>51</sup> These glimpses into the regime dominated the diasporic national imagination, casting Poland once again as a tragic victim; that everyday life carried on in Poland in spite of the regime is something that seems to have been eclipsed from the panorama of exile.<sup>52</sup> One man who came to Leicester in the 1980s spoke about the attitudes he encountered:

They had some sort of guilt. I'm here, living in good conditions, I don't have to queue, these guys have to queue, it must be terrible, I have to support something against it, and it leads to something like impotent extremism. Well these queues, these queues were terrible, but after all in my entire life I spent two nights queuing for food. That is probably two nights more than you did, but it's not a lot ... Communism did enormous bad things to this part of the world really... But on the other hand it was a system under which you could live, and you could enjoy life to some extent, in a different way.<sup>53</sup>

The presence of more recent Polish migrants in Leicester, with their different historical backgrounds, has left some of the earlier arrivals feeling unsettled. When the original parish priest died, for example, his replacement was sent over directly from Poland, causing upset amongst the older generation who felt that while they had shared a history with the older priest, they had nothing in common with the new one. This new historical distinction between those who lived under Communism and those who did not has also shaped the perceptions of Poland's future. While Poland has recently voted to join the EU, several of the interviewees seemed to be more focused on the possible dangers that European integration could befall:

There is a fear now, the population are afraid of joining the Common Market, the reason being it will be easier for our neighbours, for example for Germany, and they are doing it all ready, buying land very cheaply, you know the land is one thirtieth to what it is in Germany, so they are buying it illegally through the back way. And there is a fear that once you lose your land you

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<sup>51</sup> First generation Polish man, Leicester, 26.1.01.

<sup>52</sup> For an insight into popular culture, music and fashion trends in Communist Poland see D. Crowley, "Warsaw's Shops, Stalinism and the Thaw" in S. Reid and D. Crowley, eds, *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), pp. 25-48; T. Ryback, *Rock Around the Bloc: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 22-4.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Polish man, emigrated from Poland in 1983, Leicester, 8.8.02.

lose your independence again. So there is a fear that joining the Common Market they will lose gradually what they have, and lose that in another way, not in a war, in a peaceful way. And that is something I'm afraid of, yes, I am also afraid of that, I can see that coming. People know that they couldn't trust Russians, they knew that Russians were the enemy for centuries, but they don't actually see that they can't always trust the west.<sup>54</sup>

These fears were widespread in Leicester, although most also saw positive aspects of EU membership. The perspective of the more recent emigrant, both on joining the EU and the opinions of the older Poles in Leicester, was very different:

[Polish] people living in Leicester, not all people and I am essentially talking about the older generation, their viewpoints are similar to that of extreme ultra-nationalists in Poland. 'Germans will come and buy our land again', things like this. They would like to see a strong Poland from Black Sea, incorporating Lithuania, and being the strongest place in the world, but it is not going to happen. In Poland this anti-EU movement is quite isolated and these people are regarded as loonies, and they are not very popular. There were some cries, 'OK we are going to lose our land again', but not a lot. People in Poland they have to be much more pragmatic, practical, while people here they can afford extreme viewpoints because they are not there.<sup>55</sup>

Constructions of history, therefore, can divide as much as they can unite, and different experiences clearly breed different historical perspectives. In the case of Polish history, however, there is no questioning the force it still exerts in the diaspora and its crucial role in keeping a Polish national consciousness in existence. Everything related to Poland is viewed through historical lenses, whether it is the importance of passing on the language, or providing a stance for considering Poland's developing position as a European nation.

## The 'Other'

History, traditions and religion are only a part of the mosaic of national identity. Clearly present in the testimonies of all three groups was a further universal feature of national identity – that of the 'other'. As Anna Triandafyllidou argues, the idea of what the nation is not, and who cannot be a part of it, is a central, and often fixed,

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<sup>54</sup> First generation Polish woman, 22.11.00.

<sup>55</sup> Polish man, Leicester, 8.8.02.

tenet of national identity.<sup>56</sup> The uniqueness of individual nations can only be fully understood when measured against different, separate nations. Furthermore, national histories regularly cast neighbouring nations in the role of the natural enemy, ensuring that for each nation the 'other' will often be a specific, commonly identifiable group or country. These ideas were most clearly illustrated in the testimonies of the Polish and Greek-Cypriot interviewees, both groups having clearly defined national enemies. For the Greek respondents most of the 'othering' of Greek national identity revolved around religion. One man quite openly proclaimed that, 'we don't marry Muslims, we don't mix with Muslims, only with Christians, any other nation if it is Christian we can marry our children.'<sup>57</sup> Underlying this general antipathy towards Muslims, however, was a discernible reference to Turkey, although this was only discussed openly in one interview. Most comments about Turkey were restricted to the historical relationship between Greece and Turkey, and inevitably, accounts of the 1974 Turkish invasion of northern Cyprus. The historical narrative of Greece and Cyprus was consistently linked to the role of Turkey as an aggressor: 'We celebrate our national day, the 25<sup>th</sup> March, it's a national day of Greece, they got their freedom from Turks, because we have been occupied by Turkey 500 years.'<sup>58</sup> In one interview, general attitudes to both Muslims and Turkey were explored further:

My boyfriend is a Muslim, and I know how my dad feels about that religion. So deep down I know he don't like it. It's very strange how fate works, through everything I have ever been taught as a child growing up, Muslim is this, Muslim is bad, blah blah blah, I met a Muslim guy ... There was anti-Turkish feeling definitely. Some of them are friends, but there are a lot that were not. You feel it, there's a friction. [If my boyfriend had been Turkish], bloody hell. I'm sure that would not have been good at all. They would have thought that was deliberate. They'd never accept that, they wouldn't.<sup>59</sup>

Other evidence suggests that there is further unease between Greek and Turkish Cypriots in Britain. In an interview for Radio 4, for example, one London based Turkish Cypriot man recorded the following testimony:

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<sup>56</sup> A. Triandafyllidou, "National Identity and the 'Other'", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21 4 (1998) pp. 593-612.

<sup>57</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot man, 9.3.01.

<sup>58</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot man, 9.3.01.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 8.7.01.



On the surface of the situation it looks peaceful, but behind the mind of most Cypriots there is still that hatred ... I remember that a couple of Greek-Cypriot Guerrillas shot my father and that person who I said hello to could be related to one of those who pulled the trigger. I remember that. It comes to my mind straight away. I have three sons. If one of them started liking a Greek girl and they wanted to get married I would definitely try to stop them by explaining to my son that his grandfather was killed by Greeks. In a way that nation is our enemy, so how can he marry an enemy daughter, although that girl might not have anything to do with my father's killing. At the end of the day I know the Greek-Cypriots I cannot trust.<sup>60</sup>

In the same vein, the Polish respondents predictably depicted Germany and Russia as national enemies. Again, interviewees were quite forthcoming with their views of these two countries. One man spoke about Russia: 'Culturally, and economically and politically we [Poland] belong to Europe. Very often people don't understand, they think Russia is Europe. Well Russia is not Europe. If anybody thinks that the Russians are Europeans he needs his head examined. They belong to a different world.'<sup>61</sup> Any consideration of Germany also generated insecurities:

When Germany reunited, as much as I was happy, and I always say it was down to Solidarity, my first thought was they are going to rise above us all again, and when they talk about the Common Market I do worry how big Germany is going to get. That worries me because I have heard all the history about how Poland and Germany have always fought. They took Christianity from the south, not the west, because they didn't trust the Germans. They always emphasise how the Germans aren't very good, how they would try and dress themselves up as different, but they were still Germans underneath.<sup>62</sup>

Painful wartime memories have similarly underlined the role of Ukrainians as 'others', particularly in the perceptions of those from eastern Poland. Again the respondents were very open in their criticism of both Ukrainian activities in the Second World War, and the very existence of the Ukraine as a separate nation. One woman recounted wartime atrocities committed by Ukrainians to those who had remained on the eastern side of Poland as it became occupied by Russia:

'A few people stayed there [the eastern part of Poland which later became the Ukraine]. They had a very hard time there. The Ukrainian people were horrible, they murdered even small children. It was dreadful. They cut a

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<sup>60</sup> "Green Line, Green Lanes: Greek and Turkish Cypriot Communities in London", *It's My Story*, BBC Radio 4, 26.3.01.

<sup>61</sup> First generation Polish man, Leicester, 26.1.01.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with second generation Polish woman, Leicester, 12.2.01.

women expecting a baby, they cut her stomach and took the baby. They cut her in half with a saw, the men. So they were so afraid, they were afraid even to speak Polish ... The Germans were no good to them, and the Ukrainians were even worse, they murdered Poles. My sister told me that when the Germans left the Ukrainians wanted to murder the Poles.'<sup>63</sup>

In the Polish national imagination Ukrainians are held responsible for the brutality of this wartime inter-communal violence.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, there remains a strong resentment that the Ukraine was 'created' from Polish land, and becoming a nation-state without any perceived historical legitimacy to do so. As the same woman commented, before the war, 'they were not Ukrainian at that time, they were Russian, but later they started to use Ukrainian.' Another man insisted that, 'no Ukraine ever existed, yet they took parts of Poland and kept the different names. That is what they did, they actually claimed this land of Poland, and by calling it Ukraine, they thought it would be OK.'<sup>65</sup>

It would be misleading to place too much emphasis on these external 'others'. For every example of difficult national relations, there are stories of friendships cutting across these national boundaries. Ukrainians, for instance appear in some of the Polish life history narratives in a much more positive light: in one account, the respondent claimed, 'my mother always said that living as neighbours she got on very well with them'.<sup>66</sup> For both the Polish and Greek-Cypriot groups however, the strength of feeling felt against these 'others' can in part be attributed to the personal experiences which have reinforced, or even created these prejudices. For the Polish respondents the migration itself had been dictated by German and Soviet invasions, and for those from the east the role played by Ukrainian 'partisans' in inter-communal violence would have been communicated through popular folklore resting on the memories and accounts of friends and family. Similarly, the upheaval and tragedy of 1974 cemented further the image of Turkey as the enemy in the minds of the Greek-Cypriot respondents, many of whom had lost family members, friends,

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<sup>63</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 2.2.01.

<sup>64</sup> These issues are addressed from a different perspective in T. Snyder, "'To resolve the Ukrainian question once and for all': The Ethnic Cleansing of Ukrainians in Poland 1943-1947", *Journal of Cold War Studies* 12 (2000), pp. 86-120.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 26.2.01.

<sup>66</sup> First generation Polish woman, 22.11.00.

property and land in the conflict. As one woman described, 'people were scared because everybody knew somebody. They were worried that somebody would be taken out of their homes or killed. Some people lost family as well. From my village I lost fifteen people. It was bad.'<sup>67</sup>

## **The Internal 'Other': Minorities and Regionalism**

The role of the 'other' is not solely an external phenomenon. National identity by nature demands at least some degree of perceived communal belonging. Clearly the same adherence to national religions and rituals which can unite a nation can also serve to divide it from within. When nationalism is popularly understood in ethnic or cultural terms and not on the principle of citizenship, whatever the national constitution proclaims, the scope for generating internal others is immense.<sup>68</sup> Each of the three groups illustrate this point, from the presence of the historical Jewish 'other' in Poland, to Italian regionalism, to the complex national relationship between Cyprus and Greece.

Much has been written about Polish/Jewish relations and anti-Semitism in Poland, and while this was not discussed directly in the interviews a confused attitude to Polish Jews was evident in many of the accounts.<sup>69</sup> One woman, for example, painted a very peaceful image of coexistence in eastern Poland before the war:

My mother was very friendly with Jews, they were always welcome in our house, they were Orthodox Jews and they could do all the praying in our house because they had to do their prayers at a certain time of the day. I remember they had a black box, they would cover themselves with a black robe, they would chant, praying. Me being a child, I was amazed, I was really amazed to see it, there was really an atmosphere to take care of the other

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<sup>67</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot woman, translated by her daughter, Leicester, 9.3.01.

<sup>68</sup> See particularly R. Cohen, *Frontiers of Identity: The British and the Others* (London: Longman, 1994), pp. 192-206.

<sup>69</sup> See for example C. Abramsky, M. Jachimczyk and A. Polonsky, "Introduction" in C. Abramsky, M. Jachimczyk and A. Polonsky, eds, *The Jews in Poland* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 1-14; E. Hoffman, *Shtetl: The History of a Small Town in an Extinguished World* (London: Verso, 1999); differing perspectives on the Polish role in the Holocaust are considered in Y. Gutman and S. Krakowzki, "The Poles Helped Persecute the Jews", and R. C. Lukas, "The Poles Were Fellow Victims", both in D. L. Niewyk, ed., *The Holocaust* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), pp. 203-215 and pp. 215-229.

beliefs. There were loads of Jews, loads of Orthodox, and another religion, I can't remember what it is called. Somehow they lived in harmony, there was no problem whatsoever, religion was no problem.<sup>70</sup>

This account, however, is underpinned by an inherent recognition that Jews were not Poles, but rather were exotic and different. The ambiguity in her testimony was revealed further when the discussion turned to the Catholic church. Here it was made very clear that true Poles have to also be Catholics, thus consciously or subconsciously preventing Jews from ever being 'genuine' Poles: this was the same respondent who claimed that 'always if you are Polish, if you are genuine Polish, the church keeps you together.' In fact, the heavy emphasis on the church and religious traditions throughout the interviews underlines how effectively religion and nationalism can be at once inclusive and exclusive. These tensions are also readily apparent in the national history of Poland, where Jewish and Polish histories are told from very different perspectives. The symbolic representation of this historical antipathy has almost been embodied in the controversy surrounding the treatment of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.<sup>71</sup> Just one mention of this camp was enough to stir one respondent into adding that Polish people had died there too, as if the Jewish suffering there somehow detracted from the Polish lives lost in the camp.

It is with this internal othering that national identity is at its most fragile. Here the strength of regional and local identities can work in the face of national identity, and this is nowhere more apparent than with the Italian case-study. While there is evidence supporting the existence of Italian national identity in Leicester, the interviews strongly suggested that, reflecting Italian national identity in Italy, regional identities are still the most pervasive. The most immediate othering is the mutually antagonistic relationship between north and south, something already discussed in relation to emigration, but still an important cultural and political issue in contemporary Italy, and apparent in the testimonies of the Italian respondents.<sup>72</sup> One

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<sup>70</sup> First generation Polish woman, 16.2.01.

<sup>71</sup> See for example A. Charlesworth, "Contesting Places of Memory – The Case of Auschwitz", *Environment and Planning D – Society and Space* 12 5 (1994), pp. 579-593.

<sup>72</sup> This has received considerable academic attention: see especially G. Bedani and B. Haddock, eds, *The Politics of Italian National Identity: A Multidisciplinary Perspective* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000); P. Verdicchio, *Bound by Distance: Rethinking Nationalism Through the Italian Diaspora* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997); C. Levy, ed., *Italian Regionalism: History, Identity and Politics* (Oxford: Berg, 1996); G. Gribaudi, "Images of the South" in D. Forgacs and R. Lumley, eds, *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 72-

woman in particular spoke about the differences between northerners and southerners in Leicester, reinforcing the popular image of the perceived cultural, social and intellectual 'backwardness' of southerners and southern traditions:

You take the men from the south, the older generation, they are a bit more narrow minded. In the south they are more jealous of their wives, a bit more possessive of their children. I know quite a few cases twenty, thirty years ago when the boyfriend, they wouldn't call it boyfriend they call it fiancé, because as soon as a man starts courting a girl they have to go home, meeting the girl at home, having the permission of the father and mother, never go out both together without the chaperone. It was like that. I never did that with my children because we are from the north, and I always give a lot of trust to them. The south of Italy, the deep deep south, among the older generation, you can see when we are getting together, from the north among us immigrants there are quite a lot of people with degrees, but the south that doesn't happen much. The south of Italy, men a lot of them are very keen on their allotments, people from the south they love their land, they are farmers ... The south is very poor, in the north they say the south is like the rope around the neck, there is a bit of Mafia down there, there is more crime down there.<sup>73</sup>

For their part, the interviewees from the south consistently displayed suspicion and antipathy towards northerners, aware that the south was usually depicted in such a manner. It is worth quoting again the first generation Italian woman who observed 'I think that the northerners don't like the people from the south.'<sup>74</sup>

Internal divisions in Italy and the Italian diaspora are more sophisticated than just the north/south rift. Interestingly, the Italian respondents focused particularly on regionalism almost as an alternative geographical identity to nationalism. While national identity could unite the Polish interviewees in particular, Italian national identity has to play a balancing act with the nation's historical regional allegiances. As Dickie argues, at the time of unification Italy was a 'state with little in the way of a nation on which to base its legitimacy.'<sup>75</sup> The juxtaposition between nation and region has proved to be one of the defining characteristics of Italian political culture since the *risorgimento*, and even before political regionalism developed in the 1920s,

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87; P. Peri, "Italy: An Imperfect Union" in L. Hagendoorn, G. Csepeli, H. Dekker and R. Farnen, eds, *European Nations and Nationalism: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 249-279.

<sup>73</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with first generation Italian woman, Leicester, 5.7.01.

<sup>75</sup> J. Dickie, "Imagined Italies" in Forgacs and Lumley, eds, *Italian Cultural Studies*, p. 19.

Italian identity was particularly village or city, rather than nation, orientated.<sup>76</sup> This smaller scale identity was strongly evident in the collected testimonies, illustrated for example by the following claim: 'I am interested in Italy because I am still attached, but I'm more attached to Sicily than the rest of Italy. Even if I love Italy, and I do, I'm Italian but I'm Sicilian first. It's a quite different feeling towards it.'<sup>77</sup> Another man spoke at length about this regionalism:

I am Venetian first, second I am Italian. Because we are quite different. Every region is different. Because also the history in Italy, Italy was united 150 years more or less ago, so it is a very young country. A lot of the regions still retain their own cultures, their dialect ... I am Venetian. You belong to a tribe, different tribe. When I go to Italy I belong to my regional tribe which is Venito. If you speak to any Italian they always think their region is best. You speak to people from Naples they think they are best, although we don't think so.<sup>78</sup>

His account went on to describe some of these cultural regional variations:

The food is quite different from one region to another. Say in the Venetian region which is north east of Italy they eat more meat than say people in Naples. In Naples they eat more pasta and they have a lot of variety of pasta. In the Venice region pasta is very limited. I remember when I was at home forty years ago my family didn't know pasta until my grandfather brought us pasta, because my grandfather on my mother's side was from Sicily so they used to eat pasta. But my father he never wanted pasta because he was never used to have pasta, we had polenta, pork, meat in general. Quite different north and south, and regions are quite different as well.

National identity as a mass phenomenon is arguably relatively new in Italy, and is something that has developed over the last fifty years particularly – in many cases after the emigration of the respondents.<sup>79</sup> This can be seen most strikingly in the language statistics for Italian speakers in Italy. While at the time of unification very few Italians were Italian speakers, by the end of the Second World War the maximum percentage in Italy was still only 37%. Only the combined developments of increased literacy levels, the proliferation of newspapers and a mass national media

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<sup>76</sup> See A. Lyttleton, "Shifting Identities: Nation, Region and City" in Levy, ed., *Italian Regionalism*, pp. 33-52; A. Bull, "Regionalism in Italy" in P. Wagstaff, ed., *Regionalism in the European Union* (Exeter: Intellect, 1999), pp. 140-157.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with first generation Italian man, Leicester, 2.7.01.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with first generation Italian man, Leicester, 26.1.02.

<sup>79</sup> It is paradoxical that while national identity in Italy has strengthened, regionalism as a political and educational issue has also grown in influence – so much so that while the Northern League promotes separatism, most other parties accept the call for federalism.

in the form of television has led this figure to rise to 90% in the early 1990s.<sup>80</sup> This has ensured, however, that rather than identifying with a national language, one of the key features of national identity, Italians have identified primarily with a regional dialect. Most of the Italians interviewed had moved to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, at a time when mass knowledge of the national language was still restricted. As a result the collected accounts illustrate very clearly the cultural importance of dialect over national language, with most of the respondents speaking dialect rather than Italian most of the time. Also discernible from the interviews, however, is the complicated relationship between the two, and the prevailing awareness that dialect is not 'proper' Italian. One northern Italian woman, who also spoke about the south, demonstrated her complex attitude to the regional dialect in her testimony, torn between wanting to present dialects as a significant anchor for regional heritage, while also disassociating herself from dialects personally:

I regret not being able to speak the dialect, our dialect, because dialect really, we call it in Italy a heritage that will disappear. Dialect is not a slang, dialect is a language on its own. Now especially in the north of Italy they teach dialect in classes, as a subject, because they think it is a heritage that shouldn't be lost ... it's fascinating to hear people speak in dialect ... [later on in the interview] We always speak Italian, with my friends we always speak Italian, it comes naturally.

Q. Do they speak dialect?

No, they come from a very good family. Like my family, they would never let them speak the dialect.<sup>81</sup>

National identity in Italy, and the Italian diaspora, therefore is neither straightforward, nor a homogenous sentiment: of course no national identity is straightforward, but Italy is a particularly complex example. While awareness of the national identity undoubtedly remains high, the emotional attachment seems to be to the region, a phenomenon very different from the Polish case. While Polish national identity consciously overrides, almost wilfully ignoring Poland's minorities, Italian national identity has to co-exist and sometimes compete with a very well developed regional consciousness. However, regionalism is not unique to Italy, and minorities

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<sup>80</sup> Figures taken from H. Moss, "Language and Italian National Identity" in Bedani and Haddock, eds, *The Politics of Italian National Identity*, p 110; see also B. Cervi, "The Italian Speech Community" in S. Alladina and V. Edwards, eds, *Multilingualism in the British Isles: The Mother Tongue and Europe* (Harlow: Longman, 1991), pp. 214-227.

<sup>81</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

are not unique to Poland. Regional attachment was certainly discernible from the Polish interviews, and again hinted at class differences, this time between east and west, rural and urban:

You see a remarkable difference between the peasant class in the east, obviously the east is very rural, but the western part was very westernised, with plumbing and plush hotels, even in the thirties. It's a running joke with the Poles that everyone is from Warsaw, no one wants to admit that they are from the east ... There are people who were obviously very wealthy, but there are others who have probably bettered themselves, because where they came from was just run down shacks, like my father. My mother was from the west, was totally different, my grandparents had a business, and they were a really well to do family. [There were tensions] all their lives because they were very different, the way they cooked, everything, their whole philosophy. My grandmother disapproved completely of their marriage.<sup>82</sup>

While significant, this regionalism has been consciously neglected in favour of the national image; in the interviews it was a national identity which was projected, and not a regional one. The increasing presence of new minorities in Italy in the form of economic migrants has added another dimension to internal othering in Italy, something that two of the respondents spoke about with some concern. Having regional variations within Italy is acceptable and legitimated by history. In practice region and nation can be seen to reinforce each other, rarely requiring Italians to choose between the two but allowing them to have both simultaneously. The introduction of a new 'other', however, is a different matter, and perhaps as a result works to push region and nation closer together.

### **The 'Other'? Cyprus and Greece in Greek-Cypriot National Identity**

The Greek-Cypriot case offers a different scenario again. Greek-Cypriot national identity has to reconcile two separate nations, Greece and Cyprus, a sometimes uneasy relationship inextricably bound up with debates over Cypriot independence and union with Greece, and ultimately brought into sharp focus by the Turkish invasion.<sup>83</sup> In fact, the varying perspectives on what constitutes Greek-Cypriot

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with second generation Polish woman, Leicester, 31.8.99.

<sup>83</sup> This relationship is considered in C. V. Mauratsas, "The Ideological Contest Between Greek-Cypriot Nationalism and Cypriotism, 1974-1995: Politics, Social Memory and Identity", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 20 4 (1997), pp. 717-737; see also N. A. Staniatakis, "History and Nationalism: The Cultural Reconstruction of the Modern Greek Cypriot Identity", *The Cyprus Review* 3 1 (1991), pp. 59-86; V.



national identity are so complex that, as Papadakis argues, 'if anything unites Greek Cypriots in a community, it is their participation in a debate about what constitutes the nation, not some shared conception of 'the nation'.<sup>84</sup> Put simply, the key issue has always revolved around whether Cyprus should unite with Greece and embrace *enosis*, or whether the island should be an independent sovereign state. Since 1974 public identity in Cyprus itself has generally shifted away from the desire for union with Greece, and concentrated on an alternative independent identity, symbolised in the increased public display of the Cypriot flag.<sup>85</sup> This has not necessarily had the same impact on individual national identity, however, particularly for the older generations and those who had already emigrated by 1974. More than anything the accounts of the respondents illustrate there is more than one way to identify as a Greek-Cypriot. At one end of the spectrum, some interviewees displayed a strongly Hellenistic national identity. One of the respondents, for example, recounted the 'glorious' history of Ancient Greek civilisation:

Greece is one of the first civilisations, and everything began from Greece. The English language, most of it is from the Greek language. Everything began from Greece. The planets, all their names from two and a half thousand years ago, they named the planets. The only people who were educated when Christ came on earth were the Greeks.<sup>86</sup>

Another respondent projected a picture of Cyprus as a Greek island, historically entwined with the ancient motherland:

The books come from Greece, the Greek language, proper Greek. Cyprus is a Greek island. It's been a Greek island for years, three and a half thousand years ago. There are ruins there, if you go to Cyprus you go to Greece, it's the same thing. Any Greek island you go, when you go to Cyprus it's the same, there are the ruins ... Like you are English from London, it's the same thing, like the Greek islands they say Greek from Crete, Greek from Rhodes,

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Calatychos, "Inter-Disciplinary Perspectives: Difference at the Heart of Cypriot Identity and its Study" in V. Calatychos, ed., *Cyprus and its People: Nation, Identity and Experience in an Unimaginable Community, 1955-1997* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), pp. 1-34; Y. Papadakis, "The Politics of Memory and Forgetting in Cyprus", *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 3 1 (1993), pp. 139-154.

<sup>84</sup> Y. Papadakis, "Greek Cypriot Narratives of History and Collective Identity: Nationalism as a Contested Process", *American Ethnologist* 25 2 (1998), p. 162.

<sup>85</sup> Mauratsas, "The Ideological Contest Between Greek-Cypriot Nationalism and Cypriotism, 1974-1995", pp. 718-720.

<sup>86</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot man, 9.3.01.

they are all Greeks. All their history and everything like that, all the background is Greek.<sup>87</sup>

In this same testimony it was made clear that the presence of the Turkish population in Cyprus could be attributed to an accident of politics and geography, the product of an island with a history of foreign invasion. Cyprus is Greek, not Cypriot, and certainly not Turkish:

We are a small island and the position of Cyprus is the key of the Middle East, everybody wants to get in Cyprus for political reasons. That's why there are all these troubles in Cyprus. The north of Cyprus, 40% has been taken by Turkey. There are Turkish Cypriots, they are the same as us, they speak Greek, because they are a minority, like the Indians in England. It's only 18% Turks in Cyprus, but this politics they brought Cyprus to this. Cyprus is a Greek island, but its position, the key of the middle east, everybody needs Cyprus. Anybody can capture Cyprus, there are less than a million people on the island.

One second generation man revealed that he had embraced Hellenic culture wholeheartedly:

I read the Greek classics on my own. I had a fascination with Greek, ancient Greek, although it's not Cypriot, it's Greek. I'm reasonably knowledgeable about that period, the history, the Greek Gods and all that because it is my heritage. I have a fondness for Hellenic culture. The Greek way of life, the Greek mentality, I am very Greek in my ways. I like Greek cuisine, Greek culture, Greek music.<sup>88</sup>

Other respondents expressed contradictory views. One man, for example, emphasised the differences between Cyprus and Greece, and considered the Turkish Cypriot population to be a legitimate minority worthy of legal protection:

It is a different culture altogether. Cyprus people think more like the eastern countries, the Greeks they think more like Europeans. Cyprus is an independent country. It has never been a free country. When Cyprus became independent there was 20% Turkish Cypriots so one of the conditions was for Cyprus to be an independent country to safeguard the safety of the Turkish Cypriot minority.<sup>89</sup>

As Rex and Josephides argue, 'although many Greek Cypriots like to believe that despite all these influences they have always been 'Greek', the evidence suggests

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<sup>87</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot man, 9.3.01.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 3.7.01.

<sup>89</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 28.6.01.

that Greek Cypriot culture, even taking its most objectively distinguishing features, that is language and religion, has always been in a state of flux.<sup>90</sup>

The most typical response from the interviews was the recognition that Cyprus and Greece share a fundamental culture - most importantly the Greek Orthodox church - but that Cyprus is not simply an extension of Greece. As Pollis has argued, Greek-Cypriot national identity cannot ever just be a reproduction of Greek national identity; it has been shaped by a different history, politics and population.<sup>91</sup> Interestingly, and like Italy, differing linguistic patterns and attitudes to language in Cyprus and Greece almost offer a metaphor for Greek-Cypriot national identity. While language policies in Cyprus have been heavily influenced by Greece, with both countries adopting standardised modern Greek as the official language in the 1970s, most Greek-Cypriots have always spoken the local dialect rather than 'proper' Greek.<sup>92</sup> As one woman explained:

We talk different but understand each other. The Greek-Cypriot language is more traditional. If you go in the villages, if a village person went to Greece from Cyprus, they would have a bit of trouble understanding each other. They'd get there, but it's kind of like slang. The books in the schools, they all come from Greece, it's the same. They just talk different in Cyprus.<sup>93</sup>

Again, an experience emerges that is similar to the Italian one, with mainland Greek holding a higher status than the Cypriot dialect, as one man showed: 'I was speaking Greek all the time, proper Greek. I think my parents liked that. In a way mainland Greek is sort of looked up to.'<sup>94</sup> It would seem that as with the region and nation in Italy, Greek-Cypriot national identity can, and has to embrace parts of Cypriot heritage and parts of Greek heritage, with a flexible balance employed between the two.

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<sup>90</sup> J. Rex and S. Josephides, "Asian and Greek Cypriot Associations and Identity" in J. Rex, D. Joly and C. Wilpert, eds, *Immigrant Associations in Europe* (Aldershot: Gower, 1986), p. 35.

<sup>91</sup> A. Pollis, "The Social Construction of Ethnicity and Nationality: The Case of Cyprus", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 2 1 (1996), p. 69.

<sup>92</sup> See E. Papadaki d'Onofrio and M. Roussou, "The Cypriot Speech Communities: The Greek Speech Community" in Alladina and Edwards, eds, *Multilingualism in the British Isles*, p. 190; D. Georghiou, "Cypriots in Britain - A Research Report on Bilingualism: The Maintenance and Future of the Greek Language within the Greek Cypriot Community in London" in M. Roussou, ed., *Greek Outside Greece: Cypriots in Britain* (Nicosia: Greek Language Research Group, 1991), pp. 65-154.

<sup>93</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot woman, translated by daughter, 9.3.01.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 14.6.00.

## Myths, Ambiguities and Grey Areas

If anything, this consideration of the 'other' has highlighted how complex national identity can be. Suggesting that the celebration of national days and flying of national flags adds up to a strong national consciousness would dramatically oversimplify the nature of national identity. As theorists of nationalism have laboriously demonstrated, with such a vast history there can be no one satisfactory theory of what nationalism is and why and how it came about. With this in mind, accepting displays of nationalism at face-value is clearly an inadequate approach to understanding national identity. National consciousness is just as confused and impressionable as any other identity. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the myths and ambiguities that accompany all the other 'ingredients' in the formation of national consciousness.

Polish national identity appears straightforward at first, resting on a message of common national suffering and defiance, but centuries of partitions and border changes have ensured that at its edges lie a series of confusions and grey areas. One second generation woman, for example, recounted the unique way she had been taught about Poland's territorial boundaries after the Second World War at the Polish Saturday school:

We did Polish history and geography. It made me smile, because they had this map of present day Poland, but what happened was Poland shifted, and what the Poles told us was, this is Poland, but this bit, with Vilnius and down there, used to be Poland but the Russians pinched it off us. So they made out not that Poland is here and it has moved, but that it used to be bigger. They didn't own up that actually we were given a bit from the Germans, they kept that quiet. They didn't deny it, but the way they said it, it was like this bit should really be ours.<sup>95</sup>

Similarly, extensive border alterations have brought into question who is genuinely Polish and who is not, as seen in the following testimony:

I remember someone years ago in the Polish community was saying, oh so your father is Russian, because I never used to get embarrassed about saying my father was from the eastern side, Belarus, and this particular man in the Polish club used to say, oh so you're not Polish, you're Russian. I know where my parents were born, and I actually found a map and I was going to take it. I thought you are being so petty because the borders kept changing.

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<sup>95</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 12.2.01.

Years later he came to me and said he went to see his relatives in Belarus, and I though crikey, you used to say that I'm Russian, but you are from the same part of Poland, But people used to be really embarrassed and reluctant to say that they came from that part of Poland, maybe because they thought they would be called Russian.<sup>96</sup>

As another woman claimed:

You've got to be careful with some Polish people, some of them, it makes you wonder whether they are half German, or half Ukrainian, depending on which side they are on, and you can sometimes tell by their surnames, if they've been changed a bit. A lot of Ukrainians pretend to be Polish.<sup>97</sup>

Generally, the Polish interviews have revealed the persistence of myths and omissions in the presentation of Polish history. Gdansk, for example, is spoken about with great pride as the birthplace of Solidarity, but the German heritage of the city which had only changed its name from Danzig after 1945, is left unexplored.<sup>98</sup> One man started his testimony with the words, 'I was born near Gdansk, where the Solidarity movement started, it's now famous.'<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, Poland has been depicted so successfully as a tragic nation that earlier, pre-partition history of Poland as a much more aggressive player in Europe has been almost completely forgotten.<sup>100</sup> The more unsavoury aspects of Polish history are similarly unexpressed in the interviews. While accounts of independence in the inter-war era refer to the practical difficulties of recreating a unified state after such a long time under partition, there is no mention of the fact that most of this period of 'freedom' was spent under the 'personalised authoritarian regime of Marshall Jozef Pilsudski':<sup>101</sup>

They were living under three different cultures, and when we have been finally united, 1918, there was a lot of problems to be solved. People were educated

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<sup>96</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 31.8.99.

<sup>97</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 12.2.01.

<sup>98</sup> See C. Tighe, *Gdansk: National Identity in the Polish-German Borderlands* (London: Pluto Press, 1990).

<sup>99</sup> Pre-recorded interview with Mr. Dobski, first generation Polish man, BBC Radio Leicester, 1995.

<sup>100</sup> Norman Davies provides an account of Polish mythology in N. Davies, "Polish National Mythologies" in G. Hosking and G. Schopflin, eds, *Myths and Nationhood* (London: Hurst and Co., 1997), pp. 141-157; for an earlier history of Poland see N. Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland; Volume I: The Origins to 1795* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

<sup>101</sup> J. Bielasiak, "Poland" in S. P. Ramet, ed., *Eastern Europe: Politics, Culture, and Society Since 1939* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998) p. 127.

in three different languages, under three different systems, and to join the country together again, it was rather difficult, but it was done. You see I remember Poland in 1939 before the war, the country was united, and was progressing. If there wasn't a war it would have been okay, but unfortunately that didn't happen.<sup>102</sup>

Additionally, although this would not be something experienced first hand by any of the respondents themselves, none of the interviewees showed any awareness that after 1945 thousands of German citizens, having suddenly found themselves within Poland's new borders, were expelled in a similarly brutal manner to those Poles who had been deported to Siberia.<sup>103</sup>

It is not only history which is vulnerable to this type of reinterpretation: the very traditions on which national identity rests can be similarly ambiguous. One woman, for example, openly challenged the popular belief that the church is at the heart of Polish national identity:

Not all Poles go to church, they won't do. Some aren't even Catholic. Some people will go back to the religion when they have got the time, but when they are busy working they sort of put church on hold. Today's youth, even in Poland, they don't go to church as often. My cousin, he and his wife are both Polish Catholics, and they never go to church. But they like to think they go.<sup>104</sup>

Once again this is further evidence illustrating that national identity is not a pure, unambiguous identity, but is subject to interpretation, manipulation and sometimes wilful omission.

### **Transmitting National Identity**

The key to national identity lies in its transmission. Nationalism and national identity are not natural phenomena, but have to be both invented and imagined: crucially, they have to be learnt. This 'checklist' of national identity, including common history, language and traditions, rests primarily on an outward display of nationalism that requires extensive transmission. Knowledge of key 'national'

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<sup>102</sup> First generation Polish man, 26.1.01.

<sup>103</sup> See P. Panayi, *Outsiders: A History of European Minorities* (London: Hambledon, 1999), p. 101; R. Crampton and B. Crampton, *Atlas of Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 143.

<sup>104</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 12.2.01.

traditions is not automatic. Almost surprisingly, the interviews presented many cases of gaps in the learning of national identities. The projection of the whole of Poland and the Polish diaspora, for example, ardently following the same traditions from generation to generation, almost acting on an inherent national knowledge, is a mythical creation. Many of the most significant national traditions go unlearnt, as the following testimony demonstrates:

To be honest not many people in the cities would use all the traditions. My mum actually learnt some of the traditions when she came here. Her best friend was from a village and so she knew all these traditions, and she learnt about Christmas Eve and having twelve different courses. So she did it, but she didn't do little courses, she did big ones. Those adults were eating all night, she used to spend weeks preparing.<sup>105</sup>

The lack of knowledge of 'common history' among the first generation Italian respondents generally was also very striking. Any sense of 'pastness' for many was literally just that, a feeling of the importance of their own past and how that linked to the villages of their childhood, but no sense of the wider significance of Italian national history. Similarly, most of the respondents speak their regional dialect, and know very little of standard, 'national' Italian. Much of this lack of specifically national knowledge can be attributed to limited formal education prior to emigration, as one woman explained: 'Because we come from a village, we did not have enough education, we only had five years at school, so we tried our best to go away and speak Italian but we still speak dialect between ourselves. People used to speak dialect but now people have more education.'<sup>106</sup>

If the transmission of national identity is taken for granted in the homeland itself, even when its success is clearly limited, migration places education much more consciously at the heart of the quest for a survival of national identity away from the homeland. For all three groups the education of the second and third generations was considered to be a priority, with each providing Saturday, or after-school classes for language learning particularly, to complement the learning of national culture already taking place through church attendance and in the home. The Greek-Cypriot priest, in particular, explained the importance of teaching this national awareness:

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<sup>105</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 12.2.01.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with two first generation Italian women, sisters, Leicester, 2.8.01.

[At the school] they learn to read and write Greek. We teach them their faith, religion, dances, Greek dances, Cypriot dances, songs ... I always say to the parents this is not just the duty of the church or the school, this is the duty of the people as well, the parents are the first teachers. They should teach their children to love the Orthodox faith, to love the Greek language, to love Cyprus and Greece, the history of their forefathers. Once you implant those things in there, they will have those things there always to teach their children.<sup>107</sup>

One second generation Polish woman spoke at length about the particular attempts of the Polish community to impart knowledge of the national history:

I knew a lot about the partitions because we went to Polish school. [My parents] did talk about it as well. I'm sure they used to tell us about our history as well. It was more their own stories they told us. It wasn't just them, it was teachers at Polish school, other people's grannies told us their stories. Other people's grannies would say that they remembered not being able to speak Polish, having to teach their children Polish in secret. They were bedtime stories. We were all aware of it. The community would put on events and shows, people would give speeches on the stage, recite poetry on those special historical occasions. We would say 'why do we have to go to this one?', 'well, that's the day Poland regained independence', 'why do we have to go to this one?', 'that's the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May constitution day'. So they would tell you why that came about, even before the partitions.<sup>108</sup>

Despite this educational offensive, however, the testimonies show that national transmission away from the homeland is not necessarily efficacious. Educating children in national traditions at home has to be achieved around working life, allowing large gaps in national knowledge to develop, as the following testimony from a second generation Greek-Cypriot man illustrates:

There is this tradition that you name your first born son after your dad, and your parents have done the same thing so the family name lives on, first name and surname. My oldest brother, when he had his first born son didn't name his son Andrew, or Andreas, and my dad was hurt by that, and my mum was upset by that. I don't remember them really inculcating us with what was expected, telling us what to do, this is the way things are done. Maybe because they were too busy, maybe they just thought we would pick it up by osmosis. I mean I didn't know this was expected until the pregnancy, so how come I hadn't picked that up?<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot priest, 29.6.01.

<sup>108</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 9.2.01.

<sup>109</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 14.6.00.



A similar situation was revealed in the testimony of a second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, who had had difficulty learning Greek, and lacked knowledge of the basic traditions:

I wish I could pick up the Greek, and I felt inadequate because I couldn't pick it up, so I thought I wouldn't bother ... Don't ask me about history, I don't know ... There are the saints days, saints' name days. It is a big thing when we go to church, we go to church on the saints' name days, like my son Andreas when it is St. Andrew's, and my daughter. I've forgotten what day it is, someone did tell me. Sometime in December.<sup>110</sup>

In the case of language learning, national transmission is further complicated by the Italian and Greek-Cypriot second and third generations learning the national language at school, but speaking the local dialect at home. This does, however, work to preserve the same linguistic patterns of the homeland, reproducing the same dichotomy of national and regional/local identity.

Even when the transmission and education are efficient, the type of national identity being passed on can in itself be problematic. The attitudes, values and traditions that have been transported from the homeland with the first generation migrants inevitably reflect a certain place in time, and are in danger of crystallising the past, offering an outdated national consciousness that no longer has much resonance with the contemporary home nation. A visit to Poland brought this realisation to one woman:

I went over for Christmas and there was one moment when we went to church for Christmas Eve and sang all the carols and things that we have always done here, and I got this sense that this is what it is all about. I suppose it is that sort of personal connection, my experience, their experience. We had a traditional Christmas Eve supper which we always have here, but they didn't have what we have. Even though they were so poor they had got this whole smoked salmon, which we had never had before. I remember feeling really disappointed, there's us struggling to keep up these traditions and they go and have smoked salmon and fried cod and things like that. I think we tend to fossilise traditions that people over there just wouldn't do.<sup>111</sup>

A similar situation has developed with the Polish language. In Leicester the language spoken is that of the pre-war period, while in Poland itself the national language has evolved:

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<sup>110</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 11.7.01.

<sup>111</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 9.2.01.

I learnt the pre-war language from the pre-war teachers. Although I grew up in the '40s and '50s, in England it was the pre-war teachers. And the language is a living thing, like American and English, it's changing. It's the same in Poland, you realise that certain words came in, or certain words that are brought in from the foreign words which we try to avoid, we try to avoid it here but in Poland they use it.<sup>112</sup>

The country is strange, we have grown apart. Even when I read the Polish press, from Poland, I have to think twice, what does that mean? My language, my Polish is as it was sixty years ago. The language, the Polish language in the country is alive, and it changes, so I often have to think, what does that mean? Sixty years makes a difference to a language, new pronunciations, new ideas come along.<sup>113</sup>

Whichever rituals and celebrations are remembered, and whatever form they take, the interviews have also revealed an underlying sense that sometimes they are enjoyed more for the occasion of meeting up with friends and family, rather than for their particular national significance. Take, for example, the testimony of the Italian woman who described the Italian national day party as 'another lovely thing', alongside another second generation woman remembering her childhood experiences of the Italian club: 'We had to dress up in little red, white and green outfits which are really silly now, but at the time you thought you looked the bee's knees. Traditional days, fancy dresses, I'd quite like that for my daughter.'<sup>114</sup> Clearly it is possible to be unreflexive in the participation of national rituals; the learning and 'performing' of national practices does not automatically guarantee an understanding, or even prolonged consideration of them. Whether consciously embraced for their national character or not, however, rituals and traditions remain pertinent subconscious signifiers of national identity.

## National Commodities

This checklist of national identity, put forward by Anthony Smith, only goes so far in explaining and understanding the intricacies of national consciousness. More useful approaches are those adopted by Billig and Edensor, incorporating the

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<sup>112</sup> First generation Polish woman, 22.11.00.

<sup>113</sup> Mr. Dobski, BBC Radio Leicester, 1995.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with second generation Italian woman, Leicester, 5.7.01., a.m.

recognition that the most enduring signifiers of national identity can be on much smaller scale, embedded in the everyday life of individuals.<sup>115</sup> For migrants in particular the private sphere of the home becomes the most immediate forum of national space, and as such a constant reminder of the nation. As Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton have argued, home is more than simply a physical shelter, but is 'a world in which a person can create a material environment that embodies what he or she considers significant.'<sup>116</sup> What makes the home especially significant for national identity is the series of rituals that are undergone domestically, and the objects that are kept there. Theorists of nationalism, as Edensor argues, have been slow to recognise the national importance of material culture, and more particularly domestically held objects which, according to Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 'might represent dimensions of similarity between the owner and others: shared descent, religion, ethnic origin, or life-style'. As they argue, 'the object symbolically expresses the integration of the owner with his or her social context'.<sup>117</sup> For migrants, the significance of the domestic space for identity is heightened. In her research into Ugandan Asian migration to Britain, for instance, Divya Tolia-Kelly concentrates on the sense of home that can be built around the objects that accompanied the migrants as they moved.<sup>118</sup> Household artefacts can preserve a physical link between old and new lives, providing a tangible reminder of national identity and national history.

The interviews reinforced this assertion that for the maintenance of national consciousness domestic life, and things in the home, are just as important, if not more so, than participation in large-scale, external national demonstrations. As one Italian woman explained, 'although we have been living here a long time, when we

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<sup>115</sup> Smith, *National Identity*; Billig, *Banal Nationalism*; Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*.

<sup>116</sup> M. Csikszentmihalyi and E. Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 123.

<sup>117</sup> Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things*, pp. 38-39. See also A. Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

<sup>118</sup> D. Tolia-Kelly, "Cultures of Identity-Making: Diasporic Negotiations of 'Home'", Paper presented to the Geographies of Home Conference, University College London, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2000.

are in this house it is like being in Italy.'<sup>119</sup> The collected testimonies were littered with references to domestic furnishings and decorations. Polish Christmas celebrations, for example, require very specific items in the home, including a pure linen tablecloth and special wafers sent from Poland. One woman described what could be found in a 'typical' Polish house:

It's usual for a Polish home to have a picture of Our Lady. Mary is quite a big thing in the Polish Catholic church, so it would be usual perhaps to have a picture of Our Lady, maybe a cross, certainly on Palm Sunday. This is nothing to do with religion, but Polish homes would have a lot of this wooden, the plates, the wooden plates, that is very traditional, and the cushions, they are hand embroidered. Again, probably older Polish homes would have a lot of that sort of thing, draped over the back of the settee, and crochet stuff as well, lace and things.<sup>120</sup>

Another Polish woman showed a collection of Polish objects kept at home:

I do have a few things Polish. This [wall-mounted wood carving] is from the south of Poland, from people who are living in the mountains, Zakopanne, it is hand-made. [gets small object from the kitchen] This is for salt, this carving here is traditional ... people put these on trees near small roads, they are religious, but now people are buying these to put on walls in houses ... I get a Polish calendar every year, every year I have one. In Poland it is a tradition that we have name days, not birthdays but name days. In a calendar you have got the name which is for the particular day, and also we have days which are religious holidays, feasts.<sup>121</sup>

A similar account was given of the Greek-Cypriot home: 'If you look around you can see in lots of places, like there is a big church pictures of Jesus. Certain things, Greek calendar, a few antiques that are Greek. The layout of the way the house is presented is very Greek.'<sup>122</sup> One second generation Greek-Cypriot man had similar comments: 'one of the traditions, one of the things I have noticed is that the Greeks like icons and pictures and things, and there's a lot of those around in most Greek houses, my mum has them, so I notice that.'<sup>123</sup> In fact, the whole interviewing process was a very visual experience, with each house visited displaying different

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<sup>119</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

<sup>120</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 3.7.00.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 5.2.03.

<sup>122</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 9.3.01.

<sup>123</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 14.6.00.

signifiers of the occupier's national identity, from family photographs to books, newspapers and magazines, to ornaments and religious icons: each home contained a wide range of everyday reminders of the national consciousness.

The home does not only house these objects, but also provides a space where the national rituals of everyday life can be enacted. One Greek-Cypriot woman spoke of the room she keeps for private prayer:

I've got a room where I've got my icons, I pray ... They light candles in the church, and have this smoke [incense]. I do that every Saturday at home, every Saturday night, and if it is a special saints day I do that. And I light a candle, I light candle every night.<sup>124</sup>

Even the most mundane activities of buying and preparing food at home can be understood as forms of nationally orientated consumption and performance. For one second generation Polish woman, memories of food and home highlighted the differences between the domestic Polish world, and the norms outside it:

And I remember food was a funny one as well. Of course you made some friends and you used to bring them round, they used to say oh what's that funny smell, because of course they'd never smelt garlic sausage. Mum used to make yoghurt herself by getting milk and making it go sour, they used to think that was disgusting, because there was nothing like yoghurt in Britain in the fifties, we ate all this peculiar food. We had cabbage and beetroot, so there was all that. I know my parents used to have a very hard time, being told by the neighbours that we were peasants because we had chickens in the garden.<sup>125</sup>

One Italian woman described the difficulties in purchasing Italian food when she first arrived:

When I first came it was so funny, because we use a lot of olive oil, naturally Italy is the place of olive oil, and the only place where you could find a bit of olive oil was in the chemist. Oil in those days, it was used as a medication. In those days you didn't find a lot of things, you wouldn't dream to find parmesan cheese or parma ham, that sort of thing, but you would find tomatoes, can of tomatoes.<sup>126</sup>

For women in particular, the making of traditional national dishes has acted as a significant reinforcement of national identity: 'Polish housewives always, always

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<sup>124</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 13.6.00.

<sup>125</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 31.8.99.

<sup>126</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

have to have cake, home-made cake. My mother had four children and she always used to come home from work and make a cake. You weren't a proper woman if you weren't making a cake.'<sup>127</sup>

For both sexes domestic spaces and the private sphere play an important part in national identification, precisely due to the small-scale nature of activity undertaken in this arena. Rituals and celebrations are much more meaningful if they are done at a personal level, and done voluntarily. In fact, it is actions such as appreciating household objects and worshipping privately at home that situate individuals so effectively as agents of their own national identity, rather than passive participators in a wider display of national consciousness. Ordinary processes such as shopping for national food locate people as active consumers of national identity, requiring a conscious decision making process not found in most communal forms of national celebration. For national identity to be truly meaningful it has to be in the control of, and resonate with, the individual.

## Conclusion

As the testimonies have revealed, national consciousness forms a fundamental component of the identities of the respondents. Despite living away from the respective homelands for, in some cases, nearly sixty years, ideas of the nation and nationhood have not dissolved. The nation and its heritage is regularly invoked at communal gatherings, in school lessons, in church services, in the home, and in personal and collective memories, narratives and prejudices. Not only is the national identity consciously preserved by the first generation, but its transmission to the children and grandchildren has in most cases become a central priority.

National identity, however, is far more than just the knowledge of the national history, the fear of the 'other', or the ability to explain the intricacies of Christmas Eve celebrations and naming day traditions: it is a much more rounded experience than Anthony Smith's checklist allows for. Reminders and embodiments of national consciousness are embedded in everyday life; even when the complexities of national symbolism are not fully understood, they can be recognised and associated

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<sup>127</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 9.2.01.; see also Temple, "Gatherers of Pig-Swirl and Thinkers".

with the self. As the collected accounts illustrate, this does not alter with migration. Even away from the homeland, everyday life continues to hold the key to national identity, ensuring that although the nation cannot be seen or touched, it can be still be imagined, remembered, celebrated, performed, spoken, eaten, drank, stitched, and above all, felt.

Although national identity is a collective identity, its true resilience lies in its flexibility, in its ability to resonate differently with different people. The very nature of its transmission ensures that the passing down of national consciousness can become like a game of Chinese whispers, with some aspects being remembered, some forgotten, and others still being reinterpreted entirely. What is common to all national identities is the way the collective is made relevant to the individual, the way the large-scale becomes small-scale, the way the external becomes internalised. Polish national history is so significant for the Polish respondents because the tragedy in their own lives mirrors almost exactly the wider historical tragedy of the Polish nation. Greek-Cypriot national identity is partly manifested through personal memories of 1974, and its poignancy for Cypriot, Greek and Turkish relations. Italian national identity manages to incorporate regionalism into itself, allowing individuals to locate their own experiences of the village, city or region in the wider national picture.

There is one key tenet of national identity still to be investigated – that of territory – and this is where the discussion will turn next. The homeland, and the individual and collective relationship with it, is perhaps the most powerful symbol of national consciousness of all, and as such deserves a chapter to itself.

## Chapter Three

### The Myth of No Return

#### Introduction

The concept of a nationally defined territory - a homeland - is something that underpins both experiences of migration and national identity, forming an important overlap between the two. For national identity, the recognition of a national homeland is widely agreed as being one of the central foundations of national consciousness.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, the relationship with territory, place and 'home' is pivotal to migration.<sup>2</sup> After migration, the national territory exerts an even more powerful influence on the national psyche. Not only does it represent the past, the place where lives would have been lived if migration had not happened, but it also has an important part to play in the present; images of and connections with the homeland are embedded in the everyday lives of migrants. While permanent return migration may remain a mythical goal for many migrants, the idea that the homeland is not revisited at all after migration is equally mythical. This chapter will consider the concept of the national territory in three ways; firstly, to explore how the national homeland is imagined and remembered, both on a national, collective scale, and individually; secondly, to investigate the transnational networks that are maintained with the homeland, and participation within them; and thirdly to address the related idea of diaspora and diasporic consciousness.

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<sup>1</sup> See particularly A. D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991); M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> See for instance, N. Rapport and A. Dawson, eds, *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement* (Oxford: Berg, 1998); M. Sarap, "Home and Identity: The Meanings of Home and the Politics of Place" in G. Robertson, M. Marsh, L. Tickner, J. Bird, B. Curtis and T. Putnam, eds, *Traveller's Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 93-104.



## National Territory

It is widely acknowledged that the existence of a clearly defined homeland territory is, in most cases, a necessity for the construction and maintenance of national identity. As Herb and Kaplan argue, 'territory is so inextricably linked to national identity that it cannot be separated out.'<sup>3</sup> The real geographical significance of the homeland territory, however, has received less scrutiny than the social and political dimensions of the nation. In fact, Herb and Kaplan go on to claim that the principal theories of nationalism have been guilty of neglecting the physical centrality of territory to national identity; 'even the concept of nations as bounded communities neglects territory, because the boundaries it examines are social not geographical.'<sup>4</sup> Despite this assertion, however, territory is a recurrent feature in the existing debates.

Perhaps the most significant observations made about national territory have been those highlighting the primordial appeal of a national homeland, however dubious the national claims to a specific piece of land might be. Here the most important dimension of a national homeland has to be its role as the physical evidence of the antiquity of the nation. Accounts of a shared history assume much greater significance if they can be attached in some way to a specific place. Once rooted, ethnic and national heritage become easier to imagine; while time has passed, the land in which the past was played out remains, even if the exact borders have changed. As Anthony Smith notes,

[the national land] is, and must be, the 'historic' land, the 'homeland', the 'cradle' of our people, even where, as with the Turks, it is not the land of ultimate origin ... The homeland becomes the repository of historic memories and associations, the place where 'our' sages, saints and heroes lived, worked, prayed and thought.<sup>5</sup>

The historical legitimization that the national territory provides enables contemporary nationals to feel a powerful sense of rightful attachment to the land itself, ensuring

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<sup>3</sup> G. Herb and D. Kaplan, "Introduction: A Question of Identity" in G. Herb and D. Kaplan, eds, *Nested Identities: Nationalism, Territory and Scale* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), p.2.

<sup>4</sup> Herb and Kaplan, "Introduction", p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, p.9.

that the homeland becomes almost overburdened with the emotional imagery of belonging. As Grosby explains,

for better or worse, these territories are 'homes' for those who are born and dwell within them. The entire territory of the national state is recognised in some way to be your 'own'; it is where you were born; it is the jurisdiction of that which you are familiar; your customs and language - your way of life.<sup>6</sup>

This connection between 'home' and the homeland is central to the broad-based appeal of the national territory. The land where the individual and family home is rooted simultaneously provides a home for the entire nation, thus creating 'heimat', the collective national home. While 'heimat' has been described as 'an ominous utopia', an ideal that is divorced from reality, the image of a 'home' that incorporates both the individual and the collective is nevertheless extremely powerful.<sup>7</sup> Even the language surrounding the homeland reinforces this sense of belonging and ownership, creating images of biological and primordial attachments: 'As evidenced by the near universal use of such emotionally charged terms as the motherland, the fatherland, the native land, the ancestral land, land where my fathers died, and, not least, the homeland, the territory so identified becomes imbued with an emotional, almost reverential dimension'.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, as Billig points out, the semantics of national labelling consciously links people to their homelands, for example the Poles of Poland, Cypriots of Cyprus, Italians of Italy.<sup>9</sup>

The physical link with the homeland is not only felt through kinship and biology. Belonging to the land also involves a keen identification with the physical characteristics of the landscape. As Lowenthal notes, 'countries commonly depict themselves in landscape terms; they hallow traits they fancy uniquely theirs.'<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> S. Grosby, "Territoriality: The Transcendental Primordial Feature of Modern States", *Nations and Nationalism* 1 2 (1995), p. 157.

<sup>7</sup> D. Morley and K. Robins, "No Place Like Heimat: Images of Home(land) in European Culture" *New Formations* 12 1990, p. 4; see also, E. Hobsbawm, "Exile: A Keynote Address", *Social Research* 58 1 1991, pp. 65-68; Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p. 75.

<sup>8</sup> W. Connor, "The Impact of Homelands Upon Diasporas" in G. Scheffer, ed., *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 16; see also, Grosby, "Territoriality", p. 151; G. Gold and R. Paine, "Introduction" in G. Gold, ed., *Minorities and Mother Country Imagery* (1984), pp 1-16.

<sup>9</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p. 78.

<sup>10</sup> D. Lowenthal, "European and English Landscapes as National Symbols" in D. Hooson, ed., *Geography and National Identity* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), p. 17.

Similarly, Anthony Smith asserts that, '[the homeland's] rivers, coasts, lakes, mountains and cities become 'sacred' - places of veneration and exaltation whose inner meanings can be fathomed only by the initiated, that is the self-aware members of the nation.'<sup>11</sup> The dissemination of the 'specialness' of the landscape logically becomes the primary focus for national poets and artists, clearly tying nature and nation together in the national imagination.<sup>12</sup>

Within 'modernist' perspectives on nationalism heavy emphasis is placed on the importance of the co-ordination of economic, political, administrative and geographical boundaries into 'nation' states, specifically in Europe. Clearly marked geographical national boundaries enabled the creation of a defined sphere where the standardisation of language, education and law could be introduced to ensure a common, national, experience within the state borders.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the physical distribution of land could be conceived as a reflection of the political power and international status of the nation-state; a territorial mirror to the changing political landscape.<sup>14</sup> The territorial integrity of the nation state is the most fundamental aspect of the nationalist ideology: borders must be protected, by laws and when necessary, by force. Again as Billig argues, nationalism and the collective attachment of a population to its homeland may be 'banal', but it is not necessarily benign.<sup>15</sup>

The national territory incorporates a complex mix of the physical and tangible, and the emotional and imagined. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that territory and the national homeland are recurrent themes in the collected interviews. The understanding that the national territory is a clearly demarcated, unique, physical space is clear throughout the testimonies, from the images of the homeland told through national and personal histories, to the more everyday descriptions of the landscape, weather and national lifestyle. These references illustrate that the homeland still retains high status after migration has taken place; it may be a long

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<sup>11</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> See particularly S. Schama, "Homelands", *Social Research* 58 1 (1991), pp. 11-30.

<sup>13</sup> See B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983); E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

<sup>14</sup> See J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p. 7.

way away but the memories of the national territory are invoked on a daily basis. The homeland is not forgotten.

## **Remembering the Homeland**

Territory has a different role to play in the national identities of each group. In the three case-studies, the projected image of the national territory reflects the perceived image of the national history and the dominant themes of national identity. For Polish and Greek-Cypriot national identity, as discussed in the previous chapter, the vulnerability of the national territory is a central strand of the national narrative. The geography of the nation permeates Polish national consciousness in particular: Polish national history reifies the national territory, but at the same time has constructed a non-territorial means of survival, through culture, language and religion. As a result, and as already considered, the issue of territorial ownership is a serious discussion point in Polish national identity. One interviewee in particular demonstrated the strong perception of a primordial link with the homeland, the historical right to claim the national territory. It is worth repeating his assertion that although Poland has a precarious geographical position in Europe, 'we have been placed there by our forefathers and that is where we are going to stay.'<sup>16</sup> Again, as discussed before, changes in the territorial boundaries have created significant 'grey areas' in Polish national history and identity. As a result, however, the projection of the Polish homeland's geographic boundaries is now quite 'flexible', particularly when it comes to clarifying the differences between historical and contemporary Polish borders in the west. This was illustrated in the earlier example of geography teaching in the Polish Saturday school, and is something commented upon by Walker Connor: 'Somewhat analogously, Poles, in their numerous references to homeland, do not appear to differentiate between traditionally Polish-dominated regions and that large western sector of the contemporary state of Poland which, prior to 1945, was populated principally by Germans'.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, the Greek-Cypriot respondents demonstrated great sensitivity towards the historical legacy of Cyprus' geographic positioning. To repeat another quote, 'its

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 26.1.01.

position, the key of the Middle East, everybody needs Cyprus. Anybody can capture Cyprus'.<sup>18</sup> Another man asserted:

It has always been a very strategically important place, even in Alexander the Great's day, where it is. You can go straight to the Middle East, you can go to Egypt, north Africa, or you can go to Turkey or Greece. That's why the English have still got their base there. It's a very, very good spot. It's one of the best spots on earth because you can hit almost anywhere. It's also a very good listening post. Unfortunately for the inhabitants, it's the worst thing that can happen to them.<sup>19</sup>

The Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus has had a fundamental impact on the image of the homeland; for Greek-Cypriots a significant chunk of the Cypriot national territory has been stolen by its northern invaders. As one woman commented, 'I feel like half the place I came from is gone, missing, and there is nothing I can do about it. It's like you've got a house and somebody kicks you out, and you can't go again inside to your house, it's like that, the same.'<sup>20</sup> Another man commented that '[when] you go to Cyprus you can only go to half of the place.'<sup>21</sup> For Italian national identity, again the image of the national landscape reflects both the geographical divide between north and south, and between the regions. As one man stated, 'In Italy there is still a gap between north and south. The south of Italy is not industrialised... In Italy with twenty four regions, you've got twenty four different individual states, they are like as they used to be before the unification.'<sup>22</sup> While the Polish homeland is imagined in its generous historical entirety, and the island of Cyprus is imagined in its incomplete, occupied state, Italy is imagined in regions and divisions.

Even more important than these national perceptions of the homeland, perhaps, is the status that territory holds in the personal memories of the respondents. The homeland is the place where the life stories of the first generation migrants are rooted. As one second generation Polish woman explained, it was only when she

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<sup>17</sup> W. Connor, "The Impact of Homelands Upon Diasporas", p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 9.3.01.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 3.7.01.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 9.3.01.

<sup>21</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 3.7.01.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with first generation Italian man, Leicester, 26.1.02.

visited the exact site of her father's pre-war home that she felt that she understood his history:

The one time I did feel identification [in Poland] was when we went to my father's family, they have still got the land, going to see the land and tying that to the stories that my father had told me. I sort of thought well this is where he did it, it comes through, all those stories, and about how they had to give so much up and had so many hardships. It's not just going to see where he was brought up, for me that was a lot more to it than that.<sup>23</sup>

Similar sentiments were voiced by a Greek-Cypriot man, as he spoke of the importance of taking his children to their family's village:

[My children] know everything about Cyprus. They were a bit lucky to be honest. In 1973, just before the invasion which happened in 1974, we drove there. We went in the car to Europe and we stayed there for six weeks, so they know quite a lot of their birthplace. They were young, but mostly they still remember. They remember their grandparents as well, the places, when I talk about it. I always mention such and such a place, various places in our village, and they still remember it.<sup>24</sup>

The significance of the national territory resonates on both a collective and individual level. Just as there is 'personal nationalism', so there is the 'personal homeland': while the national territory may inspire similar recounted stories and sentiments, no two people could in reality have exactly the same personal experiences of the homeland. It is inevitable, also, that these personal connections with the national territory are focused on smaller places within the boundaries of the homeland. A village, a house, even a plot of land, is capable, as the site of individual and familial belonging, of symbolising the life history of the family, while at the same time providing plentiful reminders of the existence of the wider national territory.<sup>25</sup> While Gillis argues that the recent proliferation of family history research signals a movement away from 'national' history, it seems more likely that small-scale

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with second generation Polish woman, Leicester, 9.2.01.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 19.3.01.

<sup>25</sup> For an interesting discussion on the juxtaposition between national and local see A. Confino and A. Skaria, "The Local Life of Nationhood", *National Identities* 4 1 (2002), pp. 7-24.

memories and histories are so appealing because they are still comfortably located within the wider boundaries of the nation.<sup>26</sup>

Since much of this homeland identification is played out on a local scale it is not surprising that references to the landscape focus on descriptions of the immediate environment, rather than of the entire national territory. In fact, it is the intimate nature of homeland recognition which ensures the prevalence of the physical landscape in territorial memories. A return to the comments made about life before migration, for example, illustrates that pre-migration recollections depict 'home' and the homeland in great, tangible detail. Descriptions of life in Cyprus and Italy typically include accounts of farm-life, a reflection of the closeness of rural life to the land. One Greek-Cypriot woman, for example, spoke of her life in a small village when she was young:

[My father] was a landowner, he was growing corn, all sorts of kinds of seeds, he had a lot of land, land for vegetables, potatoes, beans and everything, and then we had a lot of land, acres and acres of melons. He had a lot of people work for him, two men look after the sheep and other animals, and a lot of people work in the fields.<sup>27</sup>

To repeat the words of an Italian woman from the first chapter, representations of life in southern Italy are characterised by the farm and working on the land:

People from the south, they know what it's like to do hard work, it's not like now when you've got the tractors, there people used to have to do things by hand, dig the land, chop the grain, all by hand. And then perhaps the land they had was miles away so they had to cart all their fruits and things back home, with donkeys or whatever.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, a recurrent theme in accounts of pre-war Poland is the severity of the winters endured there and the impact that these had on everyday life, particularly in rural areas; as one man remarked, 'in winter times I couldn't go very often to school.'<sup>29</sup> These are also the images passed down through homeland stories:

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<sup>26</sup> See J. R. Gillis, 'Introduction; Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship' in J. R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp.17-19.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 13.6.00.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with first generation Italian woman, Leicester, 5.7.01.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 28.2.01., a.m.

My dad lived on a farm and my cousin still farms the land, so there were lots of stories about that. He used to tell us how they would sit around knitting in the winter. My mum was only nine when the war broke out. She used to tell us about the farm. When she was ill she used to be wrapped up in furs and put on this horse drawn sleigh, and taken to the doctor in the nearest town. They worked hard.<sup>30</sup>

The harsh winters themselves are also embedded in memories of forced migration:

About three months before they [the Russians] came and took everything from the farm, which they had the winter storage, there was a habit of getting things ready for the winter, because the winters are more severe than anywhere else and nothing grows outside, and so they took everything they could which was of use to them, including the animals and horses.<sup>31</sup>

In almost all of the accounts of deportation to Siberia, images of the winter landscape are vividly remembered. While one woman recalled that on the day of deportation, 'it was very snowy, the snow was over a metre deep, frost was very severe', another man commented that 'that night and that winter was very cold, about twenty eight degrees below zero, it was very, very cold.'<sup>32</sup>

The weather is an important element of the recognised physical landscape. Just as trees, lakes and mountains can be associated with the homeland, so the weather too takes on an implicitly national identity; once again, however, the weather incorporates a national dimension but is at the same time a physical experience, ensuring that its appeal is both tangible and metaphorical. When asked what was missed most about the homeland most of the Greek-Cypriot and Italian respondents indicated the landscape or the weather. One Greek-Cypriot woman was particularly emphatic with her answer: 'The sun, the mountains, I love the mountains.'<sup>33</sup> Cognate sentiments were voiced by an Italian woman:

Well there is one thing [I miss], I suppose it's the only thing, it's the weather. I mean today it is like spring here. Coming from the north in the winter it's not very good, probably worse than here, but at least they've got a better summer.

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<sup>30</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 9.2.01.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 22.11.00.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 16.2.01.; first generation Polish man, 28.2.01.

<sup>33</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 13.6.00.



Starting from March, when it starts getting nice, and then you go through September and sometimes October, its very, very nice.<sup>34</sup>

Closely aligned with the weather is lifestyle and the annual calendar, purposely followed to co-ordinate with the metaphysical national landscape. As one Greek-Cypriot woman commented: '[here we] rush, rush, I mean English people as well, all the time they rush, rush. Back home it's not like that. They sit down to have their coffee, have their friends on the veranda, and the weather is lovely.'<sup>35</sup> Again in Cyprus, Easter is remembered as a special time for more than religious reasons: 'Our [best time] is Easter because it is lovely weather at Easter, not hot nor cold. Oh my God that time when I was there was so much celebration. There was very, very nice cooking, singing, visiting each other, its very nice.'<sup>36</sup> The homeland plays host to an encounter that touches all the senses: the smell and taste of cooking, the sight of the mountains, the warmth of the sun on the skin, the touch of greeting people, and the sound of singing.<sup>37</sup> It is clear that in the eyes of the respondents the specific physical combinations provided in their own homelands are unique to their nation, and cannot be reproduced anywhere else. Mediterranean countries may have similar annual cycles, but the exact mix of weather, scenery, food and folk songs will retain a national distinctiveness.

The respondents continually demonstrated a recognition of their own national homeland as a unique, bounded territory, and a familiarity with the land at a variety of levels. The correlation of homeland and belonging is clear; as one Polish woman who was too young to remember living in Poland explained:

I think it's your roots. To me, I wanted my children to see it, I took my daughter two years ago. It's knowing your roots, it's like anybody who doesn't know his family, and the country it's the same, you do want to know where your forefathers grew up, where your family came from. I don't know why, I always feel at home in Poland, even though I didn't grow up there.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with first generation Italian woman, Leicester, 7.2.01.

<sup>35</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 13.6.00.

<sup>36</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 13.6.00.

<sup>37</sup> The importance of physical senses in images of home is discussed in M. Morse, "Home - Smell, Taste, Posture, Gleam" in H. Naficy, ed., *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media and the Politics of Place* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 63-74.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 7.8.02.

The relationship with the homeland, of course, is not always so concordant. For most of the Polish refugees who had lived on the eastern side of the country, for example, the post-war territorial shift to the west has disrupted the link between home and birthplace, and the nation:

[My home] is in Belarus. It's right at the top of Poland, pre-war Poland ... we've been to see family, but on this side, we never went over to where we were born. Some people did. In my husband's case they actually pulled the house down with all the buildings. Why would I like to go, I can't remember what my house looked like, but I know the address where it was, and I have got a photo. My brother was only five when he died so my parents bought a plot of land, had it fenced off and that is where his grave is, his monument. I've got a photo, and I thought if I could go to the cemetery surely I would be able to... But they took all the headstones down with Polish names, just to say there were no Poles there.<sup>39</sup>

For the Greek-Cypriot respondents from the north, the Turkish invasion has damaged the personal bond with the homeland, reducing the relationship with their birthplaces to one characterised by loss and danger:

... from my village you can't go further. It's the last one, my village is the last one. From my village you can't go on the other side, it's all Turkish ... In the countryside, if you don't know where you are going, there are still landmines, and it is dangerous to walk still. And that is in the places that were not taken over.<sup>40</sup>

Another man commented:

I'm from Cyprus, from the north of Cyprus, Irenia district. It is now occupied by the Turks, it is occupied territory of the island. Unfortunately you can't go there ... the invasion started just outside our village, about half a mile outside my birthplace, the invasion ... we can't go to our birthplace ... I haven't got anything at all there. Whatever property we had is on the other side, and is lost.<sup>41</sup>

Even for those who cannot go back to their past homes, however, the homeland still retains its power and interest. Reconnecting with the national territory, in all its guises, is an immensely popular past-time for migrants.

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 26.2.01.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 9.3.01.

<sup>41</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot man, 19.3.01.

## Transnationalism

As Ludger Pries acknowledges, in the past decade the field of migration research has moved beyond the standard theoretical approaches to studying migration.<sup>42</sup> Emphasis has shifted from reasons for migrating to what happens after migration has occurred. Central to this is the recognition that movement away from the homeland does not result in the divorce of migrants from their national territory. As Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc assert, 'today, immigrants develop networks, activities, patterns of living, and ideologies that span their home and the host society.'<sup>43</sup> Thus we have transnationalism, 'the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement', and 'a process by which migrants, through their daily life activities and social, economic and political relations create social fields that cross national boundaries'.<sup>44</sup> Thomas Faist even suggests that transnationalism, and the 'transnationalization of migrants' activities' is the second phase of the migration process, a natural post-movement development.<sup>45</sup> Particular recognition is given to the role of contemporary technology in facilitating these activities, from Skrbis' plain speaking affirmation that, 'physical distance nowadays neither removes visual images of the homeland (because of media hi-tech), nor does it prevent physical interaction (because of transport)', to Benedict Anderson's observation that, 'the communications revolution of our time has profoundly affected the subjective experience of migration.'<sup>46</sup> As Robert Smith notes, 'today's travel and telecommunications technology make it possible to simultaneously carry on

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<sup>42</sup> L. Pries, "New Migration in Transnational Spaces" in L. Pries, ed., *Migration and Transnational Social Spaces* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 1-35.

<sup>43</sup> L. Basch, N. Glick Schiller and C. Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Post-Colonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (Basel: Gordon and Breach, 1994), p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound*, p. 7 and p. 22.

<sup>45</sup> T. Faist, "Developing Transnational Social Spaces: The Turkish-German Example" in Pries, ed., *Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*, p. 63.

<sup>46</sup> Z. Skrbis, *Long-Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p. 3; B. Anderson, "Exodus", *Critical Enquiry* 20 Winter 1994, p. 322.

significant public lives in more than one place'.<sup>47</sup> In a globalised world, the mechanisms for migrants to retain a territorial connection with the homeland are vast; technology can bring the homeland closer, and the survival of national identity is clearly given a helping hand by continuous access to the national territory. Furthermore, technology has enabled transnational activities to become embedded in the everyday lives of migrants, a normal part of the daily routine. As Robins has noted, transnationalism has become, like nationalism, 'banal'.<sup>48</sup>

Transnationalism is clearly not a new phenomenon, but simply facilitated and intensified by globalisation. As Morawska argues, migrants have always been able to stay close to their homelands. At the beginning of the twentieth century migrants in America were constructing types of transnational networks that seem to be considered specific to current migration patterns:

The back and forth flow of migrants and densely circulating letters... created an effective transnational system of communication, social control and household management, travel and employment assistance that extended both *forward* from the (im)migrants' native places in Europe into the United States and *backward* from America to their original homes.<sup>49</sup>

How far new technologies have enhanced these transnational networks, however, is an area of debate. Has the breakdown of national boundaries and the creation of virtual communities rendered the concept of a physical national territory almost obsolete, leaving instead a 'deterritorialized' version of the nation which can be accessed from anywhere in the world?<sup>50</sup> Or, on the other hand, are transnational connections themselves bound and shaped by their local contexts, characterised more by local territory than national territory, leading ultimately to be understood as

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<sup>47</sup> R. Smith, "Transnational Localities: Community, Technology and the Politics of Membership within the Context of Mexico and U.S. Migration" in M. P. Smith and L. E. Guarnizo, eds, *Transnationalism From Below* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1998), p. 227.

<sup>48</sup> K. Robins, "Turkish Migration and Banal Transnationalism", Paper presented to Diasporas, Globalisation and the Media seminar series, London School of Economics, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2002; reference to Billig, *Banal Nationalism*.

<sup>49</sup> E. Morawska, *The New-Old Transmigrants, Their Transnational Lives, and Ethnicization: A Comparison of 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> Century Situations* (Florence: European University Institute Working Paper, 1999), p. 7.

<sup>50</sup> See particularly Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound*, p. 269.

'translocal' rather than transnational networks?<sup>51</sup> Local contexts are clearly important in transnational activities, but in a world where independent, individual activities in particular have been aided by technological advances, locality does not necessarily define transnationalism.

The concept of transnationalism has also sparked further debates, most notably how freely the term 'transnational' can be used to describe migrant activities at all. Portes asserts that, 'little is gained by the re-labelling of immigrants as "transmigrants" since the term adds nothing new to what is already known'.<sup>52</sup> Transnationalism, however, is such a persuasive concept because although the actions of migrants may not have altered dramatically over time, the language used to discuss them is now more explicit in emphasising the continued importance of the homeland in migrants' lives: 'transnationalism' has become a useful word to succinctly describe migrants' ongoing cross-national activities and experiences. Mahler is also more sceptical, calling for a more cautious classification of transnationalism, and arguing that the frequency and intensity of any 'transnational' activities have to be taken into account more carefully.<sup>53</sup> Significantly, most studies of transnationalism have focused on large, active migrant groups in North America, or groups such as the Turkish minority in Germany, where Mahler's concerns would evidently be alleviated.<sup>54</sup> The ideas and theories relating to transnationalism, however, are clearly very relevant for the three smaller case-study groups, and provide a useful context in which to investigate their ongoing links with the homeland.

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<sup>51</sup> See M. P. Smith and L. E. Guarnizo, "The Locations of Transnationalism" in Smith and Guarnizo, *Transnationalism From Below*, pp. 11-15.

<sup>52</sup> A. Portes, "Transnationalism from Below: The Rise of Transnational Communities", *ESRC Transnational Communities Project Working Paper WPTC-98-01*. Available from: [http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working\\_papers/portes.pdf](http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working_papers/portes.pdf) [Accessed 9<sup>th</sup> January 2002], p. 17.

<sup>53</sup> S. J. Mahler, "Theoretical and Empirical Contributions Towards a Research Agenda for Transnationalism" in Smith and Guarnizo, *Transnationalism from Below*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>54</sup> For example, A. Portes, L. E. Guarnizo and P. Landolt, eds, "Transnational Communities", special issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22 2 (1996); K Robins, "Turkish Migration and Banal Transnationalism".

## Transnationalism in Evidence

The collected interviews revealed that the respondents are involved in several types of transnational activities, from political campaigning, to family visits, to regular telephone calls, to watching satellite television. While varying in nature and in levels of participation, each kind of transnational connection works to reduce the physical and emotional distance between Leicester and the different homelands. It would be difficult to categorise these activities, although it is evident that some links require a high degree of activism on the part of the migrants, while others, such as satellite television, can be maintained passively.

Perhaps the most obvious example of 'active' transnationalism would be political activism directly located in or directed at the political and international affairs of the homeland. In a highly globalised world the potential for transnational political movements, particularly those with a national focus, is clearly immense.<sup>55</sup> While none of the three groups constitute a major transnational political force, various examples of 'low level' political activism were uncovered. The most striking example, perhaps, was the prolonged efforts sustained by the Polish 'community' to 'fight' against the Communist regime. All of the first generation Polish interviewees relayed that they had maintained an energetic interest in the Polish domestic political situation throughout the period of Communist rule, closely observing developments and crises. Driven by the historical feeling of duty to preserve national territorial independence, many respondents recounted how they had imagined themselves to be ambassadors for a nation unable to find its own voice:

The people living outside the country were more or less ambassadors for the people who were living within the country who at many times couldn't say what they felt. So we were able to speak for them. We were also, the people overseas, like ambassadors talking about the situation that was in Poland, we were like the official spokesmen for what was happening.<sup>56</sup>

While this claim is made of Polish people outside Poland generally, the archives of the *Leicester Mercury* corroborate Leicester's Polish commitment, offering a dramatisation of community led political activism embodied in strongly worded

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<sup>55</sup> See G. Sheffer, ed., *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

<sup>56</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman and Polish priest, Leicester, 3.8.99. Quote from the woman's testimony.

condemnations of the Polish government, particularly during the period of martial law. One piece, for example, claimed that the introduction of martial law had:

... resulted in many killings, thousands of arrests and imprisonment of our fellow countrymen, on a scale reminiscent of the most cruel and repressive period of Stalinist and Nazi rule in our country ... We appeal to all the free nations of the world, to their parliaments and governments and to all the appropriate international organisations, to give their moral, economic and political support to our oppressed nation in its time of crisis and suffering.<sup>57</sup>

Political activities went further than simply issuing statements in the local press: for the endurance of the regime the Polish exiled parliament in London continued to operate, existing as an embodiment of transnational political aspirations. One man described his experiences of political involvement:

We had our government here in exile and we had a parliament as well, and I was elected here in Leicester, we had three elections here in Leicester, as representing the Polish community to the Polish government in exile in London. So I was involved in politics, so when Solidarity came along then I invited several of the top people from Solidarity to come and give lectures here in England. We have been working politically, inviting people from Poland and organising material help, quite a lot. The Solidarity movement was penniless and they needed money to rescue people from prisons, they needed money for literature and so on. We supplied the money, we supplied the typing machines, copiers and so on, until the authorities grabbed it back. From the beginning we did quite a lot, we had to collect the money here. The money we collected was first to support the government in exile and secondly trying to help Poland, and we helped quite a lot.<sup>58</sup>

It is particularly significant that this type of activism was two-way: the aid sent out from the exiled government in Britain was reciprocated in the form of high profile visits from Poland to Britain.

Overlapping political and economic transnational activities routinely took place in Leicester. Several of the interviewees, for example, spoke of the importance of sending parcels to Poland, something also featured extensively in the *Leicester Mercury*. Throughout the Communist era appeals were issued for the gathering of money and food packages to be sent to ease shortages, with the collected goods usually being physically delivered by local Polish men. As an illustration, in January 1981 the Leicester Polish Youth Association issued the following appeal: 'Anyone

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<sup>57</sup> Polish community appeal in *Leicester Mercury*, 30 12 81, p 14

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Mr. Dobski, first generation Polish man, BBC Radio Leicester Archive, 1995

willing to donate money or non-perishable foods such as tinned meat, coffee, baby food, should take it to the Polish centre anytime between 6 p.m. and 10.30 p.m. Tuesday to Sunday.<sup>59</sup> As one woman commented, the ongoing potential of crisis in Poland was a continuous focus, sometimes taking precedence over everything else:

I think that we as refugees here, we were much more concentrating on what was happening in Poland than making our way here. A lot of people had their families there and so on. I think with the elderly generation they certainly had not thought how to make their living in the best way, because they were forever preoccupied with helping their families.<sup>60</sup>

Participation in these types of operations was clearly widespread. The political and economic fight for the homeland offered opportunities for diverse involvement throughout the community, ranging from representing the city in the exiled parliament, to sending out food and money. In fact, just as Temple has highlighted the gendered nature of activities within the Polish diaspora, these transnational projects were similarly shared along gender lines, with women making parcels and men undertaking the more visible public roles of fundraising and distribution.<sup>61</sup>

One further aspect of Polish political activism is the historically close relationship between politics, nation and the Catholic church. Religious networks were inevitably politicised during the Communist regime, and although the exact role of the church as an opposition force under Communism is a source of debate, the church was undoubtedly perceived as an important alternative political voice.<sup>62</sup> Visits from church leaders were welcomed as a symbol of protest against the regime, and in Leicester the church was used as one of the forums for discussion on the domestic situation. In 1985, for example, the *Leicester Mercury* reported on a visit from Cardinal Glemp, the head of the Roman Catholic church in Poland, noting his thanks given to the

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<sup>59</sup> *Leicester Mercury*, 17.1.81., p. 14.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 22.11.00.

<sup>61</sup> See B. Temple, "Constructing Polishness: Researching Polish Women's Lives", *Women's Studies International Forum* 17 1 (1994), pp. 47-55; B. Temple, "'Gatherers of Pig-Swirl and Thinkers': Gender and Community Amongst British Poles", *Journal of Gender Studies* 4 1 (1995), pp. 63-72.

<sup>62</sup> See particularly S. P. Ramet, *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Meaning of the Great Transformation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), pp. 155-172.



Polish communities in Britain for their support for Poland during the turbulence of the previous few years.<sup>63</sup>

Polish economic and political transnationalism did not break down with the fall of the Communist regime. Political interest in the post-Communist regime has remained high. Again, the political situation is watched closely, and everybody has an opinion about how Poland has performed in its transition to democracy. Once again the themes of freedom and independence are never far away:

I think the unfortunate thing is that the people who were in power are still there, and they know how to rule. Although there was an election, they are the people who rule still, because the opposition are not given enough publicity, and I think in a lot of cases there is still the power in the old hands.<sup>64</sup>

Another woman voiced similar frustrations:

It makes us angry here that they just don't know how to use their freedom, how to get together in government, not to fight one another. Perhaps from the distance we look in a different way. I know all the parties, the people in those parties. But some people just get annoyed because in Poland there are many people who seem to have forgotten the past, how they got the freedom.<sup>65</sup>

Concern over Poland's politics stretches beyond views and opinions. In the recent referendum for Polish entry into the European Union, for example, 6206 Polish people in Britain headed to London to vote 'yes' or 'no', including several from Leicester.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, economic networks are still strong. One particular fund sends money to Polish people still living in the pre-war eastern regions of Poland, now part of the Ukraine and Belarus, in order to strengthen their attachment with the Polish homeland:

They lived there, they stayed there, they were not deported some of them. They stayed there and their lives were very, very hard, especially in the Stalin times ... Many of the young people go to study in Poland, and their fees are paid by the university, like in Lublin. The priest was here the other day, he goes around all the Polish communities in Britain, America, to collect money for Lublin university so they can help young people from Ukraine, the Polish people, to study, learn about Poland, Polish culture, and go back to Ukraine

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<sup>63</sup> *Leicester Mercury*, 26.2.85., p. 14.

<sup>64</sup> First generation Polish woman, 22.11.00.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 2.7.01.

<sup>66</sup> *Dziennik Polski*, 10.6.03., p. 1; conversation with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 9.6.03.

and get a good job there. They help a lot. We collect money for them every year, even during the Communist times.<sup>67</sup>

Political activism appears to be less all-encompassing for the Greek-Cypriot and Italian respondents. Several of the Greek-Cypriot interviewees, however, did share the same interest in domestic political developments in Cyprus, clearly made more important by the 1974 invasion. One man was more explicit about political activity, presenting an image of a very politically orientated community:

Politically, not Labour, Conservative, but when it comes to the problem of Cyprus they are very active. If there is a demonstration or if there is a protest everybody takes part in it. Our duty is to put pressure on our local MPs. Obviously the Greek community in England is very strong, in London there is a quarter of a million Greek-Cypriots living in London, and they exercise quite a lot of pressure on the government. There is a lobby for Cyprus ... We try to influence the decisions they make.<sup>68</sup>

He went on to add that some men from Leicester had chosen to go to Cyprus to undertake national service: 'Some people who are born here in England go to Cyprus for their national service ... I can think of three or four of them from Leicester who have done it.' Another respondent spoke of community members going to Cyprus to vote in elections there: 'People go from here to vote at the time of the elections, and it is usually the Communist ones that go, and they go and vote for a Communist party ... they go to vote, maybe some people are connected as well.'<sup>69</sup> Not everybody wanted to be involved in politics however, and for some the problems of 1974 were seen as evidence that politics is something to be avoided: 'The politics is difficult, I'm not a politician, I try not to get involved.'<sup>70</sup> Other people were just simply not interested in politics of any sort, British or Cypriot.

A similar situation emerged with the Italian respondents. One interviewee in particular spoke of his own extensive political experiences: 'I am involved in politics. I used to be a member of the Italian Communist Party ... I used to go to conferences

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<sup>67</sup> First generation Polish woman, 2.7.01.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 28.6.01.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 8.7.01.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 2.7.01.

and all sorts. I went as a representative of the party many times.<sup>71</sup> Another man claimed that he voted in Italian elections if he was in Italy at the time:

I can vote in Italy if I go down to Italy to vote. In Italy you can vote just in Italy, except the European elections you can vote here. Now they passed a law next time all the Italians living abroad can vote by post, so next time I will vote by post ... I don't go to Italy especially to vote. If I am in Italy during that period I vote there, but I never went on purpose to vote in Italy.<sup>72</sup>

Other than this, political involvement did not appear to stretch beyond following the news.<sup>73</sup> As with the Greek-Cypriot respondents, several claimed to have no desire to follow any type of politics. This lack of political awareness among Italians in Leicester was a clear source of frustration for the former Communist Party member: 'Italians seem to think politics is a dirty word ... Italians abroad do not want to associate themselves with politics, but in Italy you cannot breath without politics, it comes into everything.'<sup>74</sup> While not exactly political activism, the *Leicester Mercury* in 1980 did note strong concern from the city's Italian population about the large earthquake in Italy, illustrating at least a community policy of speaking out on matters of homeland concern.<sup>75</sup>

'Politics' clearly represents different things for each group. For Greek-Cypriots, politics means bitter divisions and strained regional relations with both Turkey and Greece. Although the Turkish invasion has relevance for all Cypriots, for many of the respondents the domestic political wrangling has little appeal. Understanding of and interest in politics, therefore, is still clouded by anger and regret about 1974. Italian interest in politics is by far the weakest of the three groups, perhaps a surprising observation considering Italy's political climate, although the first generation who had moved from small villages arguably would not have had an extensive involvement with politics in the homeland anyway. For Italians, politics means Christian Democrat or Socialist, or more recently, for Berlusconi or against, not choices necessarily guaranteed to mobilise political activism from afar. It also signifies corrupt

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<sup>71</sup> Interview with first generation Italian man, Leicester, 10.7.01.

<sup>72</sup> First generation Italian man, 26.1.02.

<sup>73</sup> Italian political activity in Britain more generally is outlined in T. Colpi, *The Italian Factor: The Italian Community in Great Britain* (London: Mainstream, 1991), pp. 226-8.

<sup>74</sup> First generation Italian man, 10.7.01.

<sup>75</sup> *Leicester Mercury* 25.11.80., 28.11.80., 2.12.80.

governments and the Mafia, something better left in the homeland. As one man commented:

The government in Italy is a very good question, because I think the Italians don't have very good politicians, they don't have much experience in politics ... So this government we have got now with Berlusconi, it is a government that is full of crooks and is also full of ex-fascists. You say why the Italians are voting them? Because the Italians have no choice, because the left, the centre left have not produced very good politicians, so you cannot rely. They are probably more honest but they haven't got the skill to run a country, and also because they are always quarrelling with each other, so the people say we are fed up with this quarrelling...so they voted Berlusconi, a businessman, has proved to be a good business man, although there is a lot of indication of corruption, malpractice, involvement with Mafia, money laundering.<sup>76</sup>

For the Poles however, politics still seems to carry an overt connection with national freedom - how safe that freedom is and how well it is being used. Political divisions do exist; as one man commented, 'politically there are different interests. You know the Polish joke, put two Poles together and they will form three different parties. They are politically minded.'<sup>77</sup> However, either the respondents have done a very convincing job in masking these disagreements, or politics is a much more unifying issue for Polish exiles than for the domestic Polish population, and for Italian and Greek-Cypriot migrants. Experience of exile has taught that the luxury of political factions can only be enjoyed once national independence has been secured.

### **Smaller-Scale Transnationalism**

Most of the evidence of transnational activity uncovered in the interviews is family and individually orientated. Rather than taking part in community wide organised projects, the majority of contact with the homeland is maintained on a smaller scale. The most obvious illustrations of transnational connections are those related to return trips to the national territory. Right from the moment of immigration into Britain, homeland visits have played a central role in the lives of the interviewed migrants. Even when political and economic circumstances made travelling back difficult, visits were carefully planned and carried out.

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<sup>76</sup> First generation Italian man, 26.1.02.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 23.8.99.

Despite the restrictions placed on travel by the Communist regime in Poland, and the circulating stories of the danger of returning, several respondents revealed that they had managed to visit Poland before 1989. One man described his first holiday in Poland, taken in 1967:

My first holiday, with my first earned money I spent going to Poland, although I was only allowed two week's annual leave. I enjoyed, well my roots, visiting the country, I went right up to the north and the Baltic, to the south, and my holiday dragged on for over three weeks. My boss was worried that I was missing in Poland. My friend asked me, was I afraid to go to Poland? Yes, of course I was frightened, but I was at first inquisitive and the fright came after that. Yes, they kept me for twenty four hours in Poland, interrogating me through the night and half day, asking me who my parents were before the war, and obviously I said I was four years old, I don't remember. But that wasn't sufficient for them, they wanted details, why didn't I go back to Poland after the war, my place was in Poland. They said every time you change your address from town to town you have to report to the police, and that was uncomfortable because I knew that in the hotels they had listening devices in the walls.<sup>78</sup>

Another woman recounted similar memories: 'The first time we went back was in 1972, it was still Communist, but my husband wanted to see his family in Pomerania. But the atmosphere was very tense, nobody could say anything, they couldn't talk.'<sup>79</sup> While trips did take place, however, images of the Communist regime discouraged a higher frequency of holidays being taken in Poland. Added to the political disincentives were the financial implications of travelling to Poland. As refugees, many respondents asserted that, at least during the early years of their time in Leicester, their economic priorities had been more urgently focused on paying rent and raising children. There was simply no time or money for holidays, to Poland or anywhere else.

Similar obstacles were voiced by the Italian and Greek-Cypriot respondents. As economic migrants there was an even greater emphasis on building financial security in Leicester. For many, homeland visits had to wait. As one Greek-Cypriot woman explained: 'The first twenty three years I didn't go [back] because the children were young, and we couldn't leave. We had two women to look after the children, but no-one can look after them like yourself, because I used to work all the

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<sup>78</sup> First generation Polish man, 23.8.99.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 16.2.01.

time.<sup>80</sup> Another man commented that, 'in the beginning I couldn't go to Cyprus for financial reasons.'<sup>81</sup> The Italian respondents, again recounted the same experiences: 'For the first time I couldn't afford to go [back] for about seven years. That was hard.'<sup>82</sup> Another woman claimed that she had been unusual in being able to return: '[I went back] even then. My mother sent me the money for the journey, perhaps I was one of the lucky ones, because I didn't come here to work.'<sup>83</sup> Significantly, financial difficulties were not the only hurdle to a close homeland relationship. As several interviewees explained, the actual journey itself was time consuming and required extensive planning. One Italian woman remarked that, 'in those days we went by train, you can imagine it took one day and one night to get there.'<sup>84</sup>

While return visits were taken before the 1990s, there has been an undeniable change in the nature and intensity of travel to the homeland in the last decade across the three groups. For the Polish respondents the timely coupling of the fall of communism in Poland with advances in travel technology has allowed for a substantial re-engagement with the homeland. Most obviously, this has meant that the places which had been previously preserved in memory, and remembered in the context of pre-war Poland, are now being revisited. In many cases this process of returning 'home' has been shocking and unsettling, forcing the respondents to confront changes in their homelands and potentially creating a dislocation between memory, time and place. One man voiced the frustration he felt when revisiting his home:

When I went for the first time, after fifty odd years when I first got the chance to go on holiday, actually I took the ashes of my wife to Poland, and buried my wife in my parents' grave, and so for the first time when I went to the village where I was born and where I went to school, I looked at it and said to my sister, what have you done to the country? I remember my part of the country where I came from it was more or less the richest part of Poland, and when I went there, oh my God. Nothing painted, nothing repaired, they think

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<sup>80</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 13.6.00.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 9.3.01.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with first generation Italian man, Leicester, 2.7.01.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with first generation Italian woman, Leicester, 29.6.01.

<sup>84</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

everything is OK, and I say everything is not OK, it's not. It was better fifty years ago than it is now.<sup>85</sup>

As this man went on to demonstrate, however, return trips are not exclusively about revisiting old haunts and re-experiencing the locality. Holidays can bring the homeland closer on a more national scale, retrospectively allowing the entire national landscape to be imagined, in the place of the single village.

I am going regularly now, once or twice a year, to visit my family, to visit my own country. When I left Poland I was nineteen and I didn't know the country because you see before the war people didn't travel as they do now, and so each time I go to my country I go for one or two days to see my sisters, and then I travel places and see places and historical sights, so slowly we are getting somewhere. So this year I am going again to my own countryside.

When he thinks about Poland now, having been on several holidays, his homeland imagination incorporates memories of his home village with contemporary perceptions of it, and pictures all of the other nationally significant places he has visited. It is a similar situation for those people whose home villages are no longer in Poland. The lack of a local connection does not prevent transnational activity from taking place, and does not detract from the experience of visiting the national home. Most of the people whose homes are now in Belarus still 'return' to Poland regularly. In fact, the interviews revealed that many people appropriate new 'special' places in Poland, alongside, or in the place of family sites. Krakow in particular has widespread appeal, as this teacher illustrated:

Last year for 3<sup>rd</sup> May, national day, the [Saturday] school prepared about Krakow, Krakow was one of the cultural capitals of Europe so we prepared a programme from Saturday about Krakow. Everything in Krakow, Wavel, the museum, the cathedral, everything. They have been with their parents. It is a must to go to Krakow. There is a special atmosphere. When I was there last August a few couples were getting married, went in by horse drawn carriages. People play music, singing and dancing from time to time. There is always something happening, some cultural event.<sup>86</sup>

Polish return visits are important on two levels: for extending the spatial conception of the home and the homeland, ensuring personal familiarity reaches beyond the realms of the village to a more nationally orientated scale, and for correcting the temporal dislocation with the landscape, allowing the homeland to be

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<sup>85</sup> First generation Polish man, 26.1.01.

<sup>86</sup> First generation Polish woman, 2.7.01.

imagined and experienced as it is now, alongside as it was then. A holiday to Poland is far more than just a holiday: it reintroduces the national territory into the lives of the migrants. Connections with Poland through travel, furthermore, are not a one-way traffic. The same networks that facilitate family trips to Poland work in return to ensure a steady stream of visitors from Poland to Leicester. As one woman remarked, 'many, many of us here now since the fall of communism in Poland, we travel to Poland, our relatives come here, there is a constant flow.'<sup>87</sup> For survivors of forced migration and veterans of exile, these connections are extremely important.

For the Greek-Cypriot respondents, homeland visits are equally significant. A combination of increased financial security and reduced travel costs has ensured that trips to Cyprus are an ordinary part of the annual calendar. As one man remarked, 'I like to go backwards and forwards.'<sup>88</sup> One man in particular was keen to stress just how close the links with Cyprus are, and that again these connections are reciprocal:

Cyprus is not the distance away now. I remember my grandfather it took him 25 years before he first went back to Cyprus. Now most people travel twice a year to Cyprus. It is cheaper ... the Greek-Cypriots have a very close contact with Cyprus, they travel there. Take my father, ten times a year there and back. He came to England when he was sixteen. There are airports now, Birmingham, East Midlands, half an hour drive. In six hours you can be over there, it's not a problem. You can get tickets, £50, £60 a return flight to Cyprus. Like my cousin, his daughter is getting married in two week's time. He expects six, seven, eight families from Cyprus to come here. In the same way people go there for holidays, their families will come here for their holidays so the connection is good.<sup>89</sup>

This account is exaggerated: there are no low cost flights to Cyprus from the UK, so flights would usually be far more expensive than this, and flights from the East Midlands to Cyprus are only available on charter, not scheduled services. However, this account does demonstrate two very important themes in Greek-Cypriot transnationalism. The first is the high social status attached to links with the homeland within the community. Ten visits a year may be an over-statement, but such a frequency is desirable, proves that connections are still strong, and is

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<sup>87</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 26.8.99., a.m.

<sup>88</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot man, 2.7.01.

<sup>89</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 28.6.01.



testimony to financial success. The act of migrating has been successful: the economic gamble has paid off, but the social and cultural roots have not been sacrificed in the process. As discussed with Greek-Cypriot migration, Greek-Cypriot transnationalism carries similar connotations of honour, respect and social mobility.<sup>90</sup> These transnational connections, furthermore, are also predominantly family orientated, and are therefore generally 'translocal' in nature, involving the maintenance of links with one or more particular villages, where the family is based.<sup>91</sup> As the testimony illustrates, the best example to give of transnational visits is one that shows enduring family ties, not diminished by the barrier of national borders. Being so family focused, Greek-Cypriot transnationalism also automatically incorporates the transnational sharing of life-cycle patterns. Thus families are regularly brought together through christenings, weddings and funerals. Other, unrelated, respondents gave similar testimonies: 'We are expecting a lot of visitors from Cyprus, because [my wife's] nephew is going to be married and about 25, 30 people, relatives are coming to the wedding. We try to go every year on holiday'; 'I like to go and visit my relations, once twice, three times a year if I can. When there are weddings I go when I can get away.'<sup>92</sup> Many of the Greek-Cypriot respondents, therefore, mark life-cycle celebrations in two national spheres.

Italian experiences of transnationalism illustrated an even greater closeness with the homeland. Family orientated activities were, again, at the heart of a high proportion of transnational activity. Despite early difficulties travelling to Italy, one woman outlined how visits to Italy have been a continuous feature of family life:

We went back every year. As the children were growing, and becoming independent, taking their own holidays, we even went two or three times a year when my husband was alive, we used to go by car. And then I had my parents there, and they became old and I was often there to look after them. And now since my husband passed away, well I manage probably a couple of

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<sup>90</sup> See R. Oakley, "Family, Kinship and Patronage: The Cypriot Migration to Britain" in V. S. Khan, ed., *Minority Families in Britain: Support and Stress* (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 13-36.

<sup>91</sup> Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc highlight family orientated transnationalism in *Nations Unbound*, p. 242.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot priest, Leicester, 29.6.01.; first generation Greek-Cypriot man, 2.7.01.

times a year. This year with a new granddaughter, I have been once, and I've got another trip in March and so on. We never lost touch with Italy.<sup>93</sup>

The entwining of the national territory and the family is clear in her testimony: homeland visits have strong familiar associations. Furthermore, the Italian respondents were more likely to have close family members who had gone to live in Italy despite being born in Britain. One woman explained that,

my daughter lives there and my son, having got a degree from Bristol university decided to work in clothes and he has got various agencies in Valencia ... both of them said well I don't know what you are going to do but as soon as we finish school we are going to come. My daughter and sister are there.<sup>94</sup>

Another second generation woman spoke about her family connections in Italy: 'One of my sisters now lives in Italy, is married in Italy, and [my parents] go and visit her a lot, but they do go back to their villages, my dad to his because they have family there.'<sup>95</sup> Of course, for the Italian group in Leicester 'the myth of no return' is particularly appropriate. Census figures demonstrate that after peaking in 1971 at 660, numbers of Italian born people in the city dropped to 528 in 1981, and to 419 in 1991, predominantly a result of return migration movements.<sup>96</sup> As one woman commented, 'in Leicester I lost count because so many went back, and so many people of my generation.'<sup>97</sup>

Perhaps the strongest theme within Italian transnationalism is the ease of travelling to Italy, adding weight to the widespread observations made about the fundamental impact of technology and globalisation on the relationship migrants sustain with their homelands. With a proliferation of airlines offering low cost routes to the different regions of Italy from Britain, the Italian respondents have benefited

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<sup>93</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

<sup>94</sup> First generation Italian woman, 29.6.01.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with second generation Italian woman, Leicester, 5.7.01., a.m.

<sup>96</sup> Figures for 1971 from Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Census 1971: England and Wales County Report - Leicestershire, Part 1* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1973), table 14; for 1981 from Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Census 1981: County Report - Leicestershire, Part 2* (London: HMSO, 1982), table 51; and for 1991 from Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *1991 Census: County Report - Leicestershire (part 1)* (London: HMSO, 1992), table 51.

<sup>97</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

from reduced flight costs to a much greater extent than the other two groups, and have taken advantage of these opportunities. For these interviewees, the homeland appears to be coming closer with every new low cost airline route, often conveniently booked over the internet. As one man remarked, 'in the beginning I used to go by train. Now the flying to Italy is ever so cheap sometimes you can go two or three times a year, with Ryanair from Stanstead.'<sup>98</sup> Another man commented that, 'an hour and a half and you are in Italy, two and a half hours I am in Sicily', and one woman claimed that 'I cannot miss Italy because I am there so often. It's like I'm travelling in between two places.'<sup>99</sup>

There is clearly a wealth of evidence suggesting that all three groups actively participate in transnational networks, and use these to sustain a close relationship with the homeland. Participation in these networks, however, is not necessarily universal. Return visits are not taken by all Polish, Italian and Greek-Cypriot people in Leicester; for the Polish respondents in particular, old age and poor health is increasingly becoming a barrier to overseas travel. Furthermore, the intensity of homeland visits varies greatly from person to person. Some respondents travel more than once a year, others every two or three years. Mahler would clearly have difficulty accepting that such infrequent trips could constitute transnational activity, and Portes would argue that this does not necessarily reveal anything new about migration.<sup>100</sup> However, the importance of these trips should not be underestimated. Even if not taken very often, a homeland holiday has a powerful emotional impact on migrants which lasts long after the visit has finished. A two week stay would require extensive forward planning, and a long period of anticipation. Afterwards, the *holiday* retains significance through souvenirs, postcards and photographs. A homeland holiday gives the opportunity to purchase books, magazines, ornaments, calendars, food, a chance to stock up on national commodities, and a chance to bring a piece of the homeland home. In this context, a visit cannot be measured purely in terms of days spent away. The eagerness of the respondents to talk about their return holidays further reinforces the intrinsic importance of these trips in maintaining a

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<sup>98</sup> First generation Italian man, 26.1.02.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with first generation Italian man, Leicester, 2.7.01.; first generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

<sup>100</sup> Mahler, "Theoretical and Empirical Contributions Towards a Research Agenda for Transnationalism"; Portes, "Transnationalism from Below: The Rise of Transnational Communities".

strong sense of national identity, and the high regard the homeland is still held in, even sixty years after migration. So perhaps we have 'small-scale' transnationalism; homeland travel does not dominate the lives of the respondents, but it is an ingrained tradition, ensuring that for several weeks in the year the migrants are physically connected to the national territory.

## **Everyday Transnationalism**

Holidays and visits are relatively active, outward manifestations of the networks which connect the two national spheres. Underlying and supporting these physical journeys, however, are a whole series of connections which are less obvious to the observer. While Robins has used the concept of 'banal transnationalism' in reference to satellite television watching among the Turkish population in Germany, there are other activities which also underpin transnational contact.<sup>101</sup>

Telephone calls are the best example of banal transnationalism; in fact, letters and telephone calls appear to have been almost completely overlooked in transnationalism debates. For most of the respondents, telephone calls to friends and relatives in the homeland are a weekly, sometimes daily, routine. The sending and receiving of letters also provides regular, though less immediate exchanges. As with travel, telephoning the homeland has become considerably easier over time. For the Polish respondents, the Communist regime created barriers against personal contact, making telephone calls uneasy: 'There was a time in our past when you were talking [on the phone] they couldn't say exactly from Poland what they wanted to say. They used all sorts of ways to say what they wanted. Now, phoning is no problem.'<sup>102</sup> Technological advances, furthermore, have changed the experience of phoning. Before domestic telephones became widespread making telephone calls was less convenient; two Polish respondents spoke of using a nearby hotel for telephone calls, while two Italian women commented: 'You had to go through the telephone exchange and all that, sometimes you had to wait, it was very costly'; 'In those early days I didn't have the phone, we didn't phone to Italy it was too far away,

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<sup>101</sup> Robins, "Turkish Migration and Banal Transnationalism".

<sup>102</sup> First generation Polish woman, 2.7.01.

we wrote a lot. Now we keep phoning to each other, easy thing.<sup>103</sup> Restricted telephone availability could also complicate news exchanges: 'When my mum passed away that was a shock to me because I heard it from a friend who had a business and had a telephone, and that was a shock.'<sup>104</sup> Similarly, at the time of the 1974 invasion of northern Cyprus, the lack of telecommunications technology made the situation extremely tense for those wanting news of family:

... there were no communications at the time. At the time if you wanted to ring up Cyprus you had to ring the operator and wait in a queue to be connected, it wasn't like now, you can get through. What I did, myself personally, I went to the Red Cross and I sent a message through the Red Cross to my family, whether they were alive to get in touch with me alive, where they are, to get in touch with me. And they broadcast my message on the radio back home in Cyprus, and they got in touch.<sup>105</sup>

Telephoning, of course, had to rely on the person at the other end also having access to a phone. Now, telephoning the homeland is widespread. One Greek-Cypriot man, for example, claimed that 'my wife, she is always on the phone, sisters, brothers, always she speak to them', another remarked that 'if I don't speak to my mum or brothers in a matter of a few days they ring me', while one Italian woman claimed that 'with my sister, we phone to each other so often, that really it is like being there.'<sup>106</sup>

As with holidays, it would be easy to overlook the significance of regular telephone exchanges as transnational activity. Telephoning provides instant access to the homeland, and offers the opportunity for intimate homeland engagement. At the same time as cementing family bonds, telephone calls share contemporary information, providing a window into the nuances of everyday life in the national territory. All kinds of issues can be discussed, from the weather, to popular culture, to current news. Two Italian women, for example, spoke of following the presidential election through phone calls: 'I was interested, and also because I speak by phone to my daughter and my sister every Sunday, we take it in turns. When it was election

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<sup>103</sup> First generation Italian woman, 29.6.01.; first generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

<sup>104</sup> Interview with first generation Italian woman, Leicester, 1.8.01.

<sup>105</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot man, 19.3.01.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 13.6.00.; first generation Greek-Cypriot man, 2.7.01.; first generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

time she was oh, I'm not having Berlusconi, and then, oh perhaps he isn't so bad, he keeps his promises'; 'I ring my sister at election time and say has anything happened, and my sister explains it to me.'<sup>107</sup> As these quotes show, telephone calls are important because of their real-time quality. Telephone connections, therefore are an almost effortless means of keeping homeland life alive in the consciousness of the migrants.

## Media Links

Everyday transnational networks are further supported by participation in a variety of media-orientated activities, specifically the use of national newspapers, magazines, radio and satellite television programmes to follow events in the homeland. National media has long been recognised as a tool in the construction of national identity, partly for its role as a vehicle for the national language. Furthermore, as Benedict Anderson argues, the introduction of the printing press was particularly significant for its ability to bring a sense of simultaneity of experience to its readership, thus aiding a feeling of national commonality. By reading a newspaper, 'each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion.'<sup>108</sup> Newspapers and magazines continue to serve this purpose when read from a different nation, providing a direct link to national news and social issues, allowing the transnational dissemination of a national popular culture, and once again promoting the national language.

Following Anderson's logic, national radio and television have spectacularly enhanced the immediacy and accessibility of media generated national consciousness, and the parallel national experience it promotes. As Morley notes, 'the fact of watching and engaging in a joint ritual with millions of others can be argued to be at least as important as any informational content gained from the

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<sup>107</sup> First generation Italian woman, 29.6.01.; interview with two first generation Italian women, Leicester, 2.8.01.

<sup>108</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 35.

broadcast.<sup>109</sup> Not only are the experiences of watching television or listening to the radio simultaneously shared, but radio and television also provide a national temporal structure, from marking the daily routine to observing seasonal changes and annual celebrations.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, television and radio appeal to a wider range of senses than newspapers: television clearly has a higher visual impact than printed material, and both mediums are obviously aural. From this shared experience comes the development of a shared identity. As Billig argues, the continual media 'flagging' of the nation works tirelessly to remind the national psyche about itself, acting as a transmitter of national culture and commentating on implicitly national domestic issues, alongside those related to the nation's interactions with other, separate countries.<sup>111</sup> What is more, information is presented with a distinctly national slant, heightening the sense of recognition felt among national viewers. To quote Billig, national media offers a, 'form of reading and watching, of understanding and taking for granted. It is a form of life in which "we" are constantly invited to relax, at home, within the homeland borders.'<sup>112</sup>

The significance of satellite television links for the nurturing, and in some cases establishment, of national consciousness among emigrant populations is immense.<sup>113</sup> New technology now regularly exposes groups outside their homelands to these national devices of attachment, giving migrants an opportunity to be routinely influenced by the media of their countries of origin. *Migrants can join with members of the nation through 'virtual neighbourhoods', accessing from afar national cyber territory and the national time structure embedded within it, and thus further reducing the spatial and temporal distance from the homeland.*<sup>114</sup> While national and transnational activities rest on the assumption of a collective identity, however,

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<sup>109</sup> D. Morley, "Electronic Communities and Domestic Rituals" in M. Skovmand and K. C. Schroder, eds, *Media Cultures: Reappraising Transnational Media* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 81.

<sup>110</sup> This is discussed in T. Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), pp. 97-8.

<sup>111</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p. 11.

<sup>112</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p. 127.

<sup>113</sup> See particularly J. Sinclair and S. Cunningham, "Go With the Flow: Diasporas and the Media", *Television and New Media* 1 1 (2000), pp. 11-32.

<sup>114</sup> See D. Elkins, "Think Locally, Act Globally: Reflections on Virtual Neighbourhoods", *Javnost/The Public* 6 1 (1999), pp. 37-53.

media fuelled transnationalism gives way to a privatised, individual experience of cross national communications. Personal nationalism becomes 'personal transnationalism', sustained through domestic media habits.<sup>115</sup> Accessing the national media arena can be done independently, from the home, and without reference to any surrounding 'community'. Surely there can be no easier way of crossing national boundaries and participating in two separate national spheres on a daily basis, and thus 'being transnational', than switching between two different television networks.

Again, the evidence from the different respondents can be seen to be aligned with the theoretical debates. Newspapers and satellite television proved to be central commodities in the migrants' ongoing links with the homeland. Although published in London, the Polish daily newspaper, *Dziennik Polski*, is an important chronicle of events in Poland and among the Polish diaspora more generally, is widely read, and is available to buy every day in larger W. H. Smith stores.<sup>116</sup> As such, *Dziennik Polski* is an effective instrument of emigrant Polish national identity, carrying articles about politics, social developments, satellite television listings, the weather, films, music and books, obituaries, all in the Polish language, all bringing the Polish homeland closer to the migrants. *Dziennik Polski* was established soon after the war, and throughout the Communist era was relied upon for its perceived truthful commentary on Polish domestic developments: 'There was some contact [with Poland] but it was through the Polish Daily, they were telling the truth because in the Polish papers in Poland everything was altered, many things were not mentioned.'<sup>117</sup> Since 1989 the paper's role has not changed, and it is still bought regularly by the respondents individually, and available to read at the different community centres.

For the Greek-Cypriot and Italian respondents, national newspapers are sent from the homeland, with the Greek-Cypriot church and centre taking papers from

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<sup>115</sup> The privatisation of national media consumption through the domestic sphere is discussed in Morley, "Electronic Communities and Domestic Rituals", pp. 79-81; see also Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, pp. 97-8.

<sup>116</sup> Sword also comments upon the Polish press: K. Sword, *Identity in Flux: The Polish Community in Britain* (Loughborough: School of East European Studies, 1996), pp. 120-124. Zubrzycki also incorporates a consideration of the Polish press into his work - J. Zubrzycki, *Polish Immigrants in Britain: A Study of Adjustment* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956), pp. 134-150.

<sup>117</sup> First generation Polish woman, 2.7.01.



Cyprus and Greece.<sup>118</sup> While available to buy every day they are usually at least one day old on arrival: 'There is a newspaper shop down London road where you can find the [Italian] newspaper, but by the time they come they are two or three days old, so I don't buy them regularly, but then I have other papers coming from Italy, magazines and things.'<sup>119</sup> As suggested, for many of the female respondents, magazines are also popular, although these have to be bought or sent directly from the homeland, and again the delay is frustrating. The intent is there to buy magazines, but the mechanisms to do so are not always in place:

I used to get one from St. Anthony with bits of information from all over the world, that comes in Italian, but that is about it. Sometimes I get them in town, you can even buy the paper but they are always the day before anyway, so it is news that you already know. There is not an awful lot of facilities for that type of thing really, perhaps a bit more than when we first came to England, but is always behind anyway, even with magazines, by the time you get it. In one of the magazines they give you the TV things, but by the time you go and by it half of it has already been on anyway. It costs quite a lot of money. Sometimes I buy them. I buy them when I go to Italy and then I bring them back.<sup>120</sup>

The national significance of magazines is obviously very similar to that of newspapers, offering a consciously collective experience to those who read them. In fact, the heavier emphasis on popular culture and social issues found in magazines ensures that a more complete image of the homeland can be transmitted. As Edensor argues, popular culture is a crucial component of contemporary national identity: 'Any identification of national cultures would have to include a range of other cultural producers - pop stars, advertisers, tabloid hacks, marketers, fashion-designers, film and television producers and sporting heroes'.<sup>121</sup>

While important, newspapers and magazines can only go so far in bridging the gap with the homeland; satellite television offers greater potential for migrant transnational engagement, as an immediate window into the national territory. Subscriptions to *TV Polonia* were high among the Polish interviewees, with a

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<sup>118</sup> Information about Greek-Cypriot and Italian press institutions and connections in Britain are included in F. Anthias, *Ethnicity, Class, Gender and Migration: Greek-Cypriots in Britain* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992), p. 130; Colpi, *The Italian Factor*, pp. 249-250.

<sup>119</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

<sup>120</sup> First generation Italian woman, 5.7.01.

<sup>121</sup> Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, p. 9.

minimum of 19 of the 29 respondents taking it at home.<sup>122</sup> Even wider access is assured by both the parish and Ex-Servicemen's Clubs housing satellite connections. Polonia offers a wide range of programmes, transmitting topics ranging from news and politics, to culture and history, to travel, to music and quizzes, all broadcast in Polish. The news and politics productions are especially eagerly followed, allowing opinions about the health of the nation's freedom to be readily formed, and politicians to be closely observed. Most of the recent political transnationalism already discussed is underpinned and informed by the ongoing exposure to real-time national news coverage.

Contemporary understanding about Poland is also supported by Polonia. Through a combination of television, family contacts and personal visits all of the interviewees were able to speak confidently about unemployment, new shopping and fast food developments, and in some cases fashion and music. While current issues and popular culture are obvious areas for television broadcasting, perhaps more surprising is the revelation that a high proportion of the respondents' knowledge about Poland's history, culture and geography is also learnt from satellite television. Taking geography, the ability of television programmes to show pictures of the landscape is clearly extremely significant for national identity; travel shows and weather reports can deliver an insight into the physical panorama of the nation, otherwise missing in the émigré national imagination and experience. Two respondents in particular spoke about how important they felt Polonia was to them and their relationship with Poland:

There is one programme showing different parts of Poland, because I don't know Poland still. I've been there quite a few times but I tend to go to the same places on holiday, so to me that is quite interesting. It's sightseeing, seeing different interesting things, towns, scenery and so on, different areas ... I think to me it brings the country closer, you follow what is going on, even the weather, what's the weather like, what they are doing. Sightseeing, it brings it much closer. I am sort of getting to know the country through television. It's important.<sup>123</sup>

Lots of cultural programmes, music, competitions. Programmes showing different places in Poland to visit, some beautiful places because it has a

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<sup>122</sup> Satellite television was not discussed explicitly in the earliest interviews, so this number only includes those who definitely subscribe. The potential figure is therefore higher. Most, but not all, of these subscribers were first generation Poles.

<sup>123</sup> First generation Polish woman, 7.8.02.

variety of scenery, lots of lakes, the sea, the mountains ... everything that tells us about the cities, Krakow, I watch. I am learning a lot because I haven't been to some places ... it does help because what we have been taught at school and by the books, the television helps a great deal. We didn't know much about the countryside, different parts of Poland, what they looked like. We read about it, heard about it from stories from people's mothers, fantastic stories, so colourful. But when you see it it makes it closer and you understand much more. I can see that there is something there even though I don't remember anything from Poland, I was only born there, and it is not Poland now, it's Ukraine, Lviv and that area.<sup>124</sup>

Polonia's history documentaries are also very popular. Through watching these programmes some of the respondents have developed intricate understandings of cultural and folk rituals. The legend surrounding the watch tower in Krakow's old square, for example, is recounted in detail:

There is a legend connected with that. It is connected to Tartar history in the sixteenth century when the Tartars used to attack Poland and Krakow had to defend itself. The man in the tower who played the trumpet every hour, he saw the Tartars approaching and he let the people know by playing the trumpet at the wrong time. They were able to defend themselves against the Tartars but the trumpeter was hit by an arrow and his tune was broken. It is played now every hour, and it is broken, it's not finished.<sup>125</sup>

Other history programmes focus on the Second World War:

They show a lot of what was being done in London at that time, the Free Poles, they were involved in fighting and so on, so they show a lot of that because to their people that is something they didn't know anything about because the history told them quite different to what it really was ... they tend to show the western part they played, the Free Poles, the Polish airforce, their achievements, and of course Enigma.<sup>126</sup>

Documentaries about the Communist past are also shown regularly, as is the soap opera favourite, *Klan*, set during the regime in a rural area of eastern Poland. It is perhaps ironic that the technology of satellite television is being used to support historical knowledge, understanding and identity: watching satellite television is explicitly historical in its choice of programmes, but implicitly historical in that it provides a link to the place where the viewers' own pasts are located. For the mother of one respondent, the overlap between personal history and the history broadcast

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<sup>124</sup> First generation Polish woman, 2.7.01.

<sup>125</sup> First generation Polish woman, 2.7.01.

<sup>126</sup> First generation Polish woman, 7.8.02.

on Polonia is actually uncomfortable: 'I've got Polish satellite TV and my mum has, and I find the documentaries about Communism there interesting, but my mum won't watch them because she said she's lived through it.'<sup>127</sup>

The significance of TV Polonia as a transnational connection goes beyond the content of the programmes. Watching Polonia is a daily activity, but also one that has come to be taken for granted over time. The interviewees have developed a pragmatic attitude to satellite television, and are selective about what they watch, not following the Polish channels to the extent of excluding themselves from British media channels. Patterns of television watching suggest that the Polish respondents have formed a reasonably mature transnational connection, living quite comfortably in two national media spheres:

I know when I first had Polish television I just watched nothing else but that, I was so glued up to it for about a month. And then later on after a while you treat it the same way as you do any other programmes, it's there. If I want to watch it then I check what's worth seeing, English television or Polish. I don't give it any sort of preferential treatment although I do possibly watch more Polish television than English. That's basically because I think we have a lot of repeats ... I would miss it. In fact some time ago I decided not to bother replacing the television, then after a few months I actually bought another television and got the dish back, because I missed the Polish programmes. I certainly wouldn't want to be without it ... I've had it for seven, eight years. As I say at first I was glued up to it, the television, it was so strange to listen to my language, something I have never experienced before. Then after a while, you know, nothing special.<sup>128</sup>

There are participatory limits to Polish television viewing. It still remains a predominantly *first generation activity*, and *lack of finances and high subscription costs* have prevented it being installed at the Saturday school, closing off one possible access point for the third generation to watch the Polish programmes. While the children do watch Polonia sometimes, the following comments from the Saturday school teacher illustrate the frustration felt at not being able to exploit the transnational links further:

There are a lot of educational programmes for children. Some of them do [watch], some of them are not interested ... I used a few programmes [at the school], about Krakow. We used that programme on the concert with the poems and stories about Krakow. The conditions at Moat community college,

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<sup>127</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 12.2.01.

<sup>128</sup> First generation Polish woman, 7.8.02.

it is difficult there because we are not in our own place so we can't keep the things there. We have a few cupboards there for our things and they are locked ... It would be so important to tell the children, to find something on the map, to put their drawings up, and to have the internet where they can learn about other places. We should go with the progress, the changes, the internet, the Polish television.<sup>129</sup>

Although each of the centres have satellite connections, television viewing appears to be an overwhelmingly private experience, with public spaces preserved for more human orientated interaction; as one woman remarked:

There is a television there [parish club]. We don't actually watch it very often, very little at all because when people come to us they normally like to talk to one another because they are isolated at home. It gives them the chance to chat to one another. We do certain activities but out of them all they enjoy talking.<sup>130</sup>

Obviously, watching Polonia predominantly in the home does not preclude shared discussions of certain television programmes. Despite the various difficulties with cost and installation, Polonia remains the most effective link with Poland, cheaper than travelling there, more immediate and informative than newspapers, and something that can be carried out in old age and ill health, all from within the domestic sphere.

Satellite television access was also discussed with the Greek-Cypriot and Italian respondents, with very similar outcomes. From the 15 Greek-Cypriot interviews 10 respondents confirmed having subscriptions, with a further 9 of the 11 Italian interviewees having Italian satellite television.<sup>131</sup> Like Polonia, Greek-Cypriot television offers a connection to Cyprus' past, showing programmes on the history and folk traditions of the island. One woman listed the type of programmes shown:

A lot of political programmes, music, news, theatre, programmes about how they used to live a hundred years ago, the background, the culture, so new members can educate themselves about how it used to be in Cyprus years ago. They are very modern over there now as they are in England, maybe

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<sup>129</sup> First generation Polish woman, 2.7.01.

<sup>130</sup> First generation Polish woman, 7.8.02.

<sup>131</sup> Of the 55 individuals interviewed, therefore, a minimum of 38 have national satellite television connections - approximately 69%. As with the Polish interviews not every Greek-Cypriot interview discussed satellite television explicitly, so again this figure could be higher.

more modern over there than we are here. It's nice to know your background.<sup>132</sup>

Once again, the majority of education in the island's history comes through satellite television. The lessons given in the Saturday school are likely to have a weaker impact than television programmes which are voluntarily watched. More than anything else, however, the television links are used to follow the news. As one man commented, 'I know more than the people living there. We have got Cyprus television and I watch the news nearly every day.'<sup>133</sup> Once again, the psychological impact of 1974 has made keeping up with political developments the fundamental purpose of transnational media technology. As Myria Georgiou has found in her research into London's Cypriot community, it is the news broadcasts that are defined as 'sacred moments' in the community club.<sup>134</sup> As she also observes, watching the news is also a way of keeping in touch with the locality. Local news stories carry the potential for personal engagement, possibly covering villages or people known to the viewers.

As with the Polish example, satellite television viewing is not necessarily a universal pastime. While the political and historical orientations of many of the programmes appeal to the older generation, one man argued that this focus also works against rejuvenating participation:

No, the kids don't watch the Greek television. It's not their fault, it's the administration of Cyprus TV because the programmes they put on Cyprus TV are not geared for children. The majority of them are about politics. There is a lot of time allocated to places which they have taken from the past, about fifty, sixty years ago. Now the old people can relate to that life because it was their sort of life so they like it. But when you see a child that is ten, twelve, fifteen years old who has been brought up here in England he doesn't relate to that sort of life, it doesn't interest them.<sup>135</sup>

Another respondent had a slightly different perspective: 'I don't watch it very often. Not as often as I would like to, because we are always working, unless I remember

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<sup>132</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 28.6.01.

<sup>133</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 28.6.01.

<sup>134</sup> M. Georgiou, "Beyond the Domestic: Constructing Ethnic Identities and Media Consumption in the Public Ethnic Space - the Case of the Cypriot Community Centre in North London", available from: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/EMTEL/Minorities/Article%20Myria.doc> [Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> February 2002], p. 13.

<sup>135</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 28.6.01.

to tape something. It's there, we use it. The kids use it, they watch it sometimes for music.'<sup>136</sup> Being too busy, in fact, was a common thread throughout the interviews, in most cases a direct legacy of economic migration and the need to work during the evening and at weekends: 'I don't watch any telly at all. I'm always busy. I've got four children'; 'I haven't [got it], no. It's not at the top of my list of priorities.'<sup>137</sup>

Italian satellite television viewing habits were noticeably different. With the highest incidence of subscriptions of all three groups, the Italian interviewees placed a much greater emphasis on watching contemporary programmes, in addition to following news coverage. One woman commented on her viewing tastes:

There's not a lot really, most of it is comedy shows, American films in Italian, that type of thing. There's not very many films that have actually been made in Italy that you see on there, but it is a way of keeping in touch. You watch the news, you get the news every day. You only get three channels anyway, and those channels are not the best that you could get in Italy, but if you watch it all the time you get to see what is on when, what interests you, and you watch it. Lots of shows, comedy, quiz shows.<sup>138</sup>

The three male respondents cited sport, particularly football, as the main reason for having Italian satellite links. One man in particular spoke at length about his experiences of watching Italian television, clearly something that strengthens his personal connection with Italy:

I receive these programmes, they are so much clearer here in England than in Milan. When I go to see my sister the television is not as clear as this because this is by satellite ... I prefer to watch Italian to be honest, I don't know why. I think the Italian television makes me laugh more than the English television ... I got it when I moved into this house, mainly I want to watch Italian football which I get, and I want to keep in touch with the social events as well, so when I go to Italy and I speak to my relatives if they talk about something I know what they are talking about, I'm not coming from Mars, they say where have you been?<sup>139</sup>

This is perhaps the defining advantage of satellite television for keeping strong relations with the homeland. It is a forum that can be shared with family and friends

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<sup>136</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 3.7.01.

<sup>137</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 28.6.01.; interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 8.7.01.

<sup>138</sup> First generation Italian woman, 5.7.01.

<sup>139</sup> First generation Italian man. 26.1.02.

there, literally providing the self-conscious simultaneity of experience associated with national media.

As with the other two groups, viewing patterns are sophisticated. English and Italian channels are watched interchangeably, with programmes prioritised for their interest value, rather than purely for their national nature: 'I don't watch a lot of Italian programmes, I watch from about eight o'clock to about ten, and then I switch back to the English one'; 'if there is nothing interesting on the Italian television I go back to the English television'.<sup>140</sup> However, again like the two previous case-studies, participation is restricted. At least two respondents commented that they would like to watch the Italian programmes more often, but are prevented from doing so by disapproval at home from their non-Italian partners. When asked how often she watched Italian television, for example, one woman replied, 'when my husband will let me, he has got to see sport and very often at the same time I want to see Italian programmes. We start arguing and I get up and go for a walk.'<sup>141</sup> One man commented that the lack of national linguistic knowledge among the older generation prevented them from subscribing to Italian television, which does not transmit in any of the dialects. Furthermore, although regional channels exist, and would have a potentially very high take up, they are not readily available in England. One man received channels for Lazio, Campania and Tuscany, but not from his native area, the region surrounding Venice. Once again, the strength of regional affiliation and the persistence of dialect languages in Leicester weakens the potential influence of the national media.

Satellite television is clearly a powerful tool in migrant transnationalism, able to bring the different facets of the homeland into the lives of the respondents, promoting an emotional bond of collectivity with other viewers, and a more practical grounding in contemporary and historical national issues. Television can bring the physical homeland closer, projecting a kaleidoscope of national landscape images, and thus familiarising emigrants with their national territory. Television cannot, however, convey the physical sensation of the homeland: the testimonies relating to territory generally had a strong physical element running through them, particularly connected to weather patterns and temperatures - weather reports alone cannot

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<sup>140</sup> First generation Italian woman, 1.8.01.; first generation Italian man, 26.1.02.

<sup>141</sup> First generation Italian woman, 29.6.01.



transmit these experiences. There is also some doubt over the universal appeal and accessibility of migrant satellite television links. Just because these stations broadcast in the UK, it does not necessarily follow that high numbers will take up subscriptions. For all three groups, satellite television has to be installed by specialist companies, and not the cheaper mainstream providers of satellite links such as NTL and Sky. The costs, therefore, are prohibitive for some. Even those that do subscribe demonstrate different viewing habits, some watching several hours a day, others when they attend the various community clubs, or when they visit relatives.

Television viewing as a transnational practice also raises some interesting questions about the nature of transnational participation. Switching on a television set requires very little commitment, and when compared with travelling to the homeland, is an essentially passive pastime: watching the homeland is not the same as going there. Can television watching, therefore, be regarded as a transnational activity in itself, or have the migrants been transformed into transnational consumers of a national product, rather than actors in a series of networks? An argument can be made that satellite television is simply providing a type of long-distance national tourism, available to those who can afford to pay for it. It is essential, however, to remember the context in which the migrants view these programmes. Television itself might appear inconsequential, but each programme watched has the potential to trigger a whole range of memories and emotions associated with the homeland, resituating viewers in their pasts: satellite television is still shrouded in concepts of home, exile and belonging, and even the most mundane show can resonate if broadcast in the home language. Transnational networks, furthermore, could not exist if they did not fit into everyday life. As Edensor hints, national consciousness is becoming increasingly bound up with consumption and an identification with national 'brands'.<sup>142</sup> Transnational television therefore works in the same way, creating transnational consumers, just as there are national consumers within the nation's boundaries. National identity does not have to be actively courted: within the nation, turning on a television set automatically exposes viewers to a national agenda in some form. In the same way, transnational identity is underpinned by equally

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<sup>142</sup> Edensor's emphasis on popular culture is implicitly related to consumerism - Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, pp. 109-112.

ordinary rituals. If anything, transnational viewing is a more active pastime, requiring the specific take up of certain channels.

Finally, the significance of these television links can be understood best when set in the context of the changing nature of territory. It is undeniable that technological advances have changed the territorial configurations of nations; for each allocated physical space, nations have a corresponding cyber space. Satellite television is perhaps the clearest form of this, allowing a different type of national territory to be accessed from afar, regularly and immediately. As Robert Smith argues, it is possible to live anywhere but still not be outside the boundaries of the nation.<sup>143</sup>

## Diaspora

Any discussion of migration, territory and transnationalism would be incomplete without at least a cursory consideration of the concept of diaspora. Like 'home' and 'community', diaspora has become a widely used classification, attributed to different groups, with different commentators employing different labelling criteria.<sup>144</sup> The most flexible, and perhaps most useful, contribution comes from Robin Cohen who recognises that diaspora is an umbrella concept, applicable for a wide range of dispersed migrant groups, from 'trade' diasporas, to 'labour' diasporas, to 'victim' diasporas.<sup>145</sup> Nine key diasporic traits are determined: dispersal, or emigration from homeland, collective homeland memory, idealisation of homeland, return movement, long-lasting group ethnic consciousness, 'troubled relationship' with new society, solidarity with other diaspora members, and the ability to maintain a distinctive identity away from the homeland.<sup>146</sup> It would seem, however, that the quintessential defining characteristic of a diaspora has to be the feeling of solidarity with other diasporic members. The relationship with the homeland is clearly at the heart of the diasporic experience, but as this chapter has shown, homeland memories,

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<sup>143</sup> R. Smith, "Reflections on Migration, the State and the Construction, Durability and Newness of Transnational Life" in Pries, ed., *Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*, p. 213.

<sup>144</sup> An in-depth debate can be found in W. Safran, "Comparing Diasporas: A Review Essay", *Diaspora* 8 3 (1999), pp. 255-291.

<sup>145</sup> R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>146</sup> Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, p. 180.

expectations and connections can exist without reference to any other émigrés. As Sheffer notes, 'all [diasporas] share one characteristic - a continuous involvement in a triadic relationship between the diaspora, the host country and the homeland.'<sup>147</sup> This is not the place to determine whether the Polish, Italian and Greek-Cypriot emigrant populations are diasporas or not, although there is a clear case for the Polish and Italian groups at least.<sup>148</sup> What matters more is whether membership of a diaspora is a meaningful concept for those interviewed. As Anderson has so persuasively argued, the nation has to be imagined in order for it to constitute a durable identification.<sup>149</sup> The notion of diaspora follows the same logic. The question has to be, therefore, to what extent do the respondents imagine themselves to be part of a wider diaspora?

The Polish case-study provides the strongest evidence of diasporic consciousness. Safran, for example, asserts that the globally dispersed Polish population can be regarded as a 'proper' diaspora, noting that 'the diasporic dimension of the Polish nation was illustrated in a saying that made the rounds during World War Two to the effect that Poland was the largest country in the world: its government was in London, its army was in Italy, and its population was in Siberia.'<sup>150</sup> Throughout the interviews the experiences of forced migration were recounted within an implicit diasporic context: I suffered this, but so too did thousands of other Poles, who have consequently had to settle around the world. Personal histories of family dislocation have left many with globally dispersed relatives and friends, in America and Australia in particular. One conversation about the cost of telephone calls to Poland, for example, naturally included a discussion of

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<sup>147</sup> G. Sheffer, "A New Field of Study: Modern Diasporas in International Politics" in Sheffer, *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*, p. 8.

<sup>148</sup> Polish diaspora is considered in M. F. Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). Italian diaspora is discussed in P. Verdicchio, *Bound By Distance: Rethinking Nationalism Through the Italian Diaspora* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997); D. R. Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (London: UCL Press, 2000); A. Fortier, "The Politics of 'Italians abroad': Nation, Diaspora and New Geographies of Identity", *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 7 2 (1998), pp. 197-224. Greek diaspora is considered in M. Roussou, ed., *Greek Outside Greece: Cypriots in Britain* (Nicosia: Diaspora Books, 1991).

<sup>149</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

<sup>150</sup> W. Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return", *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1 1 (1991), p. 85.

the cost of calls to America and Australia. Personal diasporic links also go beyond telephoning, as the following account of a trip to Chicago demonstrates:

There are streets full of Polish shops and people in the shops and the restaurants, everywhere there are Polish people. On Sundays the churches are full and people stand outside, there are lots of young people going from Poland now, still now to work ... many were there after the First World War and before, emigrating for bread they say, for a higher standard of living. But many went after the Second World War. Many emigrated from England. In America there are about ten million Poles.<sup>151</sup>

Politics is still a diasporic issue too. As *Dziennik Polski* cites, in the recent EU referendum Polish people voted from all over the world, from Chicago to Barcelona.<sup>152</sup> It is the media networks that provide the strongest sense of diasporic belonging however, as the coverage of these voting patterns also illustrates. As the same woman continued:

We learn a lot from Polonia now, the Polish television. They show these communities all over the world, in every country, everywhere, and they tell about the Polish people there. It's in the papers as well, the Polish Daily, and in the weekly paper as well. We learn quite a lot. They say one third of Polish people lives abroad ... there is TV Polonia there [Chicago] as well. Lots of famous people go there because it is big and they know they will have an audience there. They have concerts, organisations, and they are very much in contact with Poland. There is a radio programme in Poland which joins with Chicago, straightaway with them.

TV Polonia also offers an opportunity for members of the diaspora to join up in television 'phone-ins':

Sometimes you have got a phone-in and people from different parts of the world, they even have it [Polonia] in Australia now, certainly in America, so they are watching all over the world. It does link people. People quite often phone in from different parts and they talk about their experiences, so it is like a link, a cultural link, for people of Polish origin in different countries.<sup>153</sup>

It could be argued that TV Polonia is supporting a 'diaspora industry'. While the television station broadcasts in Poland, the primary role of Polonia is to transmit to members of the Polish diaspora - 'Polonia' itself means Poles living outside Poland.

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<sup>151</sup> First generation Polish woman, 2.7.01.

<sup>152</sup> *Dziennik Polski*, 10.6.03., p. 1.

<sup>153</sup> First generation Polish woman, 7.8.02.

The official website of TV Polonia openly describes its role as a supporter of Polish identity outside Poland:

All of TV Polonia's programs are created with the needs of our countrymen living abroad in mind ... [the] goal is to ensure that our programs will be the most important source of information about Poland for all of them ... TV Polonia is a "piece of Poland" which provides daily contact with the Polish language ... by virtue of its programs, TV Polonia creates a positive image of Poland and Poles, influences the maintenance of Polish culture and traditions for future generations, and most importantly, helps the spread of the Polish language.<sup>154</sup>

With this in mind, Polonia is more a diasporic media forum than a transnational one: it is unlikely that the same programmes are being watched at the same time within Poland itself. The simultaneity of experience is felt *within the diaspora*, rather than the nation. One recent emigrant from Poland confirmed this, claiming that she finds Polonia outdated, and directly aimed at the post-war refugee demographic:

Polonia, the channel, is specially designed for people living outside Poland. The name Polonia, it means Polish community outside Poland, and actually I don't like the style of that, because that for me is designed for people who are the older generation. When I was growing up in Poland it wasn't so important for us all this folklore, Polish traditions. I mean it was tradition, but it was like a normal thing, it wasn't like a big something that you have to celebrate. It was there, and we all had our own traditions, but this Polonia channel is showing it all the time the folklore, the Polish tradition and so on, so it is not like everyday television. And also they are showing old programmes, the people who are performing are old actors. Sometimes you watch and you think there is nothing new, nothing modern in Poland. But this is for those people who went to other countries, and probably they remember those from the younger age, so maybe they appreciate that, but I don't. I prefer to see something more natural.<sup>155</sup>

Evidently 'diaspora' can be a divisive phenomenon. As with Polish migration narratives more generally, the Polish diaspora is dominated by the post-war migration movement, and the diaspora industry is focused on the changing needs and demands of the forced migration survivors. Experiences of the war have become the defining characteristic of being Polish outside Poland, alienating those with different life histories.

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<sup>154</sup> TV Polonia website. Available at: [http://www.tvp.com.pl/informator/english/tv\\_polonia.html](http://www.tvp.com.pl/informator/english/tv_polonia.html) [Accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2003].

<sup>155</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, emigrated in 1988, Leicester, 5.2.03.

This sense of diasporic belonging could hardly be discerned with the other two groups. While theoretically there is a widely dispersed Italian diaspora this was not a significant theme in the interviews, aside from occasional mention of other, 'wealthier' Italian populations seen on the Italian television channels. For both groups, diasporic consciousness barely extends beyond contact with other communities within Britain, for the Greek-Cypriots in London, and for the Italians in Loughborough and Nottingham in particular. While the Polish respondents also have extensive links with other Polish groups within Britain, personal and media connections reach outwards into the diaspora: the same cannot be argued for the Italian and Greek-Cypriot groups. Italian and Greek-Cypriot activities and experiences are transnational and translocal - Polish activities are transnational, translocal *and* diasporic. This is clearly one more legacy of the traumatic nature of post-war Polish migration.

## **Conclusion**

As this chapter has shown, there is considerable evidence to demonstrate that the homeland is a hugely significant presence in the lives of migrants. Homeland attachments take a variety of forms, and are celebrated in many different ways. Personal and shared memories implicitly evoke the homeland of the past, reifying both the national territory as an imagined space, and real places which are retrospectively used to anchor life-histories. Territorial attachments are emotional and physical, and accounts of homeland life commonly depict what it feels like to live there on both levels. Transnational activity is so important because it reintroduces the homeland back into the lives of the migrants, albeit in a mediated form, demonstrating that migration does not have to equal isolation from the homeland. Modern technology has ensured that both the old and new territories can be fused together and experienced simultaneously. Transnationalism is therefore the antidote to preoccupations with immigrant integration: it proves that migration is not a process that can be strictly measured in stages, starting with settlement and progressing towards integration and eventual assimilation, or in another direction towards alienation and ghettoisation. Migrants are adept at living in different national spheres, developing different identities, and even the most apparently settled, 'assimilated'

immigrant community will have a vast array of networks reconnecting groups and individuals with the homeland.

It is also important to note that these transnational, and in some cases diasporic, links can be 'small-scale' and individualised. Transnational activity is often uncoordinated and sporadic, often only involving small numbers of people, but this does not undermine its significance. Indeed, the smaller and more ordinary the activity, the easier it is to incorporate into everyday life. Holidays, telephone calls and television programmes may appear to be weak indicators of transnational activism, but when taken together they provide a continuous layering of cross-national communications. Diasporic activity by its very nature has to involve interaction with other people, or at least places inhabited by other people, in the diaspora. Transnationalism, however, is about interacting with another place, with or without its people, and interacting with the past through that place. Transnational mechanisms ensure that contact with this place can be made in many different ways, and can be done easily and independently.

The short consideration of diaspora has raised the issue of tension between the collective and the individual, and about who belongs and who does not. It is fitting therefore, to turn to the locality for the final chapter, and situate the respondents within their urban environment. There is overwhelming evidence to show that the three groups retain resilient national identities, sustain meaningful links with their homelands, and have strong individual and collective narratives of migration. To what extent, however, do these characteristics translate into the existence of ethnic/national 'communities' in Leicester, and how useful is the concept of 'community' at all?

## Chapter Four

# The Binding Ties of Community

### Introduction

'Community' is notoriously difficult to define, a word open to misapplication and over-use, both within academic discussion and outside it. While deciding exactly what constitutes a community has diverted social theorists for decades, it is now the decline of community in contemporary society that is lamented.<sup>1</sup> There are many different interpretations of community, ranging from surface projections of outwardly visible institutions to the in-depth analysis of social networks and social capital - the reciprocal exchanges made between individual community members.

Straightforward, positive portrayals of community can be found in local publications such as the *Leicester Mercury* and *Leicester Celebrates*, where 'ethnic minority' communities are presented as delightful curiosities, characterised by closely-knit groups regularly joining together in distinctive cultural celebrations.<sup>2</sup> Other accounts treat communities predominantly as formal organisations, orientated around community centres, clubs and groups.<sup>3</sup> Most studies, furthermore, assume that community requires, and translates into, a relatively high level of geographic proximity between community 'members', whether in the form of neighbourhoods or 'ethnic' enclaves. Theoretical understandings of community, meanwhile, have ranged from Cohen's emphasis of the symbolic, imagined element of community, through to Wellman, Carrington and Hall's study of 'personal communities' and social networks,

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<sup>1</sup> Excellent overviews of the progression of community studies can be found in G. Crow and G. Allan, *Community Life: An Introduction to Local Social Relations* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994) and G. Delanty, *Community* (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> V. Davies, *Leicester Celebrates: Festivals in Leicester Past and Present* (Leicester: Leicester City Council Living History Unit, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> The communities projected by Keith Sword and Terri Colpi are good examples: K. Sword, *Identity in Flux: The Polish Community in Britain* (Loughborough: School of East European Studies, 1996); T. Colpi, *The Italian Factor: The Italian Community in Great Britain* (London: Mainstream, 1991).



to Robert Putnam's examination of social capital in America.<sup>4</sup> Contemporary analysis of community takes a balanced overview, acknowledging the positive and negative aspects of close social connections, the 'pay off' between the provision of a sense of belonging and security, and the inevitable social control this fosters.<sup>5</sup> This chapter seeks to use these different arguments to consider the three case-study groups in Leicester, determining how community is perceived from within, what form 'community' takes within the groups, if at all, and to what extent the existence of community has affected individual freedoms.

## Defining Community

It is not immediately clear what 'community' means. Most obviously, as Cohen comments, community indicates, 'members of a group of people [that] (a) have something in common with each other which (b) distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other putative groups.'<sup>6</sup> These people typically cluster around formal structures, institutions and organisations, creating clearly visible signifiers of community to those outside and within the group. As Cohen argues, the level of consciousness of community, as with nation and diaspora, is crucially significant. Community may be constructed physically, but it is also assembled symbolically, through rituals and traditions in which, 'the symbolic expression and affirmation of boundary heightens people's awareness of and sensitivity to their community.'<sup>7</sup> The connection between this argument, and that of Benedict Anderson is clear.<sup>8</sup> In fact, there seems to be common agreement that the social and symbolic natures of community take precedence over the physical. While the territorial and

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<sup>4</sup> A. P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (Chichester: Ellis Horwood, 1985); B. Wellman, P. J. Carrington and A. Hall, "Networks as Personal Communities" in B. Wellman and S. D. Berkowitz, eds, *Social Structures: A Network Approach* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 130-184; R. D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> See particularly Z. Bauman, *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* (London: Polity Press, 2001) and A. Portes, "Social Capital: It's Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology", *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998), pp. 1-24.

<sup>6</sup> Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, p. 50.

<sup>8</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983).

structural dimensions of community are undoubtedly important, in 1969 Stacey recognised that 'physical proximity does not always lead to the establishment of social relations.'<sup>9</sup> It takes more than buildings and neighbourhoods to form community: the real 'business' of community lies instead in social networks and social capital.<sup>10</sup> As Crow and Allan argue, 'much of what we do is engaged in through the interlocking social networks of neighbourhood, kinship and friendship, networks which together make up 'community life' as it is conventionally understood.'<sup>11</sup> Moreover, it is not just the networks in themselves that are so significant, but the opportunities that ties such as these present for interpersonal contact and reciprocal exchanges.<sup>12</sup> While Portes is quick to note that social capital is not a new concept, it is a vital theme for the study of community, highlighting the importance of the manner in which community members interact with each other.<sup>13</sup> More than anything else, community can be defined through reciprocal economic, social and cultural understandings, through favours, trust, responsibilities and values.

For the Polish, Italian and Greek-Cypriot case-study groups, the 'something in common' element of community is clearly straightforward: the foremost distinguishing feature of community is nationality/ethnicity. The testimonies from these three groups, however, offer portrayals of 'community' that take many different guises. Community is narrated historically, through chronicles of shared local and national histories, common experiences and common actions and purposes. Similarly, the spatial dimensions of community are illustrated, through the outside recognition of community structures and accounts of close-knit neighbourhoods. More than anything else, however, community is presented through stories of close friendships and family networks, through descriptions of common cultural values, and perhaps most interestingly of all, through accounts of community tensions and individual

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<sup>9</sup> M. Stacey, "The Myth of Community Studies", *British Journal of Sociology* 20 2 (1969), p. 144; also cited in Crow and Allan, *Community Life*, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> See particularly B. Wellman and S. D. Berkowitz, eds, *Social Structures: A Network Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 125.

<sup>11</sup> Crow and Allan, *Community Life*, p. 1. Craig Calhoun has a similar argument: C. Calhoun, "Community Without Propinquity Revisited: Communications Technology and the Transformation of the Urban Public Sphere", *Sociological Inquiry* 68 3 (1998), p. 381; also cited in Delanty, *Community*, pp. 179-180.

<sup>12</sup> See Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

concerns about the level of social control that any sense of community inevitably rests upon.

## Historical Communities

As with national communities, history is an important element in the construction of communities generally. The principle of a shared heritage equips the present community with greater legitimacy, and as with the nation, a common past becomes a useful resource for consolidating group membership and community consciousness.<sup>14</sup> It is worth reasserting Wallerstein's argument again that, 'the temporal dimension of pastness is central to and inherent in the concept of peoplehood ... pastness is a central element in the socialization of individuals, in the maintenance of group solidarity, in the establishment or challenge to social legitimation.'<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Connerton emphasises that, 'it is a common rule that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory.'<sup>16</sup> Historical accounts of community featured extensively in the collected testimonies, demonstrating a widespread sense of shared memory, and covering a range of different themes and perspectives from recollections of the 'good old days' to descriptions of traditional, implicitly historical, community celebrations.

Perhaps most strikingly, the interviewees projected community in terms of a temporal progression, a triumphant story of gradually building a community over time from nothing. The following Polish account is a good example:

Most of the people who came from the Bruntingthorpe [de-mobbing] camp settled around the Highfields area. We were disorganised, there were 82 airmen to start with, the officers from the camp. We kept meeting just outside Lewis' to just have a chat, as a sort of meeting place. Everybody knew Lewis' then. We decided to do something useful and find some accommodation to organise ourselves. One of the fathers from Holy Cross church, I don't quite remember how he got involved with the Polish people, but he took care of the Poles in Leicester, and he agreed to give us a small room in the priory

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<sup>13</sup> Portes, "Social Capital".

<sup>14</sup> Cohen discusses this in *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, pp. 99-101.

<sup>15</sup> I. Wallerstein, "The Construction of Peoplehood: Racism, Nationalism, Ethnicity" in É. Balibar and I. Wallerstein, eds, *Race, Class and Nation* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 78.

<sup>16</sup> P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 3.

upstairs, and that's how the Polish combatants started, that was 1947, '48. I was one of the first in the committee then, of course most of the people are dead now. We decided to start the Polish community, we had mass in the Holy Cross church. We had a Polish priest who was one of the chaplains who was with the forces, so he spoke the mass in Holy Cross church in Polish, and all the time they were informed that there was an ex-combatant club, if anybody wanted to join they were welcome. Of course the association grew to about 800 people. By contribution, by subscription, we decided that that small place wasn't big enough for us, so we decided to buy a bigger place, a home, a house, that would be suitable for gatherings for people. This is the place which we bought in 1956, '57, and it still is our place. People by hard work became richer and better off, and we decided to buy a church. Of course that was difficult, we had money but not enough to buy a church. There was a councillor who was very helpful to us, and he found a suitable place that was for sale on Melbourne Road, on the corner of Dale Street. When we went to look at it everybody seemed to like it, and so we decided to buy. We managed to get a loan ... by scraping every penny we could find, we got it.<sup>17</sup>

Establishing the community was a shared financial project: 'People were going round houses and we were paying for buying the Polish church and club, everybody was collecting money and we bought it. It took some time.'<sup>18</sup> A similar picture was portrayed by a Greek-Cypriot respondent:

The community was just, it started with a priest visiting the community one day. I think it was in December 1969. He just had the idea whether we wanted a community in Leicester. A few progressive people said yes, we would like to form our community in Leicester. We got a bit jealous to be honest, of Coventry, they had their community there. *Every time we needed anything to about religion we had to go to Coventry. When we saw what they were achieving there they decided to have a church in Leicester as well.* They had their meeting in December 1969 and the first service was done in Leicester Cathedral in January 1970. I think it was about three months after that the present archbishop in London who was responsible for the Leicester area, he came to me and said you are going to be a member of the committee, like that. I didn't have any idea at all ... And since that day, to the present time, I work with the community. At the time when we started in Leicester there were only about 60 or 70 families, that's all. Now there are quite a few now, there are over 200 families now in Leicester. To achieve what we have achieved, to have our own church, our community centre, to me it's an enormous achievement.<sup>19</sup>

Again, the recounted origins of the Italian community share common themes:

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 28.2.01., p.m. The Ex-Servicemen's Club house is on University Road.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with two first generation Polish women, Leicester, 24.2.00.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 19.3.01.

There wasn't a community, a club like there is now. There wasn't anything like that. We used to get together with our own friends, like our mum and dad they knew people from their village, so we used to get together in the houses, we went to somebody's house or they came to our house. That type of thing, but a community as such hadn't grown yet when we came to England. Only in the years after, it was quite a while after, when I started working I think it was, four or five years after, people started to create a club where they would do dances and people would go there and you would meet other Italians, but otherwise you just stuck to your own friends that you knew from way back. There wasn't anything like they have today. They didn't have, when we first came here, they didn't have a priest, but years after they had a priest that lived in Leicester and they bought a house on Fosse Road South. So therefore he started to say the mass on every Sunday, and we started to go.<sup>20</sup>

While the details vary, all three accounts illustrate a number of points. Firstly, 'community' existed before the club buildings were bought, providing the demand for a more formalised community arrangement to be developed. Whether this impetus came from within, or in the case of the Greek-Cypriot example, from the London community, it did so in response to a real need for meeting places to be found to house burgeoning social networks. Secondly, 'community' for the most part is viewed as a positive, logical consolidation of these networks: a shared creation which grew gradually over time and can now be looked back on with satisfaction. Thirdly, all three testimonies point to the role played by religion in co-ordinating community. Between them, church and religion cover the major facets of community, both embodying a shared identity and common values while providing a physical forum for a variety of social interactions. Finally, while these extracts contain a high level of personal recollection, they are all describing collective events, memories that everybody in the community would either remember for themselves, or would have learnt from others. The story of how the community began therefore fits very easily into Connerton's thesis of shared memory.<sup>21</sup>

Historical accounts of community also group around two very specific narratives of the early years in the city: one of the golden era of community, and the other of the common experience of hardship. Several testimonies portray palpable nostalgia for the type of community life experienced after the various clubs and groups had been established. Projections of the Polish community in particular focus on happy

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with first generation Italian woman, Leicester, 5.7.01.

<sup>21</sup> Connerton, *How Societies Remember*.

memories of an active social life, generally dating from when the interviewees themselves were young. One woman recalled that:

When I was younger I used to go dancing every weekend, every Friday they were there. Sunday you went to church, then you had the choir practice, so you had another chance to go to the Polish community. All my social life revolved around it, my friends were there, so it was most important ... it is very different [now] because all those people were young people, we hardly had any old people here, they were in their twenties, thirties, the older generation now.<sup>22</sup>

One man had a similar perception, speaking about community in the past tense:

They [the clubs] used to be busy, we used to have parties and dances and so on, but now we are declining and running into the red all the time. There is a club next to the parish club, they used to have a restaurant there, but now it's closed ... We had the Saturday school from the beginning, and quite a lot of organisations from the beginning, over twenty different organisations. We had the girl guides, boy scouts, the choir, the band, and airforce association. The main organisation was always the Ex-Servicemen's Club, which was the majority of us, and of course the parish. We've got over 1000 graves already in Leicester.<sup>23</sup>

The ageing profile of the community is a recurrent theme. Community seems to be remembered as lively and fun, set in continual contrast to the contemporary reality of a shrinking nucleus of community leaders. As another woman recalled:

You see we had parties at home when we were younger, we danced. We lived in a big house and one room was big, and we danced until 8 o'clock in the morning! But now we are older so no more dancing, but always we laugh and tell jokes and so, but only 'til 12 o'clock, not long, not any more. And not as many people as there used to be, lots of them died, so not as many as it used to be.<sup>24</sup>

This association of the past with better times is not exclusive to Polish memories. One second generation Italian woman, for example, also commented that the closeness of the Italian community was diminishing over time:

I remember when I was growing up there was hundreds of them [people], we had big dances, traditional dances, we had our plays with the children, loads of different things. Now we don't tend to do as much, we've got this little club and it is mainly the same people all the time ... as the club has been going

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with two first generation Polish women, Leicester, 3.8.99.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 26.1.01.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 2.2.01.

quite a few years, over ten years, it has died down. We don't do dances very much any more, we do one a year at New Year or Christmas, like a special occasion, and it's mainly more trips and things like that. You won't get many young people.<sup>25</sup>

It is difficult to discern how accurate these recollections are, whether the early days were more vibrant, or whether more negative aspects have been forgotten. Clearly memories of youth tend to be quite positive: remembering the community in its infancy inevitably coincides with recollections of the interviewees' own youth. Community is overwhelmingly presented in a temporal framework: the past is safe and familiar, but the future is less certain. Tied up with rosy portrayals of the past is a genuine fear about whether a community can continue to exist at all.

Community history is also told in terms of economic struggle and hard work. Not only did the three groups have to work hard and save collectively in order to establish a community, but each community member also personally experienced initial hardship as a direct result of migration. Stories of individual and collective financial ordeals therefore overlap, creating a common history of community based on solidarity, strength and resourcefulness. It is interesting that one era can be remembered in two ways: as the most secure and enjoyable, but also as the most difficult. Polish narratives of community particularly focus on the financial legacy that forced migration left behind. Without established migratory networks or kinship connections, the Polish migrants had to build personal and shared security from scratch: as one woman illustrated with her comment, 'nothing was given to Polish people, they had to earn and work hard', memories of economic hardship and hard work are recounted with extreme pride.<sup>26</sup> Sharing similar sentiments, another man noted that in many cases economic necessity turned buying a house into a collective project:

Well it was tremendous because unlike some other immigrant groups we rolled up our sleeves, we went out, we never had any sort of help from the government. Poles like their freedom ... they always wanted their own four walls ... they started with the poorer accommodation, terraced houses, they used to take other families and they shared the costs, and the ones that were living with them saved up, paying cheaper rent, and they went out and got

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with second generation Italian woman, Leicester, 5.7.01., a.m.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 26.8.99., p.m.

their own houses. Nobody was given it, what's theirs is theirs, they work for it. I admire them.<sup>27</sup>

Even building a 'home' once the house itself was secured is portrayed as a protracted process:

In our house we had a very old oven that the landlord had left, but we had nothing, not one little bit of furniture, so I got a box from some oranges and that was the table, and we were sitting like that eating around it, and that was our table. And you had to wait another month before you got something else, and most of the money had to go to pay for this and that and I couldn't spend a penny, not even for one chair, and you are waiting for perhaps six months later for a bed, for a dining room suite.<sup>28</sup>

Recollections such as this are so significant because it is inferred that this was a shared experience: Polish people across the city were simultaneously facing exactly the same difficulties. As discussed in previous chapters, the financial burden of economic migration created very similar situations for the Italian and Greek-Cypriot respondents; accounts of extensive working hours are important aspects of Italian and Greek-Cypriot life-histories.

Community is also a forum for national history. The histories remembered through the lens of community encompass local pasts but also the national heritage. The most obvious signs of this are the historical traditions that are played out collectively for national days and religious celebrations. Most of the major national events are marked within each community, encouraging widespread physical participation. Even remembered at home privately, the rituals used to commemorate certain occasions create their own temporal connections with other community members, providing reassurance that others are observing the national traditions at the same time, in the same way.<sup>29</sup> Celebrating a shared pastness, national or otherwise, is an inherent characteristic of community, and even if that past is uncomfortable, it can still be used to reassert the collective. In fact, the more tragic the common past, the greater the sense of unity in the present. In the case of the Polish community, histories of forced migration have worked to strengthen

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 23.8.99.

<sup>28</sup> First generation Polish woman, 24.2.00.

<sup>29</sup> Themes of collective remembering are discussed in J. R. Gillis, "Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship" in J. R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) pp. 3-24 and Connerton, *How Societies Remember*.



community bonds. As one woman commented, after the experiences of deportation in particular, the community has become an important source of security: 'I think that is why it was important to be in the Polish community, that gave us stability. I think without that it would have been very difficult for people.'<sup>30</sup>

## **Spatial Communities**

While projections of community are overtly historical, they are at the same time implicitly spatial. Understandings of community carry with them an important sense of territorial awareness, whether related to the geographic proximity of the residences of individual community members, or to the symbolic annexation of local space for national and community rituals. Firstly, the different respondents recounted different experiences of community neighbourhoods. For the Polish interviewees early settlement in specific areas - Highfields, around Narborough Road and by the football stadium in particular - strengthened a sense of community, locating pockets of potential community participants within close proximity of each other. As one second generation woman recalled, having other Polish families nearby ensured closeness in different ways, in this case creating a cohort of Polish children at the local school:

I remember my first day at English school vividly because we sat at the back of the class, all the Polish children, and didn't know what the heck was going on, in this strange language. We all lived near the stadium and there was a whole sort of conglomeration of Polish families in that area, and we used to go to the Catholic school St. Patrick's, and the bus used to come so all the Irish Catholics and Polish Catholics were all picked up at the stadium. We used to sort of bash each other on the way to school.<sup>31</sup>

In fact, upwardly mobile migration away from these areas into the suburbs has been charged with diminishing the geographic coherence of the community.<sup>32</sup> One

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 22.11.00.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with second generation Polish woman, Leicester, 31.8.99.

<sup>32</sup> Detailed census returns from 1971 onwards illustrate that the proportion of Polish people living in the city borough declined from 54.2% in 1971 to 46.3% in 1991 - for the county population generally, in 1971 36.8% lived in the city, dropping to 31.1% in 1991. Correspondingly, the percentage of Polish born people living in Oadby and Wigston rose from 3.4% in 1971 to 7.7% in 1991. See K. Burrell, *Identity and Integration: A Study of the Polish Community in Leicester* (University of Leicester: Unpublished MA dissertation, 1999), pp. 34-36.

woman, for example, claimed that her family experienced a steady decline in business in their shop on Narborough Road as a direct result:

After six years we came to Leicester to have our own shop, it was a shop with continental food, with different food, but most accent on the continental, on Narborough Road, there were many people living around in that part. But after a few years we noticed that business was going down, people were buying houses around, suburbs, and that meant the business was no good ... we sold the shop.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, the out-migration from Highfields has translated into dislocation between community members and community structures:

The club used to be packed. Many people used to live around Highfields but times have changed. People have moved away but the Polish club hasn't moved with them and it should have done. No one lives in Highfields anymore and it is too far from everyone. It takes two bus rides. It used to be easy walking distance but now people are afraid to walk there. It has caused the downfall of the community.<sup>34</sup>

The parish club has now moved to Evington, a decision influenced both by financial difficulties and the steady fall in regular attendees.

Experiences of neighbourhood were similar for the Italian respondents. Rather than there being one definitive 'Italian area' in the city, the respondents spoke of community members being quite widely dispersed, with just one specific area attracting a concentration of Italian families through chain migration, as already discussed:

In Evington there is a big nucleus of Italians there, families, so they tend to be together, although when we meet it is OK, but we always call them 'oh the Evingtons crowd'. All the rest of the Italians are more or less spread all over the city, while Evington, I don't know why, all the Italians started to go there and sending for their families, brothers and sisters.<sup>35</sup>

While this clearly encourages close connections between the Evington based families, these spatial arrangements do little to promote a geographically coherent community more generally. The Greek-Cypriot findings show an even weaker degree of proximity between community members, illustrating that the high incidence of

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<sup>33</sup> First generation Polish woman, 26.8.99., p.m.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 16.9.99.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with first generation Italian woman, Leicester, 29.6.01.

Greek-Cypriots working in the catering business works directly against families living close together. As the priest commented:

All the communities, especially here in Leicester, they are all working in fish and chips. In London it's different because there, maybe they have restaurants or they work in the textile industry ... if you look they are in the same type of business. Some of them might live near, but not many. Two, three, four, five people might live in the same road but not more than that because their businesses are the same so they have to be a few miles apart, otherwise they are going to compete against each other. That's why they don't live too near. A few live here just off Welford Road, in Wigston there are a few families, Oadby a few families, Glenfield a few families, a few in Birstall, in Syston about six, seven families living there. They might buy houses next to each other but their businesses are apart. In Leicester most of them have got fish shops.<sup>36</sup>

For all three groups, the spatial element of community clearly stretches beyond individual and familial residency. The real geographic force of community lies in the physical structures and the use of space around them for community activities. While churches and clubs, as central meeting places, are the most obvious focus of community, the spatial scope of community extends to include more widely dispersed shops and businesses, both constituting a series of common and physical reference points for the community, and demarcating distinct Polish, Greek-Cypriot and Italian daily 'routes' through the city. As one Polish woman explained, regular shopping activities in particular involved visits to specifically Polish shops: 'There was a Polish shop on Narborough Road, run by Polish delicatessen where you could buy Polish sausages and things like that, other Polish people went there so you would see them sometimes. You would go to a Polish doctor.'<sup>37</sup> Habitual journeys around the city are punctuated by these types of visits, illustrating how the creation and utilisation of community space reaches outside of the most visible centres.

The structural presence of community is further asserted through the proliferation of community gravestones in the city's cemeteries. In a reflection of the ageing profiles of these groups, most of the city's cemeteries have designated Polish, Greek-Cypriot and Italian areas, with the distinctive Polish graves at the Welford Road and Saffron Hill cemeteries offering good examples. These headstones are extremely significant, providing a permanent memorial to the Polish presence in

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Greek-Cypriot priest, Leicester, 29.6.01.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with second generation Polish woman, Leicester, 9.2.01.

Leicester which simultaneously represents the community's role in the history of the locality while safeguarding a physical reminder of the community for the future.

Furthermore, the existence of Polish graves in Leicester has opened up opportunities for community rituals to be held outside the main community centres:

In November, All Souls' Day, we go to the cemetery, remember the dead, we light candles and the whole place is full of candles and lights all over. We pray and refresh the graves and make them look nice and put wreaths of flowers on. We pray together, we meet together there. There is a procession ... we remember, we go there and visit. It is very important the respect for the dead for Polish people, remembering them and so on, praying for them.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps the most significant territorial aspect of community has to be this symbolic appropriation of local space for community rituals. National traditions regularly spread beyond the main community buildings in the form of religious processions through the city's streets, concerts and celebrations at De Montfort Hall, or, as in one previous example, to the banks of the River Soar. Here community is strengthened both through Cohen's symbolic ritualistic consciousness, and through the adoption of new space into the community's sphere.<sup>39</sup> As Anne-Marie Fortier asserts in relation to the Italian community in London, the performative elements of religious processions in particular are important in the grounding of community identity: 'commemorations such as the procession allow for memories to be not only lived and re-processed in a ritualised pattern of continuity. They are also located within a specific territory in a collective claim of belonging. The ritual thus produces a distinct timespace in the very heart of London.'<sup>40</sup>

While integral to the internal workings of community, community structures and spaces also serve as important signifiers to outsiders, delineating the visual outward markers of community. From the outside, the case-study groups are recognised primarily through their churches, buildings and clubs. In 1961, for example, Leicester's *Illustrated Chronicle* described the city's Polish population as 'an active community', citing as evidence the community's desire to find a new building as a site for a youth club.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Colpi's and Sword's studies of the Italian and Polish

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with two first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 24.2.00.

<sup>39</sup> Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*.

<sup>40</sup> A. Fortier, *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), p. 146.

<sup>41</sup> *Illustrated Chronicle*, 20.10.61., p. 3.

communities in Britain focus predominantly, though not exclusively, on the formal structures of the parish and various community clubs.<sup>42</sup> Community life, therefore, is most readily acknowledged when it takes place around visible, established community institutions.

## Community and Social Networks

As the various theorists concur, community remains an ambiguous and complex phenomenon. Historical and spatial projections of community are important, but can only partly uncover the real essence of community - the various social relationships that occur within the groups between individual members. As Wellman, Carrington and Hall argue, experiences of community are generally defined through kinship, friendship and organisational networks and ties.<sup>43</sup>

Despite Crow and Alan's assertion that community is something 'beyond the private sphere of home and family', it is clear that for many groups family and kinship is at the heart of community.<sup>44</sup> Anwar, for example, has persuasively argued that the institution of kinship is the focal point of Pakistani community life in Britain.<sup>45</sup> Family networks can blur the distinctions between the private sphere of the home and the more public arena of community, allowing community and family life to be experienced side by side: a gathering of extended family in the home, for example, can be both a public and private occasion. Whether private or public, however, it is undeniable that kinship ties, immediate and extended, are one of the most robust forms of social network.

Family and kinship are especially important in Greek-Cypriot notions of community, as discussed by Anthias, Constantinides and Oakley.<sup>46</sup> Here the family

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<sup>42</sup> Colpi, *The Italian Factor*, *Sword, Identity in Flux*.

<sup>43</sup> Wellman, Carrington & Hall, "Networks as personal communities".

<sup>44</sup> Crow and Allan, *Community Life*, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> M. Anwar, *The Myth of Return: Pakistanis in Britain* (London: Heinemann, 1979), p. 64.

<sup>46</sup> F. Anthias, "Sexual Divisions and Ethnic Adaptation: The Case of Greek-Cypriot Women" in A. Phizacklea, ed., *One Way Ticket: Migration and Female Labour* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 73-94; P. Constantinides, "The Greek-Cypriots: Factors in the Maintenance of Ethnic Identity" in J. Watson, ed., *Between Two Cultures: Migrants and Minorities in Britain* (Oxford:

unit is considered to be the building block of society, with the extended family of cousins, uncles and aunts being an integral part of the kinship unit. Cultural mechanisms of honour and shame value systems in particular work on the premise of protecting the reputation of the family, both immediate and extended.<sup>47</sup> Familial closeness, therefore is at the centre of Greek-Cypriot culture: as one woman remarked, 'the family, I think you find with most Mediterranean people there is a family unit where you are always together with your family, no matter where you are, how apart you are, you are always together as a unit.'<sup>48</sup> As another man observed, this family unit stretches further than the immediate family: 'Cousins are very close. Cousins, first cousins are very close relatives.'<sup>49</sup> First and second cousins, furthermore, as such close relatives, are not permitted to marry. Family is so highly regarded that the most usual way of distinguishing close relationships outside marriage and the family is to bestow honourable family membership, or 'fictive-kinship', on trusted friends.<sup>50</sup> The practice of having best men and women at weddings, for example, provides an opportunity to honour close friends with familial ties:

We have a lot more best men and best women than you do, we have about twenty or thirty. We have a first best man and a first best woman who kind of become part of the family, often they are, they are cousins very often. But if they are not, they become part of the family. You talk about your best man, it's almost like saying my brother, or my cousin. Some of your other best men and best women, you would be very friendly with as well. It's an indicator that the family keep together more, the relatives and the culture keep together more, because you have all these best men. It would be a nonsense if you weren't close in any way, why would they be your best man or best woman?<sup>51</sup>

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Blackwell, 1977), pp. 269-300; R. Oakley, "The Cypriots in Britain", *Race Today* 2 4 (1970), pp. 99-102.

<sup>47</sup> See particularly R. Oakley, "Family, Kinship and Patronage: The Cypriot Migration to Britain" in V. S. Khan, ed., *Minority Families in Britain: Support and Stress* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 17; P. Loizos, "Politics and Patronage in a Cypriot Village, 1920-1970" in E. Gellner and J. Waterbury, eds, *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies* (London: Duckworth, 1977), p. 130.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 3.7.01.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 9.3.01.

<sup>50</sup> Constantinides, "The Greek-Cypriots", p. 273.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 14.6.00.

Even the depiction of community is relayed using kinship imagery. Several respondents, for example, spoke of the community as being like a wider family. While one man remarked that, 'I consider everybody in Leicester to be a sort of relative', the parish priest commented that:

I always say to them the community means family. Don't close yourself in your own family, you have to close yourself in the big family, in the community. Our school has events, and a lot of people don't come to the events because they don't have children. I say you should come because the children they belong to all of us, they belong to the community. They have their father and mother, but we are there to give them courage, to help them.<sup>52</sup>

It is hardly surprising that the extended family provides the major forum for social relationships: as Anthias argues, without family ties social life in the community would probably collapse.<sup>53</sup> The majority of social contact within the community, as one second generation Greek-Cypriot respondent recounted, revolves around the kinship networks of uncles, aunts and cousins:

You wouldn't really mix with friends, you would mix with your brothers and sisters. Your community would be your relatives, so my friends would be my cousins. If geography helped out, if they were near, these would be the people you would socialise with. We would be in and out of each other's houses. So this would be the social contacts, this would be the social world, especially for the women, my mum and aunts and that. The people I would socialise with, I had friends but they would be my cousins particularly. So family is close like that.<sup>54</sup>

While family is important for the Italian and Polish groups, it is not such a dominant force in community life. Although Colpi portrays the Italian community as a community of families, this is a more accurate depiction of southern Italian culture, than Italian culture more generally.<sup>55</sup> For the Italian community in Leicester, with its diverse geographic origins, family is both an important element of community, but simultaneously a signifier of 'southernness':

Family values ... in Italy unless you have got to move for your job, otherwise you stay living with you family until you marry ... the south of Italy is even more close and tight together as a family. We in the north, we know the value

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with Greek-Cypriot priest, Leicester, 29.6.01.

<sup>53</sup> Anthias, "Sexual Divisions", p. 92.

<sup>54</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 14.6.00.

<sup>55</sup> Colpi, *The Italian Factor*, p.191.

but we give a bit more freedom to our children. We have got a group of wonderful people from Evington, a lot of families there, all the children married between them, they are not related but friends, they have grown up together.<sup>56</sup>

Community life for the families living in Evington inevitably involves interaction in extended kinship networks, while the other Italian respondents have less extended family to socialise with. Extended family plays an even smaller part in the Polish community. Forced migration had ensured that most kinship networks do not stretch beyond grandparents, and in some cases aunt and uncles, and as a result 'family' is tied much more closely to the private home than to wider community.

Beyond kinship ties, the most obvious social networks within the communities are those constructed from personal friendships. In keeping with Modood, Beishon and Virdee's assertion that most ethnic minority friendships are maintained within the community, for the majority of the first generation respondents close friends and community were perceived to be inextricably linked.<sup>57</sup> Several Italian interviewees, for example, used the term 'close friends' alongside community, unselfconsciously associating one with the other. The absence of extended family in the Polish community in particular has enhanced the role of friendship as the basis for most social relationships. When asked what the Polish community meant to her, one woman replied:

For example, with us it is quite common to go and see each other, invite each other for coffee, for dinner or a chat. If I was living in a cul-de-sac, with a few Polish houses, we would be visiting each other and inviting, we would probably fall out with someone but you would never feel that you were isolated. In England there is the isolation that is the problem, you know, people tend to stay in their own houses, their own castles.<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, as already suggested in the earlier examples of community histories, stories of community tend to involve accounts of friendship. The Polish woman who had spoken of having almost no furniture went on to assert that this did not undermine the role of the home as a focus for social interactions: '... and yet we would have friends, for example, who would have cups of coffee around the table

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with first generation Italian woman, Leicester, 7.2.01.

<sup>57</sup> T. Modood, S. Beishon and S. Virdee, *Changing Ethnic Identities* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1994), p. 25.

<sup>58</sup> First generation Polish woman, 3.8.99.



and a packet of biscuits around, and everybody was happy. After all we went through we were happy with that, we knew we could build it up.<sup>59</sup> In fact, the legacy of forced migration, as previously discussed, has manifested itself in the construction of social connections similar in strength to the blood ties of the Greek-Cypriot community. The first generation especially holds onto these established friendships, facilitated by a day care centre at the parish club twice a week. One of the women responsible for the day care centre, translating for another woman and adding her own thoughts, commented:

She said she has always stayed, and she still does, within the Polish community, that was the centre of our socialisation, we have our friends there ... we are open at the moment two days a week for the elderly people, we have a group of about seventy people that come. It's the old friendships which are still being maintained, you know, sometimes people have known each other for more than fifty years, and suddenly they meet up here and it is like going back. It is very, very important.<sup>60</sup>

Community also facilitates a huge array of social networks which would not normally develop so organically. While friends and family meet up spontaneously, a significant proportion of community activity is conducted through specific interest groups and occasional gatherings. In all three cases, the church is the clearest example of a structure successfully promoting diverse social interaction. When asked what he considered to be the most important aspect of the Greek-Cypriot community, one man replied:

Because we are under the church, the most important thing is the church. But the church it gives the opportunity for the people to get together, have a word between people, it's the link between people. It's the most important because we get the service every Sunday, then you can see the people and you get that link, and getting to know people as well, having a word with them about their families, how their families are and so on.<sup>61</sup>

The role of the Greek-Cypriot church is so socially orientated that during the services many of the men stand at the back of the church and continue talking:

The women rush enthusiastically to the front and get on their knees and start praying quickly. I mean everybody greets each other, it's very social as well, church isn't meant to be miserable ... at church everyone greets each other,

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<sup>59</sup> First generation Polish woman, 24.2.00.

<sup>60</sup> First generation Polish woman, 3.8.99.

<sup>61</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot man, 19.3.01.

everyone is pleased to see each other and there is a lot of talking, a lot of sociability, but then once the service starts the women will go up and start kissing the icons, picking up their kids to kiss the icons, and then they go and kneel down and pray. The blokes are still milling around having a fag outside and talking to each other, eventually they will come in and by then they will all be standing at the back. It's not particularly segregated, you know men will be mixing in at the front as well, but the women get in first and the men start hanging around at the back.<sup>62</sup>

The sociability of the church was also commented on in Italian accounts:

If you want to meet with Italians you go to the Italian mass, St. Peter's, down Hinckley Road. It's always the second Sunday of the month, at 4.30 p.m. we go there for our mass, and then we meet with people that sometimes you don't see for one month or two, it's a focal point to meet the people.<sup>63</sup>

Significantly, alongside religious celebrations, the church in all three groups plays host to life-cycle events of the community members, providing a forum for periodic and extensive social connections. Weddings in particular offer an opportunity to both affirm existing friendships, and meet up with other community members not normally seen in the course of everyday activities. For the Greek-Cypriot community in particular, weddings are a shared social institution:

Marriages and christenings, these are very big things ... I have been to dozens of weddings, Greek weddings, and there's 500 guests minimum or something like that, 300 to 500, a big hall, you know, all the community, the aunts, the uncles, the cousins. It's not as if people never keep in touch with them, everyone does you see. They have loads and loads of guests.<sup>64</sup>

For all three groups, the secondary function of weddings, christenings and funerals is to bring community members together. As two Italian respondents commented, 'when we have a wedding everyone has got to be invited. I had my daughter's Christening and I invited all the people from around here that I had grown up with, we still do things like that'; 'most of the time if you get invited to a wedding you see some people that you haven't seen for years. Funerals, Christenings.'<sup>65</sup>

Another man had a similar response:

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<sup>62</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 14.6.00.

<sup>63</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

<sup>64</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 14.6.00.

<sup>65</sup> Second generation Italian woman, 5.7.01, a.m.; first generation Italian woman, 5.7.01.

A few weeks ago two of my nieces, their daughters had their first communion, had a joint party, there must have been about 70, 80 people there ... you find the same if it is a funeral, people will go to a funeral of a member of the Italian community even if they are not related. Funerals and weddings.<sup>66</sup>

Similarly one Polish woman recounted that:

Usually the reception follows [the wedding], some have it in the Polish centre, there is usually a big meal, a Polish meal, and there is singing, a lovely occasion ... at funerals we don't only go to our own family's funerals, but to each other's funerals ... usually after the funeral we have a get together organised by the family, some food, sitting together, the family is there, everybody who wants to come is invited. It is just a meeting together and being there with them.<sup>67</sup>

As the following Polish and Greek-Cypriot testimonies demonstrate, the social function of the church is so powerful that differentiating between church and community centre can be difficult, especially when the two share the same site:

We have here the Polish church. If it wasn't for the church we wouldn't know each other, so we go to church and meet people and we have a club there next to the church, and we meet on Sunday there after the mass, we meet in the club. On Tuesday and Thursday we have day centres in the club, on Saturday they come there, the Polish dance club, they dance there. On Tuesday evening is the choir, Polish choir.<sup>68</sup>

Every Sunday after church we make tea, cakes, coffee, next door in the community centre. Once a month we want to start to make kebabs for outside for all the people who come to the church. If we make kebabs that day most of the people will come to the church as well, because they know after the church there is going to be kebabs and backgammon competitions. We used to do it regularly, about 150 to 200 people used to come. When you don't do it people take different hobbies.<sup>69</sup>

Community life, as these accounts illustrate, incorporates a wide variety of activities, both inside and outside the sphere of the church. Stories of community typically include lists of community clubs and groups, past and present: for the Polish community these include the Ex-Servicemen's Club, junior and senior choirs, dance troupe, scouts and guides, football club, elderly day care meetings, and the Saturday school at Moat Community College; for the Greek-Cypriot community, groups

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<sup>66</sup> Interview with first generation Italian man, Leicester, 10.7.01.

<sup>67</sup> First generation Polish woman, 24.2.00.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 2.2.01.

<sup>69</sup> Greek-Cypriot priest, 29.6.01.

mentioned are the women's auxiliary organisation, the Saturday school, and the community committee; Italian organisations include the Dante Alighieri literature and culture group, the community committee and the evening school classes. Added to this are a whole series of informal but regular social interactions, such as the male Greek-Cypriot gambling and backgammon circles, and collective television watching in the main centres. It is almost impossible to register every type of social activity which takes place under the umbrella of community.

For all three groups, 'community' is clearly a complex array of overlapping social networks, or, as Wellman, Carrington and Hall assert, a series of social clusters and personal communities.<sup>70</sup> Just as the collectivity of the nation is felt personally, so too the shared notion of community is highly individualised, experienced in different ways by different members. If there are personal communities, furthermore, there are therefore multiple communities: as Crow and Allan argue, 'community has many meanings: it involves different sets of experiences for different groups of people, and indeed for the same people at different times in their lives.'<sup>71</sup> Community can be experienced formally and informally, regularly and sporadically; community life is characterised through weekly church masses and irregular attendance at weddings and funerals, through committee membership and involvement in backgammon circles.

Some members of the community inevitably become more intensely involved than others, participating in a whole range of different activities and taking a greater degree of control over the shape of the community as a whole. As Wellman et al found in their research, 'many network members belong to more than one cluster. Hence, these densely knit clusters tend to organize and dominate East Yorkers' networks, and their overlapping membership facilitate the co-ordination of activity between groups.'<sup>72</sup> For the three case-study groups the interviews revealed highly dynamic, authoritative figures within each community, from religious leaders to club organisers. But community is not the sole preserve of these leaders - rather it belongs to everybody willing to participate in some form. As Putnam identifies,

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<sup>70</sup> Wellman, Carrington and Hall, "Networks as Personal Communities".

<sup>71</sup> Crow and Allan, *Community Life*, p. 183.

<sup>72</sup> Wellman, Carrington and Hall, "Networks as Personal Communities", p. 155.

communities are created from a mixture of 'machers' and 'schmoozers', those who are publicly active, and those who fulfil their roles less visibly.<sup>73</sup>

Different experiences of community quite obviously form along gender and age lines, as Crow and Allan's earlier quote suggests. In all three groups there is a definite divide between the public and private and male and female spheres of the community. Women, as Putnam argues, are more likely to take on the role of 'schmoozers' in the community, working behind the scenes through informal contacts.<sup>74</sup> As Boguisa Temple observes of the Polish community in Britain, while most research to date has defined the Poles in Britain in masculine terms, focusing on the public projection of community, it is usually the women who undertake the essential but hidden tasks of community life such as making costumes for the dance troupe, cooking meals at the clubs, and organising social welfare groups.<sup>75</sup> Most of the interviewed women themselves took part in these types of 'backstage' activities, while many of the male respondents fulfilled the roles of public speakers and community spokesmen. Furthermore, those women who do not work further their community involvement during the day through regular but informal gatherings with other female friends: as one respondent remembered from her childhood:

My granny didn't work and she was a real gossip, she used to have her friends round of all ages. We knew lots of people, we had lots of people around. In the school holidays we were taken to other people where the mum might be at home with a small baby or something. Lots and lots of contact with people.<sup>76</sup>

A similar situation occurs within the Greek-Cypriot community, as the priest highlighted: 'Sometimes the women, the auxiliary organisation, they have a meeting in the community centre when they are going to have an event or they want to make a dinner and dance. The women do most of the organisation. They organise most of the events.'<sup>77</sup> These roles, however, are not necessarily static. As the Polish case-

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<sup>73</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 93-4.

<sup>74</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 95.

<sup>75</sup> See B. Temple, "Constructing Polishness: Researching Polish Women's Lives", *Women's Studies International Forum* 17 1 (1994), pp. 47-55; B. Temple, "'Gatherers of Pig-Swirl and Thinkers': Gender and Community Amongst British Poles", *Journal Of Gender Studies* 4 1 (1995), pp. 63-72.

<sup>76</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 9.2.01.

<sup>77</sup> Greek-Cypriot priest, 29.6.01.

study shows, a significantly higher rate of male mortality than female mortality has reduced the public dominance of men in the Polish community, leaving women for the first time in a more prominent position.<sup>78</sup> As one first generation Polish woman commented:

Women are the bosses, most of the men have died now. The men are dying before the women ... in our committees most of them are women ... [in the early days] we had the families. My husband was on the committee all his life and I never was. Now I've joined, now I'm doing it. Most of us are, the men are dying young, dying before the women.<sup>79</sup>

As this testimony illustrates, age is also an important variable in community experience. All three groups appear to have been very child-orientated in the early days of community, but now the general focus of community is increasingly directed towards the elderly members, particularly in the Polish and Italian groups. While the community demographic as a unit changes over time, so too do individuals' experiences of community. In all three groups the entire life-cycle is catered for within the community: life starts with a christening, moves on to attendance at the school and participation in singing and dancing shows, progresses to marriage and family with the associated wedding and christenings, and then repeats the cycle through taking children to the school, participation in community parties and events, and eventually to, in the Polish case, the day care centre for the elderly, ending with funerals and cemetery rituals. Taking the Polish example again, with the day care centre open on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, the dance troupe meetings held one evening in the week, and the school running on Saturday mornings, it is quite likely that young and old do not meet on a regular basis. The notion of community for the two age groups clearly translates very differently. 'Community', therefore, cannot be considered as an easily definable, coherent mass: rather it is better understood as a series of highly variable, fluid networks.

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<sup>78</sup> The 1971 census returns show that for that year 18% of the female Polish population in the city were widowed, compared with 3.6% of the male Polish population. Again see Burrell, *Identity and Integration*.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 16.2.01.

## Networks and Social Capital

While interesting and important in themselves, the primary function of these different social networks is the generation of social capital within the communities. Examples of social capital can be found in most of the extracts already cited, in the illustrations of social networks successfully providing economic and social support to their members. As Putnam observes, 'the touchstone of social capital is the principle of generalized reciprocity.'<sup>80</sup> The real strength of community, therefore, lies in the willingness of its members to contribute to the collective, safe in the knowledge that they also gain from the advantages of participation, and that in return for supporting others they too will be supported when they need to be. As Bauman put is, 'our duty, purely and simply, is to help each other, and so our right, purely and simply, is to expect that the help we need will be forthcoming.'<sup>81</sup> Social capital manifests itself diversely, ranging from cultures of formal and informal gift giving, as studied by Werbner in relation to the Pakistani community, to collective financial projects.<sup>82</sup>

Perhaps the clearest illustration of the positive possibilities of social capital can be found in the accounts of the Polish and Greek-Cypriot efforts to secure a church for the community. In both cases the church building was purchased with shared resources, entirely dependent on individual desires to invest financially in the idea of community. It is worth repeating the earlier account of paying for the Polish church: 'people were going round houses and we were paying for buying the Polish church and club, everybody was collecting money and we bought it. It took some time.' This communal effort has enabled one Greek-Cypriot respondent to claim that, 'we built our own church', and another to assert that 'we've got a Greek church that everybody came together for, put money in together, to get something to keep the tradition going.'<sup>83</sup> In a similar vein, recollections of house sharing demonstrate the same commitment to the concept of reciprocal resources, just on a smaller scale.

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<sup>80</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 134.

<sup>81</sup> Bauman, *Community*, p. 2.

<sup>82</sup> P. Werbner, "Social Networks and the Gift Giving Economy Among British Pakistanis", *Sociology Review* 13 (1992), pp. 6-10.

<sup>83</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot man, 9.3.01.; interview with first and second generation Greek-Cypriot women, Leicester, 9.3.01.

Greek-Cypriot experiences of community in particular are heavily orientated around the concept of economic reciprocity and mutual aid, from kinship support to co-operation in business. As one woman remarked, 'it is quite a close community. I think it used to be closer a few years ago, but everybody is doing their own thing now. Everybody knows each other, put it that way. If anybody needs somebody for help it is still quite close.'<sup>84</sup> Firstly, close kinship ties ensure that financial aid is always available for family members:

There is a lot of support there with the families. We are people who what we make in our lifetime we pass it to our children. If I've got five children, and I've got say £100, I give them £20 each. That's how it goes, we pass to our children what we have, what I have done in my lifetime. I've got kids, I've got business, and when they struggle a bit I help them out. I buy things for my grandchildren, I give them money. This is how the families work.<sup>85</sup>

Furthermore, one of the cornerstones of the Greek-Cypriot wedding ritual is the tradition of pinning money to the clothes of the bride and groom, driven by the principle of providing financial support for young couples within the community, whether they are relatives or not:

It's a lot [of money] you know, I've seen it for myself. The parents will pin a lot on, and also cousins would pin a lot on. And the Greek weddings will have 300, 400, 500 guests, all the adults will be expected to pin something on. So you know, £15,000 to £20,000 is not unusual. They do the same thing for other people, you know they help each other. And that's for the couples, its for them.<sup>86</sup>

As another man commented, 'in the weddings, when you go to the weddings you go to support the pair who are getting married. Everybody pays so much to them so they collect £20,000, £30,000, so it's a good start in life'.<sup>87</sup> One man in particular was very clear in his perception of the economic obligations and commitments of a marriage for the wider family:

A marriage in the Greek community, in Leicester, is not a marriage between a girl and a boy, it is a marriage between two families. Take my cousin, his daughter is nineteen, next week she is getting married to a twenty one year

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<sup>84</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 9.3.01.

<sup>85</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot man, 9.3.01.

<sup>86</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 14.6.00.

<sup>87</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot man, 9.3.01.



old lad. My cousin found them a shop, put £80,000 deposit for their shop. My cousin is arranging for a wedding which will cost £25,000, he has got to spend another £40,000 to do up the shop. This is my cousin. Now, when he is helping his daughter to this extent he has the right to be in their lives. They should show respect to that guy for who has done so much for them. It is a different culture. Obviously when she has children she will be expected to do the same.<sup>88</sup>

There is also an ethos of helping out other businesses within the community: 'The community here, they are good people, they can help people. Cypriots are good people, they help each other ... business, we help each other with business, that's why everybody's got his own business, we help each other.'<sup>89</sup> The following remark of one woman demonstrates how small-scale this aid can be: 'They help one another, you can phone up and say have you got any peas or any fish left, they help each other.'<sup>90</sup> While this may seem an unimportant example, not only would this stock be paramount to a fish and chip business, but this comment also displays how the concept of economic reciprocity in the community has seeped seamlessly into everyday life. The geographic dispersal of the Greek-Cypriot fish and chip shops around the city has *actually enhanced the possibility of social capital in this area*, effectively removing any fears of competition and rivalry. Supporting community businesses was also mentioned in relation to the Polish community, although in a different manner. Here, *rather than businesses helping each other directly*, community members recounted taking extra care to visit Polish shops and businesses where possible instead of English ones: when narrating regular visits paid to Polish shops and the Polish doctor, one woman added:

I think that there was the sense that you were helping somebody out by giving them business, giving them a helping hand. Everybody who came here, well not everybody, my parents were terribly poor, they had left things behind, their families had left land and properties behind and they had to start again. They worked really hard to try and get something back again. Most of the people you knew were Polish.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 28.6.01.

<sup>89</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot man, 9.3.01.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 28.6.01.

<sup>91</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 9.2.01.

While the shared memory of forced migration encouraged economic collaboration within the Polish community, the common goal of economic betterment created a similar situation for the Italian community: several of the Italian respondents spoke about visiting local Italian hairdressers and restaurants.

Social capital is seen in the actions of everyday life throughout all three communities. It can be found in the small, practical actions of friendship and community duty, especially in helping the most vulnerable community members, the elderly and the young. Childcare arrangements are a good example, with most of the female respondents recounting their reliance on family and friends within the community to look after their children while they worked. As one Italian woman remarked, for the families in Evington, childcare was easily taken care of through kinship ties:

*They've got solid marriages, very solid marriages, with children, and then you get the parents or grandparents, or the uncles and aunts, when the children are born, after a few months the mother goes back to work or whatever, the grandmother steps in, or the uncle and aunt, so they are really helping each other in a wonderful way.<sup>92</sup>*

For Polish families, there is a similar desire to organise childcare through the extended family, although once again this depended on the family remaining intact after the war.

### **Invisible networks: norms, values and information**

Community networks do not only generate practical examples of social capital. Perhaps even more important to community are the interdependent emotional and cultural ties that bind community members to each other, in different ways and at different times. Community is a repository of shared knowledge, expectations, norms and values, a forum for the exchange of community information, and ultimately a vehicle for a common way of living. The collected interviews uncovered several areas where community can be understood in these terms, from community wide notions of hospitality, to a sense of collective responsibility, to the shared values of honour and shame. At the same time as generating social capital, therefore,

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<sup>92</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

community clearly enhances, and is supported by, the cultural capital of commonly understood cultural norms.

As already discussed, a significant proportion of social interaction within the three communities occurs sporadically and informally, through private household visits. In the Polish and Greek-Cypriot cases in particular, however, these social meetings are strongly supported by a cultural tradition of hospitality, both to strangers and other community members. The Polish interviews especially revealed that for the first generation at least, long-established notions of hospitality influence social interactions. One particularly illustrative phrase continues to be used in the community, '*gość w dom, Bóg w dom*', literally translating as 'guest in the home, God in the home':

*Gość w dom, Bóg w dom*, we say if you come to my house, if we accept you we accept God. We are very hospitable people. Those people who go to Poland, they are accepted with open arms, a lot to drink, a lot to eat. We are very hospitable here as well. When we have the gatherings [at the Ex-Serviceman's Club] people just come and enjoy themselves, and we cover the cost of the gathering.<sup>93</sup>

As another respondent remarked, hospitality is closely linked to the concept of mutual respect:

It means a visitor to the house is like a God, *gość w dom, Bóg w dom*, perhaps a typical Polish thing, I never hear of this sort of expression in any other language. In England you would just say welcome, that's all. This is a very old Polish saying. If you get a visitor, you bring God with you. It's respecting your visitors, respecting your own house, your family.<sup>94</sup>

It is worth quoting at length one elderly man's account of the culture and tradition of Polish hospitality:

There is a saying here, guest home, God home, they treat you as a God, they cannot refuse you hospitality. Coming back to Christmas Eve supper there is always one setting for a stranger. I said who do you expect, and they say someone might come and knock at the door, they won't ask your name, nothing you know, please sit down and you are treated the same as everybody round the table. They visit each other if they are sick, things like that, they invite you, they make sure that you are not on your own. I managed to be on my own for three Christmases here, it's my own fault, because they phone, come and join us for Christmas Eve supper or even for the whole

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<sup>93</sup> First generation Polish man, 28.2.01., p.m.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 26.1.01.

Christmas, to stay with them, but I like my independence ... if you come to me for the first time, I'd say come in, make you welcome, *gość w dom, Bóg w dom*. Even to a stranger, even if I didn't know you, it's your duty to make them feel at home, it's your duty. And mind you, the rare cases, if they don't, word gets around and neighbours will ostracise them. So it is up to you to make sure that your guest is looked after. Strange, but I think it is pleasant. They say in England, English man's home is his castle, even old people notice, and they say for years and years they lived next door and they never invited me, we always talked, how are you, good morning, but always on the doorstep, you are not allowed to cross the step. And it was strange to me, but then from my generation you would just invite them in straight away ... in Poland, for guests anything that is best comes out, so if you let them know the day or two before you come, the woman runs around and starts baking, it's rude perhaps to drop unexpected. But you do it to save them work, you take them as you find them.<sup>95</sup>

The interviews with the Greek-Cypriot respondents also uncovered a similar culture of hospitality, again orientated around food:

The Greek word for stranger, guest or foreigner are all the same word, *xenos*. Hospitality is a very big thing, hospitality through food. Whenever I went to relatives they would always give us a meal, even if we arrived at three in the afternoon, or four in the afternoon, they would always get you something, people would eat together. People laugh and joke together over the table. It's a food based culture.<sup>96</sup>

As already suggested by the Polish testimonies, most of the invisible binding forces of community are related to the need to simultaneously project a positive image of community and maintain cultural traditions within it. A further example of this can be seen in the strong sentiments of community responsibility and pride uncovered in the interviews. Once again, the Polish case-study reveals a culture of collective responsibility, particularly in the area of child discipline, something also noted by Sword.<sup>97</sup>

I had five children, and I would say remember there are no complaints of a Polish child. I felt as if responsible for the good name of the Polish people. I think because if you are away from your country you feel a kind of ambassador of that country, and if you misbehave than it throws a bad light not only on that particular person, but it would throw a bad light on the country ... It's a very closely knit community. For example, if I have seen a Polish child do something wrong I could say to that Polish child stop doing that, I'm going

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<sup>95</sup> Interview with first generation Polish man, Leicester, 24.1.00.

<sup>96</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 14.6.00.

<sup>97</sup> Sword, *Identity in Flux*, pp. 158-159.

to tell your mother, or simply I'll tell the mother or father what I have seen, and the parent would be grateful of that. It's like a responsibility, I would never say to my children you must never misbehave because you are my child but because you are a Polish child, it's a kind of national pride. And I know that a mother would be grateful if I would notice a Polish child and pre-warned her that there could be a problem. It wouldn't be taken badly, it would be like thank you for telling me, I didn't realise the situation. It's a responsibility. Indirectly it's helping each other.<sup>98</sup>

This culture of group pride and responsibility is common to all three groups. In the Greek-Cypriot and Italian interviews especially, the respondents spoke about how hard working the communities are, and what good people they are. Extra pride is taken from the lack of crime associated with each community. While the following extract is from an Italian woman, the feelings it demonstrates are shared by the other two communities:

One thing that pleases me is that the Italians, I'm talking about the Italians in Leicester, as you read the papers about crime and so on, we never make the paper talk about us. Whenever we were in the paper it was very often about the club, doing the traditional things, choirs, but the Italians, they behave themselves. The Italian community, they contribute to the well-being of the town, because all these restaurants, hairdressers, they all pay tax, we never have a scandal from anybody, as far as I know, anybody involved in scandals or crimes, thank God not.<sup>99</sup>

Perhaps the most striking example of cultural norms and values within the communities can be found in the Greek-Cypriot and Italian codes of honour and shame, and respect. While Polish morality is closely associated with national identity and the teachings of the Catholic church, the Greek-Cypriot and Italian groups have transported the central elements of traditional Mediterranean value systems. Some interpretations of honour and shame are clearly tied up with the same concepts of group responsibility and pride: as the following Italian account illustrates, any association with crime would bring shame on the whole community: 'the shame, people don't like anyone to be a robber, a murderer, that's a shame, that's a disgrace to the whole family.'<sup>100</sup> Similarly, shame, honour and respect are used to influence

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<sup>98</sup> First generation Polish woman, 24.2.00.

<sup>99</sup> First generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

<sup>100</sup> First generation Italian woman, 5.7.01.

the behaviour of the young. When asked about these values, one Greek-Cypriot woman replied:

Oh that plays a big part, to me it does. I do sit my two children down and I say to them when you go out that door, because now my son goes to school on his own, don't shame me. Don't shame the name, your father, I always say your father's name. You respect it. There is a lot of respect, that is a strong issue. I know children make mistakes, all children do. I always say if you've done something wrong I'd rather hear it from you than anyone else, to me that shows respect. At least it has come from him first.<sup>101</sup>

This is comparable with the Polish accounts of curbing the potential bad behaviour of the young, but while for the Polish community it is a matter of national pride, for the Greek-Cypriot and Italian groups it more a case of family honour. If shame is to be avoided, furthermore, honour is to be courted and celebrated. Family honour especially is built on good impressions, and also, as the following account suggests, feeds easily into the generation of social capital through its reciprocal nature. Honour has to be met with honour, and favours have to be returned:

There is a word, *filitimo*, there is no equivalent in the English language. It means it is your way to return the favour that has been done to you. You get into a situation but you don't want to feel that you have been done a favour but you haven't done something in return.<sup>102</sup>

The codes of honour and shame are perhaps most usually associated with gender and concepts of masculinity and femininity. As Anthias notes, 'the concept of honour (*filitimo*) is a specifically male one, denoting self-respect, masculinity and conformity to the standards of male behaviour.'<sup>103</sup> Notions of what men should be are strong within the Greek-Cypriot community in particular, and again can be illustrated by a certain 'key word' in Greek culture: 'There is a word that describes a young man who is handsome, strong, has all the desired properties, *leventis*, *leventia*, you can imagine all the good things somebody has, young strong man, handsome, gentle,

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<sup>101</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 11.7.01.

<sup>102</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 28.6.01.; Anthias translates '*filitimo*' as 'honour'. See F. Anthias, *Ethnicity, Class, Gender and Migration: Greek-Cypriots in Britain* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992), p. 82.

<sup>103</sup> Anthias, *Ethnicity, Class, Gender and Migration*, p. 82.

works hard, protects the poor, there is no such thing in English.'<sup>104</sup> The ideal of femininity, on the other hand, as Anthias again observes, equates to sexual purity and innocence.<sup>105</sup> Again, these concepts are embedded in everyday values in the community, as can be seen in the following comments of a second generation Italian woman: 'They are very big on honour, for example if you came home pregnant, you would never dream of doing that ... but they are brought up to protect them a lot, not to have too many boyfriends because people talk about you, things like that.'<sup>106</sup> Although declining in usage, some families in both communities, the Greek-Cypriot community especially, continue to put these values into practice through the tradition of marriage 'introductions'. While not exactly arranged marriages, parents are able to suggest suitable marriage partners for their children: in the words of one Italian respondent, 'they don't arrange them, not like Asian families, but they will sort of introduce people and see how things go.'<sup>107</sup> Another second generation Greek-Cypriot man shared his recollections about introductions and engagements, which are worth quoting at length:

I'm 40 now so even in ten years things have changed. But when I was like 20 to 25, this is going back quite a while, at that time I had a few introductions myself, and certainly I saw my cousins being introduced and married off, so definitely 15 years ago there was a lot of it going on, and I think it still goes on, but I think it is starting to trail ... but what I saw with my own eyes, there were introductions, you know that prospective bride comes and hands out the tea to everybody, that gives the prospective bridegroom the chance to get a good look at her close up as she passes the tea around to everybody. That's obviously the first introduction and usually what is asked once everybody says goodbye is what do you think, do you like him, do you like her? And if there's a thumbs up from both sides then they get to meet again, again chaperoned but not with everybody there, it might be *in one of the parents' houses but* they are often left on their own, people moving around and stuff. So there is some chance to talk. And then if it's still OK you more or less have to make a decision, and then if both say yes they want to get engaged they are then allowed to go out unchaperoned ... if you were engaged and then you break it off, there would be a bit of dishonour there. Questions are raised, why did they break it off? What's wrong with her, what's wrong with him? Once you get

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<sup>104</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 28.6.01.; see also P. Panayi, "One Last Chance: Masculinity, Ethnicity and the Greek-Cypriot Community of London" in P. Kirkham and J. Thumini, eds, *You Tarzan: Masculinity, Movies and Men* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993), pp. 146-152.

<sup>105</sup> Anthias, "Sexual Divisions", pp. 76-77.

<sup>106</sup> Second generation Italian woman, 5.7.01., a.m.

<sup>107</sup> Second generation Italian woman, 5.7.01., a.m.

engaged you see, engagements are in church, and it's more or less assumed, it's kind of like a divorce if you split up. The other thing of course is when I was growing up, even though I'm only going back 15 years, this was a time when virginity was cherished as well, and of course they'd assume that there was a possibility, not a likelihood, but a possibility that the female might well have lost that during the engagement, because they are unchaperoned no-one minds what they do, nobody keeps an eye on them. I mean when my mum got engaged she even went to live with my dad. So the engagement is a very big thing, it's more or less viewed as you know, that's it, you've set the tie and you are going to get married.<sup>108</sup>

None of these values, norms and customs would be particularly significant in terms of community if they were not shared with and disseminated to other community members. At the heart of community, therefore, and sharing the same etymological root, is communication and the means to trade information about other community members. While diverse in nature, all of the networks previously discussed provide a myriad of opportunities to find out about the actions and experiences of other people in the community, and to monitor whether they are abiding by the established norms of community behaviour. Community closeness, more than anything else, rests on the exchange of knowledge about community members, whether this information is gained first hand, or gleaned on the grapevine through gossip. Whatever form communities take, it is essential that this information system is in place: while common to all three groups, the following account of closeness in the Polish community is instructive:

As far as the morality of the community is concerned, I think because, I'm not saying we know everybody because we don't, but there is always somebody that knows somebody. There are very few people who are actually so very, very isolated. Now and again the priest would announce so and so has died and it appears he has no family, does anybody know of his family, he lived at such and such address. So he is announcing in church and if anybody comes up to him and says I heard, or I lived next door to him, yes I know him, that's OK, that person can give the information to the coroner. But normally we know each other, or know of one and other. [My friend] is a teacher at the Polish school for many, many years now so the children that were children are adults now, so if you mention a name she says oh yes, I know the name. It's a very closely knit community from that point of view.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 14.6.00.; the shame of breaking an engagement is discussed in Constantinides, "The Greek-Cypriots", p. 273.

<sup>109</sup> First generation Polish woman, 24.2.00.



Being surrounded by other people who can reciprocate socially, culturally and emotionally ensures that community is a powerful force. It is human nature to want to belong, to be accepted, to conform, and to feel secure. As the following Greek-Cypriot account illustrates, the desire to seek approval keeps the community together:

People group together, they mix with relatives, there's norms and values which are picked up. They want to keep up. One of the strongest forms of social control is what other people expect of you, it can be. And I suppose here it is more individualistic and that doesn't go on very much, but in ours it does. You have got to be, you've got to have a sense of honour and pride, standing and status. Status is a big thing. People want to have the status of living their lives in a way that is approved, which means the conventional things of getting married, being a good person, having a good job, or a job at least, and being good with the community, with your relatives and that. That binds people together as well. So that's what I see going on. It's definitely the way communities keep together. It's expected, but they do it through choice as well. They embrace it, it's what they grew up with, and carries on. But it's modified with the newer generation, but it's still there.<sup>110</sup>

The closeness of community life inevitably provides what Bauman describes as, 'a "warm" place, a cosy and comfortable place.'<sup>111</sup> As Delanty asserts, 'the persistence of community consists in its ability to communicate ways of belonging, especially in the context of an increasingly insecure world.'<sup>112</sup> In the community you are safe, people know where you are and what you are doing, and can help you if you need them to. Countless respondents spoke of their community in terms of emotional security and belonging: as one Polish woman testified, 'it was your identity, you were there, you sort of belonged, sense of belonging really.'<sup>113</sup> Community becomes all the more attractive when the outside world appears hostile and frightening. Although not a major theme of the interviews, several respondents spoke of experiences of racism and discrimination from the 'outside' population. Polish memories of early life in Leicester include accounts of being excluded from housing and employment, being called 'bloody Poles' and 'bloody foreigners', and

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<sup>110</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 14.6.00.

<sup>111</sup> Bauman, *Community*, p. 1.

<sup>112</sup> Delanty, *Community*, p. 187.

<sup>113</sup> First generation Polish woman, 3.8.99.

having their cultural habits, particularly diet, misunderstood and criticised. For one Greek-Cypriot respondent, facing racist abuse has become a part of her life:

Here we have been called all kinds of things, Paki, greasy, fuck off back to your own country, you name it, spat in the face. I've been called all kinds of things in this country. In the back of my mind, wherever I go, even on this street, I feel the racism on this street, I feel them looking at me, because I am on my own, I'm dark and I'm young. Everywhere I go I feel it. I don't go to pubs because I feel it as soon as I walk in, they look. You sense it because you have had it all your life.<sup>114</sup>

As the Greek-Cypriot priest remarked, 'that's what they call the jungle, outside of the community is a jungle.'<sup>115</sup> It is not surprising that those who experience hostility find comfort in their own community - in the words of one Polish woman:

It helps to know that somebody else is in the same boat. Sometimes it hurts when people say, 'oh foreigners', because there is nothing we could have done. It wasn't our choice. But you can't explain things to everyone, that you had to just go through it and that there was no way out.<sup>116</sup>

### **The dark side of social capital<sup>117</sup>**

There is an obvious 'flip-side' to community and social capital. Close knit networks can become suffocating, and social and cultural norms can become coercive. Portes has rightly argued that community is too often couched in reverential terms, urging that discussions of social capital refrain from developing into, 'an unmitigated celebration of community.'<sup>118</sup> While undeniably associated with positive advantages, the negative aspects of social capital include, 'excess claims on group members', and of course, 'restrictions on individual freedoms'.<sup>119</sup> In the words of Bauman, the price of being in a community, 'is paid in the currency of freedom,

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<sup>114</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 8.7.01.

<sup>115</sup> Greek-Cypriot priest, 29.6.01.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with first generation Polish woman, Leicester, 26.2.01.

<sup>117</sup> This is a phrase coined by Putnam, see *Bowling Alone*, p. 350.

<sup>118</sup> Portes, "Social Capital", p. 22.

<sup>119</sup> Portes, "Social Capital", p. 15.

variously called "autonomy", "right to self-assertion", "right to be yourself".<sup>120</sup> Putnam similarly acknowledges the, 'classic liberal objection to community ties: [that] community restricts freedom and encourages intolerance.'<sup>121</sup> Community expectations, while comforting in some situations, can become moral obligations, leaving those who do not or cannot meet them vulnerable to social sanctions and shunning.<sup>122</sup> In all three groups certain respondents felt able to talk about this 'dark side' of community, recounting a catalogue of incidents and experiences which have left them uncomfortable with the pervading strength of community ties.

Several respondents commented upon the negative aspects of a community which is heavily focused on collective financial wellbeing. For one Greek-Cypriot man something as innocuous as the weekly church collection came to be seen as a pressurised duty rather than a voluntary gesture:

I used to go there but every time they tell me, it's like a business you know. Every time after they finish the service the priest says we need some money and everybody turns round and puts in the basket some money. At the beginning I don't mind but every time, and they want extra money again, this is business not a church!<sup>123</sup>

More seriously, perhaps, the desire in the Italian and Greek-Cypriot communities in particular to 'do well' has created an atmosphere of economic rivalry and jealousy:

I find the Greek community very pretentious, very materialistic. If you haven't got that amount of money, or you are not set up in business, or you ain't got a flash car, then you are not accepted. And they brag about what they've got, not all of them, but there's people I wouldn't even *give the time of day to*.<sup>124</sup>

Another respondent voiced the same concern:

That's the funny thing with Italians, I don't suppose they are all like that, but they are a bit of a jealous people really. The ones I can think of. As they go on and they get better, they make money and they become better off they tend to forget the people that were with them in the beginning ... you'll hear all about

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<sup>120</sup> Bauman, *Community*, p. 4.

<sup>121</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 351.

<sup>122</sup> See Crow and Allan, *Community Life*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 13.6.00.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, Leicester, 8.7.01.

what people have done, you know that their daughter has done that or that their son has done that, that they have got this.<sup>125</sup>

Outward appearances are also important in the Polish community:

I still go to church but I don't go to the Polish church, I go to our local one ... You always have to get dressed up to go to the [Polish] church. You always have to dress up otherwise it's 'have you seen so and so's daughter?', or 'did you see what her kids came to church in?', it's even worse.<sup>126</sup>

The Poles are very judgmental, very judgmental, and they are very into, when they go to church on a Sunday a lot of it is about appearance, the way you dress, everybody wants to see how you are dressed. The dress must be appropriate, you must never wear jeans or trainers or anything like that.<sup>127</sup>

For the community members who maintain a high level of involvement in community life and bear the brunt of Portes' 'excess claims', the downsides of close ties sometimes outweigh the positive notions of belonging: one disillusioned Italian woman spoke about feeling continually criticised despite working harder for the community than most other members:

There are some things I don't like. You do all this hard work and you get criticised. They think you are getting paid for it when in fact you are doing it in your own time, your own phone. You get some comments thrown in your face, but you just keep doing it. Sometimes I feel like telling them to get lost!<sup>128</sup>

The following testimony from a second generation Polish woman told a similar story:

There is a lot of pressure and there is a lot of bickering, I presume it is in every community really, because of the closeness everybody get to know everyone else's business, there can be a lot of back biting. I suppose it is everywhere but maybe with the English it is not so noticeable because they can detach themselves a little more, maybe they are not as close in the first place. They can let people get on with their business. I think the sensible ones have probably distanced themselves. I think there is a lot of pressure there. But we try our best, I stuck it out for a long time, one of the longest, but it does grate, it's very wearing actually. When you put yourself out you become a target. If you sat back and nobody saw you then you wouldn't get criticised. It's living with that really, and I know a lot of people can very quickly get

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<sup>125</sup> Second generation Italian woman, 5.7.01., a.m.

<sup>126</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 9.2.01.

<sup>127</sup> Interview with second generation Polish woman, Leicester, 3.7.00.

<sup>128</sup> Second generation Italian woman, 5.7.01., a.m.

disillusioned and upset by that. Other people stick it out for as long as they can.<sup>129</sup>

It is not just those who make themselves so visible within the different communities that notice the negative impact of gossip and the associated difficulties in maintaining a private life. The seemingly benign social networks that provide so much support and entertainment simultaneously operate as mechanisms of social control, placing palpable pressure on community members to conform. One Greek-Cypriot man, for example, voiced his displeasure that some parents do not send their children to the Greek school: 'My children went to the Saturday school. It is nice to keep the traditional culture. I feel uncomfortable when I know that there are school kids in the community and their parents do not send them to the school.'<sup>130</sup> For those on the receiving end of this type of disapproval, community life loses its appeal. As one Italian woman commented, the closeness of community ties can amount to a system of surveillance: 'There is so much gossip in the community, people talk about each other. You can't breathe without somebody seeing. If you do something, are seen out with boys, when we were younger even if we went out to the shops, we were spotted and told on.'<sup>131</sup>

In addition to being watched, members are constantly reminded of their duties and obligations, particularly through the forum of the church. The Polish and Greek churches were both associated with pressure and guilt in the collected testimonies: '[in] the Polish Catholic religion they place a lot of guilt, a big guilt trip, Hell and damnation and all this stuff. I didn't like that. It worked, but I didn't like that. And it's still working.'<sup>132</sup> Speaking about the Greek church one respondent remarked, 'I don't believe it's the way to teach people morals, it is rules and law laid down to people, it's so controlling.'<sup>133</sup> The family, of course, as another key community institution, is also a primary source of pressure and guilt. Once again, the testimonies come from Polish and Greek-Cypriot interviewees, speaking about different aspects of the

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<sup>129</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 31.8.99.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot man, Leicester, 2.7.01.

<sup>131</sup> Interview with second generation Italian woman, Leicester, 5.7.01., p.m.

<sup>132</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 3.7.00.

<sup>133</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 8.7.01.

negative implications of close kinship ties. One Polish respondent, for example, discussed the expectation of caring for elderly family members:

It's the family thing isn't it, looking after the elderly more, it's far more family orientated ... in some ways it works quite well, but in other ways it can be quite tedious, and perhaps the younger generation feel a lot of pressure and a lot of guilt if they don't get involved with the elderly and their parents.<sup>134</sup>

For this second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, the familial closeness of Greek culture has become claustrophobic:

It's pressure from your family, your family give you pressure. You want to do one thing, they want you to do something else, and if you don't do what they want you to do you feel guilty, they make you feel guilty. You just can't win. I think the only way you can be completely free from your family is to move away. It's sad, but it's true.<sup>135</sup>

While community facilitates a sense of belonging, community membership is ideally associated with the 'best' participants, those who keep to the rules and involve themselves fully: there is a thin line between Wellman et al's 'clusters' and cliques.<sup>136</sup> In each community there is a core of active people who seek to represent the group as a whole. For the Polish community this role is predominantly taken by first generation survivors of the war, and by those who organise the different activities such as the choir and dance troupe. Italian community is likewise projected as those who are members of the club and the literature group. In the Greek-Cypriot group there are several key families at the centre of community life, regularly attending church and organising events. For those not at the hub of the community, belonging can sometimes be superseded by intimidation and isolation: the community belongs to those who spread the gossip, not those who are gossiped about. In certain circumstances, individuals who depart from the collective codes are treated differently, not exactly shunned, but noticeably distanced. In one example from the Polish community, a second generation single mother felt that she had to continually demonstrate her 'Polishness' and her commitment to the community in order to be accepted and 'forgiven' for her deviance in having a child out of wedlock. In her own account she hinted at feeling excluded by the couple-oriented culture of

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<sup>134</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 31.8.99.

<sup>135</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 8.7.01.

<sup>136</sup> See Wellman, Carrington and Hall, "Networks as Personal Communities", p. 155.

the community, while another woman coincidentally spoke about the same, or a very similar, situation:

I can imagine it must have been very, very difficult for her, and she was very brave. She held her head high and that was it. I don't actually think that a lot of people did talk about her behind her back because she was so, she carried on going to church, she is religious, and [her son] is religious, he goes to Catholic school. She did all the things I didn't do, but I was married. But in a way I think people respected her. She carried on with the community work, she's done an awful lot for the senior citizens ... in the Polish church there is a really strict code of what is correct and proper, but I think people respected her because she is patriotic. It's easy to say, like I say I'm Polish, but I don't do anything to show it, but she does, she always has done, and people respected that.<sup>137</sup>

It is no coincidence that all of these testimonies are from female respondents. The closeness of community clearly has a greater negative impact on women than men: the female interviewees were certainly more sensitive to criticism and surveillance in the community, and more attuned to the power of gossip. It is not surprising that this should be the case. As already discussed, the informal networks and ties that work as the community information exchanges are more usually female orientated, exposing women to gossip more frequently than men. The 'backstage' work done by women in the community, furthermore, is obviously less glamorous in nature than the public duties of the men, seemingly warranting a weaker degree of acknowledgement, respect and appreciation from other community members. This type of work, perversely, leaves women more vulnerable to community scrutiny, for although their roles are not 'high profile', they are still visible to other members on a regular basis, giving plenty of opportunities for disapproval.

Above anything else, the female members of the communities are subjected to stricter moral codes governing gender and sexual behaviour than their male counterparts. In many cases, experiences of community cannot be divorced from perceived experiences of sexism and inequality. As the interviews demonstrate, women can become easily trapped in gendered roles, ranging from household responsibilities to being pressurised into marriage. In all three groups, women have been cast as the guardians of the home and family before anything else. While many respondents were anxious to assert that the most rigid gender divides have been liberalised over the past decade, for the younger members especially there is a

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<sup>137</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 3.7.00.

lasting impression of gender inequality. While one Italian woman remarked that, 'years ago they always said the woman's place was in the home but I don't think, it doesn't apply here anymore, no,' a younger Italian respondent maintained that, 'boys are allowed to do whatever they like. Boys can come and go as they please, they can have as many girlfriends as they like, they can do whatever they want. Girls are to learn how to look after the house.'<sup>138</sup> Interestingly, it is often the older women themselves who sustain the established gendered boundaries within family and community, bestowing clear guidelines on their daughters and granddaughters about how women should conduct themselves. As one Italian woman commented, 'my grandma says it as well sometimes, oh you are a woman you should be cleaning and cooking.'<sup>139</sup> One Greek-Cypriot woman gave me the following relationship advice: 'It's nice if you don't make the man angry or fed up or things like that. If you do things together try to show him you do a bit more than him.'<sup>140</sup>

The norms and values directing gender are at their most damaging in the realm of sexual behaviour. As Anthias and Medaglia emphasise, both Greek-Cypriot and Italian cultures promote patriarchal power structures, resting on an inherent double standard of sexuality and supported by religious teachings.<sup>141</sup> At the heart of notions of honour and shame is the concept of female sexual purity, and as Anthias observes, 'men must therefore strive to keep their honour through the control of their family and "their" women.'<sup>142</sup> As she later points out, 'notions of women's sexuality have remained largely unchanged within the British setting, parents stressing the need for "virginity" and frowning upon "boyfriends".'<sup>143</sup> The second generation female Italian and Greek-Cypriot testimonies certainly support this claim, as the following account from one Greek-Cypriot woman illustrates:

It is a very sexist culture, being honest. The man has more rights than a woman ... For me, even being in my generation, it's been hard for me to have

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<sup>138</sup> First generation Italian woman, 5.7.01.; second generation Italian woman, 5.7.01., a.m.

<sup>139</sup> Second generation Italian woman, 5.7.01., p.m.

<sup>140</sup> First generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 13.6.00.

<sup>141</sup> Anthias, *Ethnicity, Class, Gender and Migration*, p. 82; A. Medaglia, *Patriarchal Structures and Ethnicity in the Italian Community in Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 3-4, 49.

<sup>142</sup> Anthias, "Sexual Divisions", p. 77.

<sup>143</sup> Anthias, "Sexual Divisions", p. 89.



a normal life, mix with your friends, go out with your friends. I wasn't allowed to have a boyfriend when I was in my teens. But I was always fighting for my freedom, no matter what the rules that were laid down, I was always the rebel of the family.<sup>144</sup>

The double standard is at its most stark with the issue of infidelity. As Rex and Josephides note, while the Greek-Cypriot woman has to be 'irreproachable', is acceptable for the man to be unfaithful.<sup>145</sup> Once again, this is still a feature of community life in Leicester: 'Infidelity would not be terribly frowned upon, not by men anyway. You know, they would probably guffaw and boast about it. If a woman did it, it's the equivalent of being stoned in Biblical times. I mean that wouldn't literally happen, but it would just be out of order.'<sup>146</sup>

Real difficulties with the stringent cultural expectations of gender develop when there is a conflict between the views of the family and the wider community, and the hopes and choices of the individual. The following testimony from a second generation Greek-Cypriot woman who married reluctantly, is an example of how community and family norms infringe on individual liberties:

I was married to a Cypriot man. And that was all rushed and pushed, and something I didn't want to go through with ... *From being in England we went to Cyprus and I was there about just under six months and I ended up coming back on my own, and that was it, it was over ... I shamed my family. Boys get away with a lot more than what girls do. I think that in the whole of the Leicester community I was the first person my age to divorce ... it wasn't arranged, it was pushed. I did meet himself but if I tell you the time that I knew him and the time how quick everything happened you would be shocked. Two weeks I knew him, in a month I was engaged to him, in three months I was registered married with him ... I know it's been common for quite a few girls. Once I'd reached the age of 19 and they could see that I wasn't a typical Greek brainwashed kind of girl, and I think this worried them and they saw the opportunity they wanted to, oh, let her get married. I had just turned 19. I was trying to get out of it and it was hard. There was a lot of pressure going on ... I remember people that were talking about me behind my back.*<sup>147</sup>

The implications of this account, of course, are that for women, marriage choices are not necessarily free and autonomous. It is not only women who feel coerced by

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<sup>144</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 8.7.01.

<sup>145</sup> J. Rex and S. Josephides, "Asian and Greek Cypriot Associations and Identity" in J. Rex, D. Joly and C. Wilpert, eds, *Immigrant Associations in Europe* (Aldershot: Gower, 1987), pp. 11-41, p. 37.

<sup>146</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot man, 14.6.00.

<sup>147</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 8.7.01.

sexual values of community, however. Men too are expected to be married with children by a certain age: one Greek-Cypriot respondent openly spoke about her frustration that her 40 year old son was still unmarried. For both genders, furthermore, there can be no deviation from the cultural norms of heterosexuality: as Panayi observes, in the Greek-Cypriot community an 'accusation' of homosexuality is the 'ultimate insult' to a Greek man.<sup>148</sup> Once again, this is supported by the following account:

There are a few men as well in unhappy marriages. They are so afraid on both sides of what people are going to think. When you get yourself in that trap it is hard to get out of it ... there is one guy, he's a distant cousin and he has known that he is gay, he is about 21, but he has known that he is gay from a very young age, but nobody in his family will accept it. He is just living a lie now, but he was open and he told people, and that was brave, but nobody's accepted it, even his own mother. It's just not heard of. If you think you are a Greek man that's gay then the only thing to do is leave the city, leave the country, or live a double life. Possibly get married.<sup>149</sup>

## Assuming Community

Community is clearly a mix of positives and negatives. Whatever the nature of community life, however, it is important to determine how accurate 'community' is as a classification for the three case-study groups. As Lynnette Kelly has argued about Bosnians in Britain, sometimes 'community' becomes a label applied to a disparate group of individuals, rather than a genuine construction of collectivity.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, not all potential community members choose to participate in group activities: as one Polish woman noted, 'I think it does depend on the individual ... there are probably lots of [Polish] people who have never set foot inside the Polish club.'<sup>151</sup> In other situations, community members may be willing but unable to participate: in the case of the Greek-Cypriot group, socialising within the community is restricted due to working patterns of late nights and seven day working weeks.

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<sup>148</sup> Panayi, "One Last Chance", p. 151; see also C. N. Phellas, *The Construction of Sexual and Cultural Identities: Greek-Cypriot Men in Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

<sup>149</sup> Second generation Greek-Cypriot woman, 8.7.01.

<sup>150</sup> L. Kelly, "Bosnian Refugees in Britain: Questioning Community", *Sociology* 31 1 (2003), pp. 35-49.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with second generation Polish woman, Leicester, 16.9.99., a.m.

There is strong evidence to indicate that all three groups can be construed as communities - as collective bodies held together by a range of formal and informal, social and cultural ties. Community closeness, however, is not something that can always be taken for granted. While the Polish and Greek-Cypriot communities seem particularly tight-knit, group unity can be sometimes be undermined. Significantly, of all the Polish testimonies, only one respondent spoke of the damaging tensions within the community:

Polish people like to argue a lot. There have been rifts ever since I can remember. There were even two parishes at one time. They shared the same church but they had different priests. Some people had fallen out with the priest who was there. If you were on one side you didn't communicate with the other. There were two Polish schools as well.<sup>152</sup>

Even without such an obvious division, it is well documented that Polish communities often find themselves in the midst of a power struggle between the parish and the Ex-Servicemen's Association.<sup>153</sup> This phenomenon again became apparent in the interviews, with different respondents citing either the parish, or the Ex-Servicemen's Club as the principal structure.

The biggest question over community is reserved for the Italian group. For all the tensions and divisions, there is no disputing the existence of a Polish and a Greek-Cypriot community in Leicester. Although there are certainly sufficient informal networks to warrant classifying the Italian group as a community, the projection of community among the Italian respondents themselves is undeniably weaker. While the Polish and Greek-Cypriot interviewees spent the early years of settlement in Leicester consolidating formal communities through the purchasing of buildings and churches, for example, *the Italian group has experienced a noticeably lower level of economic reciprocity*. As a result, there is no designated Italian church in the city, and no real physical focus for the community:

We used to use St. Peter's on Hinckley Road, which we still do. But Christmas times and Easter times we normally used to borrow the Ukrainian church on Fosse Road, we used to borrow that because obviously they do their functions on different days. We always had to borrow off someone, we've not really had anything of our own, like the Polish people have built themselves a

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<sup>152</sup> Second generation Polish woman, 9.2.01.

<sup>153</sup> See Sword, *Identity in Flux*, p. 135.

nice church, they've got a club, they did all that years ago, but now it is too late, you can't accumulate that type of money.<sup>154</sup>

Furthermore, while the Polish and Greek-Cypriot communities appear able to overcome the inevitable tensions of regional and class differences, most of the Italian interviewees remain highly aware of the social and cultural implications of their regional origins:

We are Italians but we don't have nothing in common ... the Italian community is not very strong because we are very individual. The Italians are very individual and like to do their own thing. The second thing is we come from different regions, we are all different. Even from one city to another city within the region they are different, that is the reason why there isn't a big bond, strong bond among Italians. That's the reason, individual.<sup>155</sup>

Similar comments were voiced by another respondent: 'I've got nothing in common with them, they are strangers. I've got more in common with you even with my strong accent than any Italian person I meet in the community.'<sup>156</sup> Another interviewee again was very clear in his perception of the Italian community: 'Some people, for whatever reasons, they like to believe that there is a good community spirit, there is not, there has never been. There never has been ... there has never been that need to unite, and if you can't unite you are lost.'<sup>157</sup>

This last point is an important one. The Polish and Greek-Cypriot communities have clearly defined attributes which predominantly work to tie people together. National history, forced migration and exile are powerful forces driving unity in the Polish community. Even those who feel excluded can recognise these as important aspects of being Polish in Britain, and call upon their own personal histories to make sense of the collective. The cultural norms and values of the Greek-Cypriot community, reinforced by a process of chain migration which located people from similar backgrounds together, are a similarly defining characteristic. Family and kinship ties are an important enforcer of community. For the Italian group, there is no tragic history to unite around, and no common cultural background to share. Overt demonstrations of Mediterranean values are rejected by those from more northern

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<sup>154</sup> Second generation Italian woman, 5.7.01., a.m.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with first generation Italian man, Leicester, 26.1.02.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with first generation Italian man, Leicester, 2.7.01.

<sup>157</sup> First generation Italian man, 10.7.01.

and urban parts of Italy, while the national language and literature groups are inaccessible to those who only speak the regional dialects. The Italian community in Leicester can perhaps be best described as an uneasy alliance between two factions, those from the north and those from the south.

## **Conclusion**

As this chapter has demonstrated, there are many different facets to community life. Characterisations and manifestations of community encompass a wide array of memories and experiences, ranging from historical accounts of the early days of settlement, to the physical and symbolic uses of community space, to the proliferation of community clubs and networks, through to illustrations of the common cultural currencies of social norms and values. Although there is no perfect, universal example of community, however, the different communities use a common set of bonding mechanisms to forge closer social and cultural ties. In each case-study, community is held together predominantly by reciprocated social and cultural expectations, norms and values, kept in circulation through a wealth of formal and informal social interactions. Even when community is deemed to be weak, in the case of the Italian group, there is still vast underlying evidence of its existence.

It is important to be balanced about community. While a clearly positive, popular phenomenon, the local collective of community raises real challenges for individual freedoms and autonomy. Community, in fact, produces an interesting juxtaposition between the individual and the collective. Like the nation, community is a shared phenomenon that is flexible enough in scope to be experienced and interpreted at a personal level. Unlike the nation, however, the intimate nature of community invites a much more intense degree of social control. The real, not 'imagined', quality of small communities ensures that it is more difficult, though not impossible, to assert individuality. Fortunately, the openness of the different respondents has allowed a much more accurate understanding of community life to be established, clearly illustrating what contemporary and historical experiences of community really entail. The enduring strength of community has to be that it successfully combines both high level and low level frequencies of social interactions, protecting the renewal of community knowledge and information, but simultaneously allowing members to opt in and out, and pick and choose their community attachments. Thus community

membership is wide and diverse, incorporating everybody from the parish priest to the person who barely stays in contact. Community life is no less evident in the intermittent attendance at Italian weddings and funerals, in the conversations held between community members, and in the pooling of resources between Greek-Cypriot fish and chip shops than it is in the spectacular displays of religious processions, in the regular attendance at church, and in the performances of the Polish dance troupe.

## Conclusion

### Everyday Experiences of Nation and Migration

This thesis has considered a range of themes related to the everyday experiences of migration and national identity among the Polish, Greek-Cypriot and Italian populations in Leicester. Using 55 oral history/in-depth interviews, respondents from the selected groups were asked about their life stories, their personal experiences and perceptions of migration, national identity and the homeland, and community.

The first chapter concentrated on the diversity of migration, uncovering a wide range of migration stories and memories. Individual reasons for migrating within the Italian and Greek-Cypriot groups were studied, as were the different networks that existed to aid and influence the migration movements. The testimonies demonstrated that within the broad category of 'economic migration' there are a variety of motivating factors fuelling migration, not all of them economic. Cultural and social contexts of migration in particular offer an important insight into migrant decision making. For the Polish group, in contrast, migration was a traumatic experience, resulting from the violent invasions of Poland during the Second World War. The analysis of the transmission of migration stories, both in the interview process and to the second generation, confirmed that Polish migration has been a pivotal experience for the Polish respondents, whereas for the Italian and Greek-Cypriot groups, migration has been portrayed as a much less dramatic occurrence. For all three groups, however, the retrospective accounts of migration have been very revealing. While the Polish interviewees focus predominantly on the horror of forced migration, the Italian and Greek-Cypriot respondents present their experiences in the context of hard work and economic success. For all three, migration has left a distinctive legacy which is still apparent in the everyday lives of the interviewed migrants.

Chapter Two contained an analysis of the national identities of the three groups, demonstrating that each respondent has maintained or, in the case of the second generation, developed a strong national consciousness despite being away from their national homelands. While each respondent showed that they had remembered their national heritage, the exact configurations of national identity varied considerably between each group. Religion was a common indicator for all three, for example, but in the Polish case national history was found to be a particularly strong element of national identity, much more important than for the Italian and Greek-Cypriot interviewees, with all of the respondents well versed in Polish history. The testimonies also illustrated the survival of national myths and ambiguities, in addition to the continued existence of the national 'othering' of external and internal 'enemy' groups. More than anything else, this study found that national identity is still a very powerful association, and is something that is continually supported on a daily basis within the domestic sphere through rituals and national activities, and the ownership of national material culture. As such, national consciousness combines an acknowledgement of the collective with a personally constructed and individually experienced national identification.

The third chapter emphasised the continued presence of the national territory in the everyday lives of the migrants. Memories of the homeland permeated the collected testimonies, and while for some the image of a vulnerable homeland was dominant, others were more focused on the national physical landscape and weather. The common ground in this chapter was found in the realm of small-scale transnationalism, the regular revisiting of the homeland through holidays, telephone calls and the large number - 69% of all respondents - of subscriptions to national satellite television channels. Satellite television connections are extremely significant, both educating migrants in homeland history and geography, and providing a window into the political, social and cultural realities of the contemporary nation. For several respondents, furthermore, their continued closeness with the national territory is sustained through the shared watching of programmes with those back 'home'. While transnational links are not new, technological change has facilitated the increased ability of migrants to live simultaneously in two national spaces, and to do so independently of other migrants. This chapter also considered the concept of the diaspora, illustrating how Polish transnational activities are



undertaken predominantly within a diasporic context, giving rise to a Polish diaspora 'industry' consciously geared towards the post-war exiles.

The final chapter focused on the three groups in their local setting, investigating constructions of community in Leicester. It was found that 'community' is experienced and projected in a variety of ways; historically, spatially and through shared morals and values. The same networks behind the different migration patterns were again found to be an important element of community, with the Greek-Cypriot community sustained primarily through kinship ties, and the Polish community more reliant on established friendships and shared history. Above all, the interviews illustrated that behind the physical contours of community, the real essence of community life lies in a series of information exchanges which allow community members to support and monitor each other. Such a close social environment inevitably involves a pay off between feelings of belonging and emotional security and varying degrees of social control and cultural expectation. Consequently, while some respondents were positive about their communities, others were more focused on the restraining influences community holds over personal autonomy. As with the other three chapters, it was found that the collective concept of community is flexible, incorporating a diverse degree of interaction from different members.

### **Polish, Greek-Cypriot and Italian Experiences**

For the Polish population in Leicester the overwhelming emphasis has been on forced migration and the influence that this holds over migrant Polish national identity. Understandings of the national history in particular have been formed from the perspective of exile, entwining the experiences of the individual with the wider tragedies of the nation's past. Forced migration has been the formative experience for individuals and the wider community, underpinning personal and shared historical narratives, enhancing the poignancy of public and private displays of national consciousness and providing the basis for enduring social networks of friendship. Even the transnational connections sustained with Poland are inspired by images of a nation under threat, from the watching of satellite television programmes about the Second World War, to the political involvement in the 'fight' against the Communist regime, to the close following of news broadcasts about Poland's future in Europe.

While the interviewees themselves feel the connection between nation and adversity very strongly, it is important not to get drawn too far into romanticised images of Polish national identity. The projection of national vulnerability was often undermined by the omissions and ambiguities of the respondents' testimonies. Migration narratives, for example, also have to include those who were not subjected to deportation, as illustrated by the account of one woman whose father had been called up to the German army. Chapters Two and Three also revealed the grey areas of Polish nationality along with the apparent eagerness to underplay the newness of post-war territorial acquisitions in the west. Portrayals of national history, furthermore, resolutely neglected those parts of Poland's past which do not fit into the image of suffering, focusing instead on suppression and invasion. The construction of the Communist era as an un-Polish occupation, in particular, has created a division between post-war migrants and those *who remained in Poland*. Even the satellite television station TV Polonia has a vested interest in showing an image of Poland that the émigré viewers want to believe. The idea of a community united by exile and a common past was further undermined by the disclosure in the interviews of internal tensions and even a split into two parish factions.

For all the problems with Polish national consciousness, it is the strongest national identity of the three groups. The symbols and stories of migration and national identity have been successfully transmitted to the younger generations and are an integral part of family and community life. Although the main nurturers of Polish national identity - the first generation - will pass away, there is sufficient national inheritance to ensure that key elements of national consciousness will survive and the story of Polish migration to Britain will carry on being told. While there is no doubt that over time the intensity of national feeling will diminish and the public 'face' of the community will fade, there is also no reason why most of these memories should not continue to be passed down to future generations.

For the Greek-Cypriot respondents, the Turkish invasion of northern Cyprus in 1974 and the associated strained relations with Greece and Turkey have become the defining features of national identity. More than for the other two groups, Greek-Cypriot national identity is constructed in relation to something else - in this case Greece. Representations of the homeland encompass a variety of perceptions of the importance of Greece to Cyprus, from viewing Cyprus simply as a Greek island, through to the idea, more commonly held in contemporary Cyprus, of the island as

an independent entity. If the level of closeness with Greece cannot be agreed upon, however, Turkey offers a clear 'other' to unify against. 1974 has left a strong personal legacy among the different interviewees: not only did several respondents lose friends and family in the invasion, but for those from the north, memories of the homeland have become tied up with images of loss and occupation.

Kinship ties have played a central role in the social and cultural contexts of Greek-Cypriot migration, national identity and community. The extended family has fuelled chain migration, safeguarded the survival of the family unit after migration, continues to underpin the majority of transnational interactions and has formed the pivotal element of community life. This heavy emphasis on family has also aided the translation of Greek-Cypriot social and cultural values to Leicester. The formal and informal patron systems facilitating migration, for example, successfully institutionalised existing codes of honour, shame and respect in Britain by casting members of the extended family in the respected patron role. Families themselves have become the keenest guardians of cultural values, ensuring widespread adherence to the traditional national, social and cultural norms. The advantages that strong kinship networks carry for family and community members, however, have to be set against the problems that strict moral codes governing gender and sexual behaviour have presented for some of the respondents. It seems probable that the combination of close families, cross-national links with Cyprus, and a continued existence of a vibrant London based Cypriot population will help to sustain the Greek-Cypriot community in Leicester for decades yet.

The Italian respondents presented a different set of experiences again, projecting the most positive reflections on migration of all three groups. While tales of hard work entered into the migration narratives, moving to Britain was also presented as an exciting, liberating experience, and a route of escape from post-war economic disruption. Italian national experiences are the most contemporary of the three groups, an observation supported by the curious lack of history in most of the accounts - while the Greek-Cypriot interviewees spoke about ancient Greek civilisation, in contrast not one person mentioned the Roman Empire. Unburdened by homeland tragedy and traumatic pasts, the Italian respondents were the most enthusiastic embracers of real-time transnational networks, and the most frequent return travellers.

Relatively untroubled experiences of migration, however, have not translated into close community ties. The diverse geographic origins of the different respondents, coupled with an absence of shared suffering to unite around, has affected the overall coherence of the Italian population as a group. Instead of reifying the concept of a national collective, national identity focuses more readily on the internal problems of the nation, homing in on regional differences and tensions. Everyday reflectors of national consciousness, for example language and cultural values, represent national fragmentation rather than a common heritage. Many of the first generation migrants speak their regional dialect in the place of 'proper' Italian, and attitudes to gender and family are recognised as indicators of north or south. The inability to acquire a community church in Leicester is therefore symbolic of - in comparison with the other two groups at least - a relatively weak shared national commitment. Italian national identity, however, has survived migration away from Italy: it simply mirrors the same type of tensions between nation and region which have characterised Italy since unification. Of the three groups though, the Italian population is the least likely to continue beyond the first and second generations. With no powerful historical narratives to bestow onto new generations, and without the recognisable physical structures of community buildings, the best chance for the survival of an Italian identity is the strong relationship maintained with Italy itself.

## **Key Themes**

There are several central, overlapping themes within this thesis that are worth reiterating. The first is the significance of the migration process itself for what happens afterwards in the lives of the migrants: emphasising the distinction between voluntary and involuntary migration is essential in migration studies. Voluntary migration potentially enables individuals of similar geographic and cultural backgrounds to establish their own chains of migration, allows for continuity in family structures and carries the possibility of immediate re-engagement with the homeland afterwards through return visits and transnational links. Intrinsically tied up with the quest for a better life, voluntary migration brings with it its own pressures of economic success and hard work. Its legacy, however, is very different to the consequences of forced migration. Where voluntary migration facilitates continuity, involuntary migration creates discontinuity and dislocation. Existing family and

friendship networks are more likely to be ruptured, the homeland is less likely to be accessible afterwards, and most of important of all, the migration itself becomes the focal point for subsequent memories, rather than the experiences that came before or after. Of course, voluntary migration can also produce dislocation. Italian migration to Leicester, for example, has not resulted in the wholesale movement of Italians with a common cultural background, and Cyprus has not been accessible to Greek-Cypriots from the north since 1974. Neither group, however, has experienced anywhere near the level of disruption portrayed in the accounts of Polish deportations.

By focusing on the national identities of the three groups, this thesis has also argued for a greater recognition of the continued hegemonic status of the nation in the formation of large-scale geographic identities. As Billig and Edensor ably demonstrate, the idea of the 'nation' is so embedded in contemporary societies that it has become a concept that is recognised almost subconsciously in public and private life.<sup>1</sup> Even at the start of the twenty first century, it is still difficult to imagine a world without nations. Discourses of nationalism, therefore, need to consider more closely the reasons why nations are still the primary building blocks of international society and politics, rather than how, why and when nation-states evolved. Globalisation may have undermined the economic supremacy of the nation-state - although America is both the world's most influential global player *and* a 'nation-state' - but it has not superseded the political, social and cultural components of national identity. Edensor offers the most persuasive explanation, asserting that the survival of national identity lies in its ability to resonate with an increasingly diverse national body:

... whilst there remain common-sense points of fixity where constellations solidify and hold epistemological weight, it is vital that national identity is understood as continually dynamic, capable of making connections through a persistent rearticulation. It is now the sheer flexibility of ways of making links in the vast, shared cultural matrix that sustains the power of national identity, opening up multiple points of connection.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995); T. Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* pp. 188-9.

As this study has shown, national identity is a particularly strong identity among migrants. Rather than being eroded by globalisation, migrant national identity is strengthened by the opportunities it presents.

This recognition that the world is still primarily organised along national lines, however, does not prevent an acknowledgement of the increasing significance of global networks, again for migrants in particular. While the English provincial city of Leicester is firmly embedded in the context of British national identity, caught up in historical narratives ranging from Roman settlement to the Industrial Revolution, it is also a city which - due to its migrant populations - is increasingly connected into global exchanges. Although not a 'global city' on the scale of London and New York, Leicester is taking on an ever increasing role in social and cultural global networks, most notably through its Asian population.<sup>3</sup> Smaller-scale versions of these connections also ensure that Leicester is linked to places as diverse as Krakow, Warsaw, Lwow, Chicago, Nicosia, Larnaca, Rimini, Milan and Sicily, just from the memories and association of its Polish, Greek-Cypriot and Italian populations. If a map was drawn showing all the 'glocal' connections of Leicester migrants - cities, towns and villages - the visual impact would be significant. With Leicester as a global player, there are strong implications that other cities and towns are similarly globally engaged. National narratives, therefore, need to be flexible in order to house the burgeoning global connections of the domestic population.

Finally, it is important to reassert the 'everydayness' of experiences of nation and migration. Legacies of migration are embedded in daily life, remembered and passed on via commonplace routines. Through memories of the homeland, cross-national links and community encounters, furthermore, migrants successfully incorporate local, national and transnational scales of consciousness into their day to day existences. The resilience of communal, public constructs such as shared history, nation and community ultimately lie in their flexibility, and in their infiltration into ordinary, daily activities, ensuring that individuals are able to interpret and experience collective phenomena personally and privately.

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<sup>3</sup> See S. Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 4.

## Appendix A

Transcript of interview with first generation Greek-Cypriot man, wife present throughout, 19.3.01.

Q Where are you from in Cyprus?

I'm from Cyprus, from the north of Cyprus, Irenia district. It is now occupied by the Turks, it is occupied territory of the island. Unfortunately you can't go there.

Q When did you come to Britain?

I came to England in October 1953. The reason I came to England is because the circumstances at the time back home, they were not very good, no prospects at all. My sister was here, so I decided to join her and her husband.

Q And you came to Leicester?

No I was three years in Bedford working there as a hairdresser, and then my brother-in-law, they got a cafe in Leicester, on London Road, near the station, and I joined them there as a waiter. I gave up the hairdressers. I worked there for three years, after that I went into partnership with somebody else, with his brother actually. We opened a fish and chip shop in the area, down there on Hinckley Rd., and from then on just got on with it. In the meantime I got married as well, in 1956. I got married in London, we didn't have a community then in Leicester. I got married in London, and then I settled in Leicester, and I have never moved from Leicester since. We liked it so much, and the children liked it here.

Q Can you tell me about the early days in Leicester, when you tried to build up a community?

The community was just, it started with a priest visiting the community one day, I think it was in December 1969. He just had the idea whether we wanted a community in Leicester. A few progressive people said yes we would like to form our community in Leicester. We got a bit jealous to be honest, of

Coventry, they had their community there. Every time we needed anything about religion we had to go to Coventry. When we saw what they were achieving there, they decided to have a church in Leicester as well. They had their meeting in December 1969, and the first service was done in Leicester Cathedral in January 1970. I think it was about three months after that, the present archbishop Gregorious, in London, who was responsible for the Leicester area, he came to Leicester and he said to me, you are going to be a member of the committee, like that. I didn't have any idea at all. I knew something about the religion, but to be honest I wasn't very much interested. The circumstances they were such I wasn't interested in religion, because I had to work seven days a week for my family, I didn't have any time. And he said to me you are going to be on the committee. And since that day, to the present time, I work with the community.

Q Are you pleased now?

Oh yes, very pleased. I was chairperson from 1973 for eight years, I was chairperson of the committee, and we achieved quite a lot at the time.

Q Can you tell me about the community, is it a close community?

Yes, it is very close. That's one of the...we are so close that the other communities they are jealous of us. Because of personal interest, the other communities they are not united, but in Leicester, whatever we are doing we are always united. I think that's the main reason that we moved forward and we achieved so much. At the time when we started in Leicester there were only about sixty or seventy families, that's all. Now there are quite a few now, there are over two hundred families now in Leicester, but at the time there were only about sixty families. To achieve what we have achieved, to have our own church our community centre, to me it's an enormous achievement.

Q Is there a Saturday school?

Yes, there is a Saturday school. I was involved in that at the beginning as well. When I was a chairperson of the community I was the chairperson of the school committee as well. At one time we had about sixty kids at the school. We had our own coaches picking up the kids from home to take them to the school. But afterwards it became so expensive so we decided to stop the coaches.

Q What do they learn at the school?



The Greek language.

Q Is the Greek language different to what you speak in Cyprus?

No, it's the same language, different accent, but it is the same language. It basically is exactly the same language, no difference at all. The same religion as well.

Q What else do they teach them at the school?

Greek, about religion as well, about our culture back home.

Q In Cyprus?

Yes, because the majority of the people in Leicester are from Cyprus. There is only a few people from Greece. They are involved in the community as well, but not as actively as the Cypriots are. They join in anything we do, they join up as well, but they are not actively involved in the community. There are a few families as well, but most of the people from Greece are students, not families.

Q So would you say you were Greek or Cypriot?

I always say I'm Greek from Cyprus. I'm always proud of my birthplace. I'm proud because I'm Greek, but I'm proud as well because I'm from Cyprus. It's a different country, it's an independent country. I'm not ashamed to say I'm Greek, no, but my birthplace is Cyprus not Greece.

Q It must have been terrible when it was invaded.

Yes. At the time we were here. The invasion started just outside our village, about half a mile outside my birthplace, the invasion. We were so much worried about our people there, whether they were alive or killed, where they were, we didn't know anything about it. There were no communications at the time. At the time if you wanted to ring up Cyprus you had to ring up the operator and wait in a queue to be connected, it wasn't like now, you can get through. What I did, myself personally, I went to the Red Cross, and I sent a message through the Red Cross to my family, whether they were alive to get in touch with me if they were alive, where they are, to get in touch with me. And they broadcast my message on the radio back home in Cyprus, and they got in touch, fortunately, but they were on the other side of the island.

Q So you can't go back to where you were born?

No, unfortunately not. They say there is a chance if I want to go there as a visitor through the United Nations because I'm holding a British passport, but

because my name sounds Greek, it doesn't sound like English, I should say about ninety percent they wouldn't allow me to go. I haven't tried to be honest, but I'm ninety percent sure they will say no you are not welcome here.

Q But you go back to Cyprus?

Yes I do. I always go there, I love the place. I try to go every year, I go once a year for a month. Spend a bit of time with the relatives. My relatives, I have only got a niece and a nephew there now, my sister unfortunately she passed away about nine years ago. My other sister she passed away here about four years ago. But my wife she has got a sister there, so we visit relatives as well.

Q Do you have children?

Yes.

Q Do you tell them all about Cyprus?

Oh yes, they know everything about Cyprus. They were a bit lucky to be honest. In 1973, just before the invasion which happened in 1974, we drove there. We went in the car to Europe and we stayed there for six weeks, so they know quite a lot of their birthplace. They were young, but mostly they still remember. They remember their grandparents as well, the places, when I talk about it I always mention such and such a place, various places in our village, and they still remember it.

Q Do they speak Greek?

Three of them they do, the other three, I've got six, five lads and a daughter, the three of them they speak the Greek language quite well. The other three, they can understand the language. If they have to speak it they will, but not fluently. They can get by, let's put it that way.

Q I've been struck how close the family seems to be in the community.

Yes it is, oh yes. To be honest this is the most important thing to me, the strength of the family, to be together is the most important thing to me. I was saying the other day to my oldest lad actually, when my time comes to go, I would like it to be as linked as you are now. I know you are like a chain now, and you can't separate it, that's how I want it to be, that's one of my wishes when I die, that's how I want you to be. And he said don't worry we will be. I am so proud of that. The family link is very, very important, to me anyway. It is the same way with the other people as well.

Q Cousins, aunties and uncles seem very close..

Oh yes. We have all got so much respect for each other, for the cousins, and the nieces and so on.

Q Are there any traditions that you keep up, national days or anything?

Yes we do try to keep as much traditions as possible, but the circumstances are so different to back home, everybody's working. We do try to do a special Easter time, we try to do the traditions they do back home. For instance we always do the service early in the morning on the Sunday morning. We do the mass on Saturday night but it is after midnight we do it, the service. They do fireworks as well at that time, because when we say Jesus has risen at the time, they always light fireworks to celebrate.

Q And they do that in Cyprus?

They do that yes, and they do it here. I know it sounds a bit, I won't say uncivilised, but the time of the night, it's so late that you have got to think about the neighbours. But fortunately where we are nobody ever complained, so we are very fortunate.

Q Did you have any difficulties with the language when you first came?

Yes. I did because I knew the basics because we were taught in school for about an hour a week, English. They do more hours in the higher school, but unfortunately at the time I couldn't go any higher. I went to the elementary school, that's it, because at the time if you went to a higher school you had to pay a fee for it, and buy your own books and everything. You didn't have any uniforms or anything, but we had to buy our own books and pay a fee, and my father he was just an ordinary worker, everyday worker, if he had work he was paid, if he didn't have any work he didn't get paid, so the priority was to feed us. Education was secondary, unfortunately. When I came to England I could say good morning, goodnight, thank you, goodbye, that's it. But I was very fortunate, I was working with a Cypriot at the time, he was managing the shop where I was working, and whenever I had any difficulty he was coming to my rescue all the time. What I did was, I bought a dictionary and I tried to know all the basic words. I couldn't read any papers but I was getting the papers despite the fact I couldn't read it. I was getting the English paper, and I was sitting down, and any word I didn't understand, on my side was the dictionary, open the dictionary, find the word and get the meaning of the sentence. That was how I started.

Q It's a different alphabet isn't it?

It is a difficult alphabet, it's difficult to learn it if you don't know it.

Q And to write it?

To write it, yes it is. I can write a bit, but not that much. I make a lot of mistakes. But I can read it, I can understand the language, I can get by with anybody in a conversation, I don't have any problems, and that was all self taught.

Q Do you miss Cyprus?

I should say yes and no. I miss it because it is my birthplace and a lovely place. On the other hand I do not because all the family is here, they are all settled here now. They all live around here as well, where I am, only about five minutes walk from here. If I want to go to visit them it's only five minutes walk. They are all settled here, I've got three of them married, two are getting married this year as well, so everybody is married and settled in England, so from that point of view I don't miss it.

Q So you are glad that you came?

Yes. It's got to be yes, because I've achieved in my life what I wanted to achieve. I got married, I got my family, everybody is settled down, so basically I've achieved what I set out to achieve when I got married. I'm glad yes, it's got to be yes.

Q Do you know much about the history of Cyprus?

Well yes, but I wouldn't say that I know it perfectly. But most of it yes, I do know the history. When they started, when it was occupied by so many people and so on.

Q I suppose they must teach that at the school as well.

Oh yes, they do teach it. But as I said, I didn't have the opportunity to go to school to learn as much as I wanted to learn.

Q Do you have Greek food?

Yes, oh yes. It's a tradition, well, it's not tradition, it's Greek food, the basic Greek food. Once or twice a week we do that. We do the traditional kebabs, what we call souvla, we do them on the big skewers and we cook them on the charcoal. I'm going to have that on Easter Monday. I always invite the family here, and I always do that. It's a tradition back home to do that, celebrating

the Easter. During the year as well if there is a special occasion we always do that.

Q Weddings are really big aren't they?

You want me to tell you how the Greek wedding is! Well we do keep the traditions in England what they used to be about forty or fifty years ago in Cyprus, because they have changed, they are supposed to be modern now, they don't care about the traditions. But in England we do keep the traditions. We always have the groom and the bride, they always get dressed in their parents houses, and they meet at the church always, same as the English I suppose. But at the reception, the service is exactly the same as in Cyprus and Greece, it's exactly the same. But at the reception in the old days in Cyprus the couple would come in on the dance floor and dance, and everybody go and pin some money on the bride and the groom. First the parents of the couple, then all the guests they follow and pin the money on them. And that is we say, we give the couple a chance in life, to build on, they get the money and they do what they like with it, it's something to build on for the rest of their lives. We keep that yes.

Q But they don't do that in Cyprus?

No.

Wife - They do, in the villages.

They do, not on every wedding. They go as soon as the wedding finishes people congratulate the couple outside the church, and give them something to congratulate them, they give them money. And later on they invite a few, not all of the people they invite, to go to the reception. But the couple, they don't dance because already they got their money, at the church. That's the difference from here to back home.

Q Do you have links with the community in London?

No, we are a self-contained community, we don't have any help from anybody. What ever we achieve we've got to find the money and the sources ourselves. We do get in touch with the archdiocese in London which is the head of the community in Great Britain, but any other connection, no.

Q Is there anything else that's important to tell me, about the community?

What is the most important thing?

Because we are under the church, the most important thing is the church. But the church it gives the opportunity for the people to get together, have a word between the people, it's the link between the people. That's the most important, because we got to the service every Sunday, then you can see the people and you get that link, and getting to know people as well, having a word with them about their families, how their families are and so on. Any unfortunate thing which happens in the community, the community is always together, always. They will get together to support the unfortunate family.

Q Do you help each other with business as well?

I wouldn't say so no. It depends. If I ask for help myself from a relative, for him to help me, if he can do he will help me, yes. But not as say for instance the Jews, it's not the same. The Jews they do help each other with the business, no we don't do that.

Q It has been hard work hasn't it?

It has been hard yes, but as I said before, what I've achieved, I'm proud of it. Family wise and community wise as well. I was one of the first people responsible to buy the church, our own church, and the community centre as well, so for that alone, I'm proud of it.

Q Do you think it is going to continue into the future?

I most certainly hope so, we try to get the youngsters involved in the church so they can take over. There are quite a few young people now on the committee, so I do hope that they continue. Because it's a shame to lose everything we have achieved now, especially in fifty years, it is tremendous what we have achieved.

Q Would you go back to Cyprus to live?

For the time I haven't got any plans to do that, because of the occupation of the island we can't go to our birthplace. And it's very difficult to go and settle there now, at my age anyway, because if I do go there I will have to start from scratch, I haven't got anything at all there. Whatever property we had is on the other side, and is lost. So if I go there I've got to get my own land, build my own house and so on, which at the late time of my life is a bit difficult. If you would say about twenty years ago I would have loved to yes, but at the moment no. But I've got the community here so it's the same, it's like back home. I consider everybody in Leicester to be a sort of a relative. Something

happened in the community about two weeks ago, one of my friends and a collaborator at the time when we started to build up the community, he passed away, and when I saw the link in the community, when everybody came to pay their respect to him, that gave me the courage to say that the community will continue, and I was so glad because of the link between the people.

## Appendix B

Transcript of interview with first generation Italian woman, 7.2.01.

Q When did you come to Britain?

I came in 1954.

Q Where are you from?

Italy, and the place is called Rimini, on the Adriatic coast. It's still in north Italy there.

Q Why did you come to Britain?

Well, I married in 1951, and my husband was already a motor mechanic there, a good one. After one year married there we had a baby, and his aim was to build his own garage, his own business, but no way with the wages in those days. As soon as the baby was born I had to stay home, I couldn't help him financially, so we thought it would take a long long time for him to save the money to start his own business. So we had a friend that came over, and those friends, through them, my parents came for quite a few years. One year we came and visited them, it was 1953 actually, a couple of years after my parents came. So we came to visit them, for, I don't remember, I think it was two or three weeks. We liked it very much, especially me, I mean for what I see I really loved it. And then my mother and father said why don't you come over, you work here, if you are prepared to work hard you will probably be able to save more money, and Italy was really down after the war. So that's what we did. And we stayed six years in a private house. Then I had one of my daughters, it was a bit difficult then, we had our little cottage, but it was a bit difficult to go in and cook etc. My husband decided we were going to buy our first house, and he found a good good job as a motor mechanic. He went to work for this garage for about three years, then he was able to apply to one of the big companies, and he applied for a station, and he got it, and he started his own business, gradually. When we came, we thought we were



going to stay five or six or seven years maximum, just to save some money, go back, and then he would build his own place there. But then after five years my first daughter was born, we had already a son born in Italy, and he had already started school here as a little boy, and we liked it, honestly we liked it. So we stayed, and then my other daughters were born, so we decided to remain longer, and you know what happens the more you stay the more you are happy. We built our own place at the garage, and so on and here we are. Well my husband passed away six years ago, and I am all on my own now because my three daughters are married, my son married a couple of years ago, in Italy, with a girl we knew for a long time, and then now he is back there, and I have just got back from there, meeting my first grandchild. And he travels here, he has a manager in the garage now. He joined his father in the business. He comes about four times a year.

Q Did you go back to where you lived?

Every year. Even the first year when we came, we went the following year. In those days we went by train, you can imagine it took one day and one night to get there. Every year, we never missed a year. Even when we had our daughters, we always brought them. Actually, all my children were able to speak Italian before they spoke English. And so we went back every year. As the children were growing, and becoming independent, taking their own holidays, we even went two to three times a year when my husband was alive, we used to go by car. And then I had my parents there, and they became old and I was often there to look after them. And now since my husband passed away, well I manage probably a couple of times a year. This year with a new granddaughter I've been once, and I've got another trip in March, and so on. So we never lost touch with Italy. Although we have been living here a long time, when we are in this house it is like being in Italy. We speak Italian among us, and when we meet friends, so we haven't lost our roots at all. I haven't lost my accent, my Italian accent.

Q Do you notice a change when you go back?

You've got to consider Italy after the war was a great devastation. If only we had been patient, you see 1954 was really, the wages wasn't enough really, you live week by week waiting for the next wages, but if we had only been patient and waited for the sixties that was the big boom in Italy, in the sixties.

There was so much more for everybody, but we had already settled down here. We were here in the sixties about six years, and so we decided to remain. It hasn't changed in a way, but it has become richer, especially in the north of Italy. It is one of the wealthiest economies. We could have come back any time I suppose, my husband could have sold the garage, but we liked it here, especially me. And then by then all my children started school, they went to grammar school, and then university, and then they married, so here we are. But Italy has changed financially. That is a good thing and bad thing as you know, like everywhere else. I find that there are things that are much better here, other things are better there. You cannot compare, 'is England better than Italy, or vice versa?', you can't, you got the positive and negative here, exactly like there. It's a nice place to live, because every time we go it is so nice to be there, but then again home is here now, after 46 year you can imagine.

Q Is there anything in particular that you miss?

No, for the reason that I am there very often. I know some people, they have not been there for fifteen or twenty years some people. The majority of my friends they go every year, but you find some people who haven't been for a long time, so they miss Italy. But I cannot miss Italy because I am there so often. It's like I'm travelling in between two places. I was Italian, but I absorbed everything there was to absorb about the English way of life. Well there is one thing, I suppose it's the only thing, it's the weather. I mean today it's like spring here. Coming from the north in the winter it's not very good, probably it's worse than here, but at least they've got a better summer. starting from March, when it starts getting nice, and then you go through September and sometimes October, it's very, very nice. So it's a very long summer, here if we are very lucky we get a bit in July and August, or September, that's the only thing, I wish the weather was a bit better. I don't think there is any other thing. Even food, you find everything that you want, like you are in Italy.

Q Did you find that when you first came?

Oh no no no. The funny thing was, when I first came it was so funny, because we use a lot of olive oil, naturally Italy is the place of olive oil, and the only place where you could find a bit of olive oil was in the chemist. I couldn't believe it when somebody told me, oh yes the oil, I said chemist, what's oil got

to do? Oil in those days here, it was used as a medication. In those days you didn't find a lot of things, you wouldn't dream to find parmesan cheese, or Parma ham, this sort of thing, but you would find tomatoes, can of tomatoes, and so. And then I remember every year when we went we used to bring a lot of pasta and oil back. But that was a long long time ago, now you find everything, almost like if you're there.

Q Do you have Italian newspapers?

Yes, in fact there is a newspaper shop down London road where you can find the paper. But by the time they come they are two or three days old, so I don't buy them regularly, but then I have other papers coming from Italy, magazines and things. And then with the Italian channel. I will be without it this week, they have got to come and change it. So really when you have got Italian channel you already see all the news, you know exactly what is going on. And then with my sister, we phone to each other so often, that really it is like to be there.

Q Do you speak a dialect?

No, I never did, which I regret. I regret not being able to speak the dialect, our dialect, because my husband did, and every time we found somebody from our own place he would speak the dialect, because dialect really, we call it in Italy a heritage that will disappear. Dialect is not a slang. Dialect is a language on it's own. Now especially in the north of Italy they teach dialect in classes, as a subject, because they think it's a heritage that shouldn't be lost. I understand dialect, I understand the dialect from my place, from the Venetian provinces, and even some of the dialect from the south, because from about sixteen years we what we named the club dramatic Italiana, a play group, and one our work was based on one of the famous Italian playwrights, Eduardo de Phillippo, and the plays were mainly in dialect, so I learnt a lot of dialect in those days. We stopped about six or seven years ago, for the lack of people, no more people to bring in. It's fascinating to hear people speak in dialect, and in the north where my son lives now, is a lovely place, surrounded by Venice, Pardoia, Verona, Verona is where there is a famous theatre, Pardoia there is a famous sanctuary there, it is a well known place, and there even my son's family, although they are doctors, professors, all graduate people, between

them they speak the dialect. It is so beautiful to listen. I hope my son will be able to learn, he can already speak a few words.

Q When you first came to Britain was there any hostility?

No, that's why we like England. We were a bit apprehensive, that's why when my parents said 'come over for a few years then we will go back together' we were a bit apprehensive, because of the war, we were the enemy. We as children were so indoctrinated in school, because I was born under fascism, so in school you can imagine, you are indoctrinated. During the war we heard so much bad things about England, and we were a bit... well we gave it a go, we came here. Actually I found one thing, even to this day when England and Leicester have become so cosmopolitan, always when I meet English people they are so keen to talk and ask about Italy. I never once found anybody that would make me feel... but then again it's a lot to do with the person. I heard of other people, at the same time when we came there were other Italians, couldn't wait to go back, they hated the food, hated the way of life. Really they couldn't wait, but the thing was their attitude. You try to understand people if you want other people to understand you. But never never once, wherever we went we found a lot of friends, and people very interested to talk and to learn and to know.

Q Can you tell me about the people in Leicester?

In Leicester, I lost count, because so many went back, and so many people of my generation, there is a lot of people dead, a lot of them died. The new generation who come over here now only come for the language, study. The movement of the Italians in Leicester is quite interesting. We've got the first generation of immigrants, then the second then the third. I presume the third is my children, and the second one because it was soon after the war. The first one was the people who came between the two centuries and into the twentieth century, we've got quite a few big families, especially the ice-cream people, but not in a small scale, big scale, they've got big factories of ice-cream, big shops. Then we get into the period of the hairdresser. In Leicester the big and most important hairdressers, they are Italian. There is this big name Grecos, we are very close friends because I am godmother to one of his children. There is Mancini, and then in St. Martin's square there is Alberico. There is another one at the bottom of Belvoir Street, so there is

many, ice-cream, patisserie, hairdresser, that was just out of war, then there was the mechanics like my husband, there was another two Italian garages, they did very well. Restaurants! There is so many that I lost count. So they did well the Italians. One thing that really made me, well I don't know if proud is the word, the majority among our circle of Italians, their children, our children, they all went to higher study, they did very, very well in school. So that is another thing to be proud of. Then we got our Italian club, and I'm the chair lady, the president. Then we've got the Dante Alighieri, we meet once a month. The majority of the people are English though because the Dante Alighieri Society is spread all over the world, it is to expand Italian language and history and so on. We don't have our Italian church, but at one stage years ago we got our mission, but it was very difficult to support, it was sold. But we've got our priest now, before we had a priest in Leicester, but nowadays we have a priest that comes from Nottingham, and we celebrate mass for those Italians who like to keep the Italian traditions, and we go to mass once a month. Otherwise, whoever practices, we go to our regular parishes, there is quite a lot of Catholic parishes in Leicester. If you want to meet with Italians, you go to the Italian mass, St. Peter's, down Hinckley Rd. It's always the second Sunday of the month, at 4.30 we go there for our mass, and then we meet with people that sometimes you don't see for one month or two, it's a focal point to meet the people.

Q Are there any traditions you keep up?

Yes there are, for example in a our club we do outings, we go around visiting places. We also meet once a month, and men plays cards, the ladies just talk and chat, the children there is a big room where they can play, so it's a social evening. We celebrate for example in January our epiphany. The tradition is that a woman dresses up like an old woman, really like an old woman, with a big bag of toys on her back, and she comes there, all the children are excited, and she asks the children, 'are you being good, what have you been doing, have you been naughty?', and then one by one they go to her, and she gives one present to each of them. We celebrate Mothering Sunday, and we start with our children, we teach them poems, that's my side, there is another lady who teaches them dancing, it's for the mothers, and the children perform all their poems in Italian, and the lovely dances. Easter, you go to mass if you

believe, but Christmas and Easter is really family things. Last New Years Eve we had a dance. Last year for example we celebrated our Italian national day. 1966 we founded the club, over the years we celebrated the Italian national day, which is the 2nd of June, and very often we invited the Italian consul from Manchester, because our jurisdiction is Manchester, so that is another lovely thing, we put our flag on and things. Other things we do, for example, when it is the World Cup football, at the club we hire a huge screen if Italy goes into the final, it happened over the years a couple of times, so we had a big screen and we put our flag on, and then we all look, and if they win, big celebration with food and drink. We keep together. At one stage at the beginning when we started the club we had our own Italian football team, it went on for many years, but it sort of finished and we weren't able to build up another one. We meet among friends, especially when there is a christening or wedding, we are invited, and birthdays sometimes, birthday parties.

Q Do you have special Italian weddings?

There is a lot, some years you have hardly any weddings, some years you probably got two or three weddings. The tradition to me seems very similar to the English. Or rather the English now get a bit of the Italian tradition. When the bride and groom go around distributing the almonds, we call it bonboneries, the couple receive presents, and the way the couple say thank you, they give each of them these almonds. Confetti in Italian is different to English, it's not the paper one, ours white sweet almonds. Again there is a tradition there with this confetti, the tradition is that marriage is a combination of sweet and bitter things, nice and sometimes not so nice, so there is the sweet outside which is the sugar, and the bitter almond inside. We notice now we have been to quite a few English marriages, they start that tradition with this confetti. But the weddings are more or less similar, I don't see the difference really.

Q Family is very important isn't it?

Yes, family values, I've got to say that. Not to discredit the English, but our children, well my children left home when they married, and in Italy unless you have got to move for your job, otherwise you stay living with your family until you marry. Very rarely, even among our Italians here in Leicester, very rarely, perhaps I know one case, she found a job somewhere else and moved,

otherwise the children stay with the family until they move out for either marriage, or because they go to work somewhere else in another town. The south of Italy is even more close and tight together as a family. We in the north, we know the value but we give a bit more freedom to our children. We have got a group of wonderful people from Evington, a lot of families there, all the children married between them, they are not related but friends, they've grown up together. They've got solid marriages, very solid marriages, with children, and there you get the parents or grandparents, or the uncles and aunts, when the children are born, after a few months the mother goes back to work or whatever, the grandmother steps in, or the uncle and aunt, so they are really helping each other, in a wonderful way.

Q So in Leicester there are people from all over Italy?

I would say yes. We've got people from Sicily, not many though, very few, a few from Sardinia, but quite a few, there was more years ago but they went back at least ten years ago, fifteen years ago, then as you come up you get people from Puglia, Lazio, Italy is divided in regions and Lazio is where Roma is, you've got people from around there, and then as you come up people from Calabria, Tuscany, not so many from Tuscany, then you get people from my area, and then again from Lambarti, here I can say for sure that we have got representatives from every part of Italy. The majority came after the war, because the ones that came before they are all either dead or gone back. I can think of the people, an ice-cream family, she is 92, and she is one of the first generation. We had another couple, they both died, they had various restaurants in town, cafeterias, he came before the war, but the wife was born in Wales from an Italian family arriving in England at the end of the nineteenth century. The older generation, they all disappear. I only knew my parents, they came in 1952, I remember my mother telling me about the Coronation. When we arrived, the only people we knew was my parents, and gradually we started to know other people, and then somebody told us that there was a little chapel in Leicester called St. Teresa, off of Fosse Rd. North, where the Italian would meet there once a month, and there was priest coming from Nottingham. We met a few more families, Italian families, especially two brothers from our own place, we became very close friends, and we still see each other when we go to Italy, because they did what they came for, they

accumulated a bit of money and they went back and they started there.

Gradually I went to the Italian mass, we met a lot of people. A lot of them went back. About my age there are still quite a lot. That is why my club is getting thinner.

Q Is there anything else you can tell me that you think is important?

One thing that pleases me is that the Italians, I'm talking about the Italians in Leicester, as you read the papers about crime and so on, we never make the paper talk about us. Whenever we were in the paper it was very often about the club, doing the traditional things, choirs, but the Italians they behave themselves. The Italian community, they contribute to the well-being of the town, because all these restaurants, hairdressers, they all pay tax, we never have any scandal from anybody, as far as I know. Anybody involved in scandals or crimes, thank God not.

Q How important is religion?

Relatively because faith is something you don't learn it, either you are it or you are not. Italy is a Catholic country, although now you have got other branches of Christianity. I find the younger generation they've got faith, but they don't feel they need to practice. My daughter told me many times, 'yes of course we believe in God, but we don't see why we need to go to mass, or confession'. Well, I'm not one who goes to confession every week, once a year is enough. But then again among the younger generation, they never miss Easter or Christmas, they like to keep tradition, because I think even the younger generation they look to keep tradition. Like coming to the Italian dance, that's tradition.

Q Do you still cook Italian food?

Yes I do, but it's a mixture. When I'm on my own I'm a very sloppy cooker. When I've got the family, like at Christmas, my children are very keen on keeping up Italian traditions, so we got at Christmas it's a big meal because we keep the Italian and English traditions. It's nice to keep the traditions going.

Q Is there anything traditional about men and women, doing different things?

Well I found among the younger generation, they are like any other generation, especially the ones born here. When my children were little at school they used to ask 'what are we mum, are we English, are we Italian?'. I



used to say you are Anglo-Italian, because you are born here but both parents are Italian. They grow up like anybody else here. Among the older generation of men, then again there are divisions there. You take the men from the south, the older generation, I've got to say, this doesn't go anywhere else, they are a bit more narrow minded, in the south they are a bit more jealous of their wives, a bit more possessive with their children. I know quite a few cases twenty, thirty years ago when the boyfriend, they wouldn't call it boyfriend they call it fiancé, because as soon as a man start courting a girl here they have to go the home, meeting the girl at home, having the permission of father and mother, never go out both together without the chaperone. It was like that. I never did that with my children because we are from the north, and I always give a lot of trust to them. The south of Italy, the deep deep south, among the older generation you can see when we getting together, from the north among us immigrants, they are quite a lot of people with degrees, but the south that doesn't happen as much. The south of Italy, men a lot of them are very keen on their allotments, people from the south they love their land, they are farmers.

Q Do you still feel Italian?

No matter how long you live in another country, you cannot wipe out your heritage, how you were brought up, it's with you through your life. For my children it's different, they have both traditions, both roots here and roots there, they go there every year. Sometimes it's like I've been here all my life. I was only 24 when I came, and I've been here 46 years, so really that would be more my country than the other one, but I can never think English. Even when I speak English, to find a word often I think in Italian and then I translate to English. But I love this country, otherwise there would be no reason to be here, because in Rimini I've got the house on the hill, my parents are both there, there is a flat near the beach. I like it here. There is one thing I like here, and this I have been telling over and over to my sister in Italy, the carefree of the English people. For example, in Italy, you wouldn't dream in our town in the north, if I want to go to next door neighbour I can just to out and in with my slippers on, and if I've washed my hair and I've got rollers in, I just go. You don't do that in Italy. I was there last weekend and I thought, when they go out they all look like they are going to the opera house or

something. I like this way of life, people couldn't care a less about you, they don't look at you, you can go out dressed the way you want to. They won't criticise you, but I'm afraid in Italy when I'm there you can see ladies so smartly dressed, they are very keen on furs there, they look at you. When you go into a shop you sense that they look at you, they don't mean anything bad, but they have got such class, and they like to see the way people are dressed. On the other hand, the Italians all love England, if you go to London, any day of the week in London, you hear more Italian spoken than English, because they really love it.

Q When your children were growing up did you always tell them about Italy? They always went there. The four grandparents were there. They all love Italy. You can go to Italy very cheap, there is this Ryanair. I went for £60 return. You look on the internet, and book it on the internet. It is reasonable, it's easy to go to Italy.

Q Was it hard at first?

The only emotional thing was that as soon as we arrived we wouldn't risk, because we didn't know if we would like it and would stay, I left my son, who was born in 1951 with my sister. That was hard. After a while we settled we brought him with us. that was the only sad thing. In those early days I didn't have the phone, we didn't phone to Italy it was too far away, we wrote a lot. Now we keep phoning to each other, easy thing.

As an Italian person, you expect to be able to cook, because I learnt from my mother, my grandmother, I delighted my landlady with home-made pasta, tagliatelle, lasagne, gnocchi. She was happy for me to cook Italian, and she taught me to cook English. I don't find much difference.

The difficulty was the language. I learnt French, I didn't know a word of English. I started, I remember reading books and not being able to understand a word, and I started visualising the words. We always speak Italian, with my friends, we always speak Italian, it comes so naturally.

Q Do they speak dialect?

No, they come from a very good family. Like my family, they would never let them learn, speak the dialect. I came across quite a few illiterate people, I would write for them, and read them their letters. People from the deep south, during the war they didn't have chance to go to school. But the other lot are

quite cultured, intellectual. So there is quite a good balance. The south has always been very poor, in the north they say the south is like the rope around the neck, there is a bit of Mafia down there, there is more crime down there. In this group we amalgamate, and it has come out as quite a nice society. But even those from the deep south, with only a few years of school, or no school at all, the children they still go to the grammar schools, there is the ambition for the children to improve themselves.

## Appendix C

Transcript of interview with first generation Polish woman, 22.11.00.

Poland regained its independence in 1918 to 21, after being occupied by Russia Prussia and Austria for over 130 years, so at the end of the First World War Poland managed to organise itself and regain its freedom. It was only free for about 20 years and the Second World War happened. My family, because Poland regained its freedom, and territories, its old territories, they tried, the government, encouraged people to occupy the old part of Poland, and some people who took part in the war were given different plots of land, and that's how my family happened to live on the eastern part of Poland. So there was still a lot of nationalistic views on the part of the people who lived there, the Ukrainian people, although my mother always said that living as neighbours she got on very well with them, but my mother was that sort of person really, adept at getting on with people. And they had quite a comfortable living, because they had their land, they were self sufficient, they had I understand quite a big part of the forest that belonged to them, the small holding, so I suppose they had more than enough to live on. When the Second World War broke out after the Russians and Germany gave each other permission to enter so Poland was attacked by Russians as well as Germans, and we happened to be on the side which the Russians occupied. About three months before they came and took everything from the farm, which they had the winter storage, there was a habit of getting things ready for the winter, because the winters are more severe than anywhere else, and nothing grows outside, and so they took everything they could which was of use to them, including the animals and horses and what have you. And three months later the Russians came, I think with the help of the Ukrainians and other pro Communist people, and they came at three o'clock in the morning and gave them half an hour to pack, to take everything with the family. In our

family there was a few small children. I was three, my twin brother, two brothers who were not much older than me, there were a couple of siblings about ten or eleven, and there was my grandmother, my parents, there was one of the aunts she lived with us. So they were given half an hour to pack, and they were loaded onto, taken to the station, and loaded onto cattle truck, and deported on a long journey to Siberia.

Q Do you remember?

I don't remember, I was three at the time, but my cousin gave me, my cousin who lives in Australia gave me some names.

(Tape switched off, woman visibly upset)

Q This journey, did your parents tell you about it? Were you always aware of it?

Yes, I was aware of it. My mother was talking about it quite a lot, because she was affected by it very much because she lost most of her family, children, her husband, eight members of the family died. My father was imprisoned and he died when he was let out of prison, so she was left by herself with small family, really not enough hands to work, and under that system if you didn't work you don't eat. So there was eventually just the two of us left, my mother and myself. I remember a little bit when we first came to Russia, because I was placed in a nursery, and I remember the boredom. I was three years old and we weren't allowed to move about, we were told to sit, I think it was something like a bed, like a cot, and you couldn't run around, had to sit all the time. Then I don't remember anything afterwards until we came to Africa, I think it was because a lot of the children died, especially at the age I was, or those that survived were very malnourished. I actually didn't see anything because my face was all swollen, due to malnourishment, and my first memory was when we got to Africa, that was two or three years later. In the meantime we had gone through Persia and so on, where we were better fed and taken care of, and I remember when we came to Africa we were taken to a place, and my first memory was of these beautiful flowers, pink, they are still my favourite flowers, the exotic. I always remember, they have stayed with me, the flowers that are a part of my childhood. Then they took us to the hostel in Africa, and from then on my memory was very good, very careful. As a child we had a simple life but very adequate, lots of countryside, freedom to

run around. The houses we stayed in were sort of very similar to the natives were in east Africa, but there was plenty of food, we were well fed, there wasn't things like cars or bicycles even, we had to walk everywhere, it was like going back. There was no modern things, the electricity or the modern water, you had to fetch your water from the taps.

Q Were you with other Polish people?

Yes, the hostel where we were, it was the refugee hostel, where there was about 5,000, and there was quite a few hostels in Africa, refugee hostels, and in India, Lebanon. Men folk joined the British army in the Middle East, and in fact that is how families managed to get out of Russia, because when Hitler attacked Russia one of our Generals negotiated with Stalin by saying with these people there could be an army formed, and they could help you to fight the Germans. The families eventually were allowed to go, and my uncles, my three uncles joined the army and that's how we managed to get out of Siberia, otherwise people who didn't have anyone in the army stayed behind. I know that my mother was affected by it all, by the deaths and everything, she went through it all her life. We stayed in Africa for nine years, so virtually all my childhood was spent there. I always look upon it as a very good time, because it was simple, I'm sure that in order to be happy you don't have to have material goods. What we had was adequate. I think there was also security in my case, I had my mother, and my two brothers who survived. But it was much tougher for people who didn't have anybody. There was plenty of children who spent their time in orphanage, and I know that some of them are still very deeply affected by it.

Q How did you come to Leicester?

I got married, I lived in Derby, and I met my husband at the dance, and we were married shortly afterwards. We came to Leicester and I had four children. They are all grown up now. That is actually something I am very proud of, they are very well balanced people.

Q Did they go to the Polish school?

They went to the Saturday Polish school. We spoke Polish at home as well, because I wanted them to keep up with their background, the culture and everything. They spoke Polish, and they went to Saturday school as well.

Q Did you tell them about coming over?

Yes. It's something we talk about, but I suppose like me, you have to be ready at a certain time to receive it. When you are sort of busy all the time learning and so on, you are not preoccupied with your background too much. It's something that comes later on in life. I think we probably tried to encourage them to make something of themselves because as refugees, without language, without the right qualifications, you had to take what was offered, we really didn't have a choice at that time. When we came to England the two choices you had at work was either in mining for men, or the farming. It didn't matter what qualifications, what education they had, those were the jobs that was open to them.

Q Was it difficult to build a home?

It was possibly as difficult as for anyone else, except that you had to start from the beginning, you didn't have anything passed on to you from anybody, because nobody had anything, and so you had to start from nothing, from scratch. I think we were more determined, because of our background, we were more determined to find a place of our own, because we didn't fancy living in somebody else's place, or move about. I think it's still important to me, the feeling of being in my place, having something of my own. I think the difficulty was with moving around like we did, or my childhood, I remember being in so many different places that eventually you feel you don't know where you belong. You don't know where your roots are. I feel quite at home when I go to Poland, and I often think, oh I wouldn't mind staying here. I went for two holidays this year, and I would love to spend the whole summer in Poland. But then your family is in England, so you are really torn. There still is this sense, I think it's like a tree, it needs to have deep roots, and we have been transplanted in too many places really to feel that you belong somewhere. I think that is why it was important to be in the Polish community, that gave us the stability, I think without that it would have been very difficult for people. I'm glad that it has been recognised, the importance of the ethnicity, and that social services are supporting the ethnic groups, because at one time that wasn't seen, you were expected to come and take what was there and make the most of it, and that is what we did. I've worked hard to get money for the Polish elderly group, for the day care centre for them, which I feel is so important because of isolation. People reach that certain age and

they are isolated in the community, they can't go next door for a chat, because it's not done, it's not a done thing in England, and they usually can't travel very far to see their friends, so it's really very important for them to come and meet each other in Polish community, have that lunch, have a chat, see each other. It helps a lot.

Q I've noticed the difference, the hospitality. Someone told me the phrase 'guest in home God in home'?

Yes. That's right there is a saying. Yes, there is a different psychology. The strangers are welcomed, not seen as a threat, they are welcomed. I think that's what I really like when I go back to Poland. In no time at all you always get somebody to talk to, and if you are in town you get invited for coffee and a chat. You don't feel a stranger very long. When people see that you came from you know, or perhaps speak different language, there is always going to be somebody who come and try to help you, and put you right, things like that. So yes, there is that part of the culture. I think that's what I found difficult in England, because I remember when we came in 1950, and the look you sometimes got from different people just because you spoke different language. I was still in Polish school in England, because at that time we still believed that we would be going back to Poland. It was a few years after the war had ended and I think we still didn't give up the idea that Poland would be free, mentally it was very difficult, so I was still educated in secondary school in England, Polish school. When we sort of went to town, I always remember the looks we had, because we spoke, there weren't many foreign people in England at that time, and if you did something different, which we did, culturally we are different, we are probably much louder in our behaviour, it's like Italians who are very excitable, and so on, you were definitely aware that people were looking at you, and were thinking you are not quite right. There wasn't so much tolerance at that time. You were expected to behave exactly like the natives, and it was difficult for us to behave like natives. So that was being a stranger, and being seen or viewed with some sort of suspicion because we were different. That has changed, people became much better orientated in different cultures, people travel about. But at that time that was a difficulty. They restricted the possibilities that you had, because the language wasn't fluent, but I think after a while it became quite advantage to be Polish,



because I think some people thought we were OK, and finding a job in a lot of places, you were accepted and in a lot of places you were even asked if you have got anyone else, because we are good workers generally, people try their best. So after a while I cannot say that we found much discrimination, apart from of course you were still restricted, but we began ... whoever the older generation, I was still in between, so I got married early and had my children, and realised that I wished I had had a career. My husband was a draughtsman, he was Polish as well. It was a good job at the time. We lived in Oadby which was regarded as a good area, my children went to good schools. We tried to make the best of it. I went to do my nursing, and then I went to be a psychiatric nurse. Also at the same time in 1990 I developed the care, because there was the community care, the legislation, the talk about with minorities and care being developed, I saw that as a opportunity for us, for our elder generation. I put quite a lot of effort, and had some support, but I think a lot of people didn't know what I was talking about, because they had tried to get some money before and didn't think that I could do anything. A lot of people felt that I wouldn't get anywhere. I think it was a lot of determination on my part, plus empathy for the older generation who had such a tough time, and who had a quite sad old age because of isolation.

Q You mentioned when Poland was partitioned. It comes across that it is so important to understand the Polish history.

Yes, I think it is so important because the older generations grew up with this trying to regain the freedom, and I think we feel generally very uncomfortable under the occupation of different countries, and Poland became occupied with Catherine the Great, and partitioned by the neighbours so that it ceased to exist. It was the Polish culture and language and everything was very suppressed, so we had some great people that had to go. Because before that Poland was quite a large country in the middle ages in Europe, and it was forever trying to regain the freedom, there were three different uprisings, but they were never successful.

Q But Polish culture survived didn't it?

Yes, it survived. It's surprising really the language survived, and the history survived, because under each occupation they were learning different cultures and language, and the language was passed on with some sort of classes

where they pretend to be doing something else like sewing or things like that, and they had their books underneath, and had to be very careful that they were not spotted teaching the language. I'm sure that religion was very important in the fact that it survived, the Polish history, the Polish identity. It regained independence in 1920, 1918 to 20 was fighting yet again 'til independence, but it was a very fragile independence, because we know that as soon as the First World War there were already plans for the second world war within Germany, and I think even now it regains the territory after the second world war. Oh, and then of course there was the communist occupation for fifty years, and I think that we as refugees here, we were much more concentrating on what was happening in Poland than making our way here. We were living so much what was there. A lot of people had their families there and so on. I think with the elderly generation they certainly had not thought how to make their living in the best way, because they were forever preoccupied by helping their families.

Q I've seen in the newspapers, in the 80s, the parcels that were sent to Poland....

That's right, they did actually all throughout our stay in England, because there was such a shortage in Poland of everything, until quite recently, until ten years ago. I remember when I was on holiday and there was suddenly a queue, it was only 1989, about eleven years ago, and there was suddenly this big queue, and they said what are you queuing for, and they were not sure, it must be a delivery of something. So people would buy things and then perhaps sell, because the money was devalued so quickly that if you didn't spend it perhaps tomorrow it would be worth so much less. So it was better to invest in something, in anything, and there was always somebody who would need it. It became almost a cultural thing that certain amount of people was always spending a lot of time queuing, and there was this shortage of things.

Q How did you feel when Solidarity came through?

I was afraid that it would be crushed by the Russians. I was afraid. Everybody obviously felt very elated. To me it was something I've never expected. You hoped but you never thought it was possible, that it would happen in my lifetime. It was wonderful, it was wonderful. I think the unfortunate thing is that the people who were in power are still there, and they know how to rule.

Although there was an election, they are the people who rule still, because the opposition are not given enough publicity, and I think in a lot of case there is still the power in the old hands. Of course it's not to the degree it was before. I listen, I've got the Polish television and the radio, you know the Sky, and I listen a lot to the Catholic radio, which is called Radio Maria, and it gives actually the opposite view, and the things they do to try to stop it, telling things from the other side. They don't give them, they are fighting forever to get the chance to be heard. They are so supporting the people who listen send money, but they still don't allow them, there is only about 70% of the country where they can listen to the radio. They can listen abroad on the Sky like in England and America, in certain hours, but they don't allow the free voice in the country, so I wouldn't say it was altogether free. The old system still has a lot of influence, they know how to suppress the opposition, which is unfortunate. I think the opposition, the right side, the anti-Communist, because they were never in power, they don't know how to rule. They have got the freedom but they have never been used to it. The democracy in England it existed for what 300 years, it's a gradual process, you can't expect a country to suddenly change mentality. So to a large extent I think the old mentality needs to come out, but they have done wonders, under the circumstances they really have done wonders. They are really very much survivors, and they know how to survive in difficult circumstances, so when you go to Poland you see a lot of beautiful homes being built, as this is the first time they are allowed to have their own places. So you see a lot of things being done, and people trying very hard to stand on their own two feet. I think they really cope very well.

Q I have come across some words that seem to be very important in Polish history... (sovereignty, freedom, fatherland - in Polish)

Yes, independence, freedom, motherland. Yes, it is important, because of the suppression. When somebody tries to suppress you very, very hard, you try to fight it. Yes, it's nationalistic, it has been important to me as well, I grew up with that. There is a fear now, the population are afraid of joining the common market, the reason being it will be easier for our neighbours, for example for Germany, and they are doing it all ready, buying land very cheaply, you know the land is 1/30th to what it is in Germany, so they are buying it illegally

through the back way. And there is a fear that once you lose your land you lose your independence again. So there is a fear that joining the common market they will lose gradually what they have, and lose that in another way, not in a war, in a peaceful way. And that is something that I am also afraid of, yes I am also afraid of that, I can see that coming. I think there is also, people know that they couldn't trust Russians, they knew that Russians were the enemy for centuries, but they don't actually see that they can't always trust the West. The West to them is somebody friendly, which is not always so. When you live in the West you realise that everybody looks after number one, and I don't think that's recognised in Poland, and I think before they realise it it may be too late. I don't know, I don't know what's the future, whether there is a future for mankind with all the catastrophe going on.

Q I'm very interested in the literature, especially from the partitions, Mickiewicz...Is this well known?

Very well known. We've got some writers, like Mickiewicz, who were trying by their writing to inspire Poland to talk about the times when Poland was powerful, was big, meant something you know, because it was quite instrumental in fighting the Turks and things like that. It was like they were acting at the time when Poland was occupied, as inspiration, very much so, to the people. So they are still well read.

Q Even in Leicester?

Yes. It is all classical literature, and something that everyone is expected to know.

Q The literature was used by Solidarity as well wasn't it, the ideas?

Yes. I think that there was still the writers who inspired people to freedom, and of course the church as well, the Catholic church had a lot to do with it, especially when the Pope became the pope, he was heard, he was able to say what he felt. Previously as the Cardinal he had been very tactful with what he said, with his views. In a Communist country like Poland, another Cardinal was sitting in prison, so obviously he didn't want to.. he wouldn't be much good sitting in prison. He had to sort of work with the system. Once he became the Pope he was able to say what he felt, and I'm sure that was the big inspiration in Solidarity, the church, I'm sure it had a lot to do with it. Church and Poland, they are a very similar thing, intertwined. Even in our

community here I often think... when you are younger and people sometimes criticise the priest for this and that, and I often think well where would we be in here, in England, without the church? There was always a church being built, and a community around it. And I see how important it is for the elderly people, you get this spiritual comfort from it. And I'm sure that was something that helped people to survive, because without it you have no roots, and if you have no family and nothing really, it's very easy to have a nervous breakdown. So that was a very good stabiliser.

## SIDE TWO

Q I suppose there are a lot of traditions to do with religion?

Yes, Easter Christmas. But also, you are expected to go to church at least once a week, on Sunday. And I remember quite a few years ago when my family was growing up, my younger son was 18 and still at home, and he was arguing with me, why do we have to go to church, why do we have to go, I am older now. And I said to him there are certain things when you are at home you have to do, and one of them is to go to church. And then I said, why don't you want to go to church? What is it? And he said after a while, he says, well actually, Sunday wouldn't be Sunday without going to church. So I think that's for me, Sunday. I went to church because I had no option, my mother took me and that was it, as a child. As a young woman of twenty you took your children to church, although at that time I didn't know if I believed or not believed, but it was the done thing and I felt it was my duty, so we went to church. I think also the church was also connected with the social life, you always met up with your friends, and when you were young it was a chance to dress and see your friends. And later on you took your children. It wasn't until I was thirty and I had some problem in my private life, that I was seeking for some deeper meaning of life. I wasn't taking my religion very seriously but I wished I could believe in something, I felt there must be more to life than just working and so on. And my turning point came at that time. I went to confession and I said to priest what I felt, how I felt about it, why do I go to church when I don't know whether I believe or not, and that sometimes I can't even follow the mass. If somebody asked me what the priest was going on

about I wouldn't be able to repeat it. He says don't worry, just keep coming, and as a penance say 'Our Father'. And I did very slowly, at night, and that was my turning point, I remember being very emotional, and it just came like that. After that I can say with certainty that I am a believer, I believe, it's a great comfort to me knowing that there is a God somewhere. I think when I went to do my psychiatric training I realised how important the religion is in people's lives. The people who didn't have the religion, like most people in England, the patients in hospital, and a lot of them who haven't got supportive family, they are really lost. So I think when we get depressed I think that we always feel at least there is a God looking after us, and I think that feeling is important.

Q Is it important that it is the Polish church?

It helps with the same language, it helps with the same language, but I used to go to English church. I used to go to Oadby a lot, because my children went to Catholic school and there was a pressure that we should support the Catholic church in Oadby. It was also more convenient. We had to go to work, and on Sunday. But obviously in Polish church you meet people you know, and it is done in the language which is the most familiar. For example it is different for my children. In Leicester we are going to have a new community centre, with a new church, purpose built, not far from the General, so I can envisage that when my family comes over we will be going to English masses, because then the language is more familiar for my children and my grandchildren. This is their first language. My grandchildren don't speak Polish unfortunately, because I think only the families where the grandmother is nearby, they do speak. I would have liked them to speak Polish, yes, obviously I would have liked them to. My children do speak, not a very fluent Polish because you lose fluency if you don't practise the language, and they speak it as well.

Q When you go to Poland, is it a different sort of Polish they speak there now to the Polish you speak?

Yes. I learnt the pre-war language from the pre-war teachers. Although I grew up in 40s and 50s, in England it was the pre-war teachers. And the language is a living thing, like American and English, it's changing. It's the same in Poland, you realise that certain words came in, or certain words that are

brought in from the foreign words, which we try to avoid, we try to avoid it here, but in Poland they use it. Which in a way perhaps it's convenient, because when they do learn English or other foreign languages they've got a dictionary. Somebody in Spain told me once, when I was apologising for not learning Spanish, all you have to do is learn the little words, because the bigger words are international. So I suppose from that point of view it does make sense perhaps.

Q Are there any traditions you do in the home, or Polish things you keep in the home?

Sort of little niknaks, you know - (looking at the crucifix on the wall ) and things like that. I think because I grew up not in Poland, I don't remember Poland, I grew up overseas, probably my view is not so one-sided, it's a little bit wider. And the same, I'm not perhaps a typical Polish person because I grew up in England, so you know you tend to have the views, and British ways as well. I'm not perhaps 100%, I think you try to take the best you can, from both cultures.

Q Do you still say you are Polish though?

Yes, oh yes. I am definitely Polish. I think it's your childhood. I think it's difficult, it's like you know if you are female you can't suddenly change to male from female, you are what you are born with. But I don't think it stops you from ... Even my children are, perhaps never told them what they are supposed to be. To me it was important that they were self sufficient and good human beings, and people that could stand on their own feet and cope in life. I didn't think it was so important ... well, I obviously wanted them to know their roots because I think this is important. It's like your family, everybody has got roots, and you have to know about it in order to understand yourself, and I don't think it should restrict you in anyway, I think it probably widens your horizons. Hoping that you become more tolerant of other people, knowing their differences.

Q Name days, do you have name days?

Yes, we do, but I don't celebrate them, although it's probably more useful when you get older because you don't have to say how old you are! And also with name days people, everybody knows when it's your name day. It's occasionally we sing to our old ladies, it's such and such saint, for example

St. Joseph, there's a lot of men called Joseph, it's 19th March, oh yes let's sing to them. Christmas Easter, all the church celebrations. Some national celebrations as well. The 11th November, obviously, that's very important to us because it was the day which signifies the freedom which Poland regained after the First World War, which was 82 years ago now. I always thought it was such a long time ago when I was growing up, such a long time ago. It's not until this year I actually realised that my eldest son who is 42, and I thought you know I had him, he was born only 40 years afterwards, I thought it was like centuries ago, and you realise that it wasn't such a long time ago, he is still a young man and he is 42 now.

Q Do you cook Polish food?

No, because it takes too long!

Q Did your mum cook Polish food when you were growing up?

Yes, my mother did. You have to spend more time in the kitchen. I do do certain things, traditional things for Christmas, it's like a treat because some of the things are very time consuming and I try to eat sensibly, and I think in order to eat well you don't have to spend too much time in the kitchen. So no, I'm not a born cook!

Q But your mum did?

My mum used to, yes. Yes my mother did, and I always remember Christmas, I would be cleaning, she would be baking, and she would be cooking the whole day, and we were so worn out with all the work, and it was nice to sit at Christmas Eve, to sit at the table, and traditionally we share, like a communion, and you wish each other merry Christmas. It's very much a family time, Christmas Eve. I used to have that for a long time, all the family used to come. They don't now because they all have their own children and they all go to work, it's easier for me now to go and see them. We no longer have the family reunion like we did. I still haven't made plans for this Christmas. It's not quite the same now. And of course after Christmas Eve supper, there is always a Christmas mass, a midnight mass, and that was always a very exciting time. I remember when we were in Africa as a child that was the only time of the year when you were allowed outside, with a group of people, and you walked to church which was quite a distance, you had to walk through the jungle, in a group of people. And the nights were quite light, and



we always, I remember it was something dramatic, being out at twelve o'clock at night. And I still like that midnight mass. You go to church, the church is normally packed with people, and then you wish each other a merry Christmas, and hug and kiss and so on, and it's the Christmas feel, so that's the beginning of Christmas. And to me somehow Christmas Eve seems to be very important, it's very important. Later on you are preoccupied with eating much more. Easter, it's also a very family orientated festivity, with different food, and there is a lot of visiting the church, Good Friday, Holy week and so on, the build up to Easter. You are not supposed to have any, which now doesn't affect me, but as a young girl I always remember thinking oh there are so many weeks now when we won't be having any dances. Lent, you don't have dances. So it was always a difficult time, Lent, for six weeks you don't have any dances. We were used to going to dances every week, it was a long time, a big punishment. Good Friday, Resurrection on the Sunday, it's all sort of around the church, around the church and family.

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