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## HISTORIOGRAPHY OF POLISH IMMIGRATION: A PROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE STUDIES ABOUT RIO GRANDE DO SUL – BRASIL<sup>1 2</sup>

### 1. THE PROBLEM OF NUMBERS AND IDENTITY

The first challenge of a historiographic analysis which concerns a specific group of immigrants is to make clear which community is to be studied. National states, with defined borders, and one common mother tongue make studies concerning immigration easier, because they enhance the probability of collating official registries of entrance with the national identity of the persons, although in common sense these representations are associated with ethnical identities. The case of Poland is a strong example of this situation. Unified with Lithuania, Poland in the 16<sup>th</sup> century became the richest and strongest power of Eastern Europe, and in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, would only be placed after France in terms of size, having control of regions like Ukraine and Pomerania (ANDERSON, p. 285, 293). In any case, the Polish powerful nobility *szlachta* frustrated the formation of an absolutist state with centralized power and, from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it became a state, whose partition would solve the conflicts of its powerful neighboring countries, mainly Russia and Prussia. This historical condition makes studies of Polish immigration an arduous job of distinguishing

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between Poles, Lithuanians, Pomeranians, Ukrainians, Ruthenians and Slavs, not forgetting the percentage of Poles amongst Germans and Russian immigrants

The following table shows information from the demographic census from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in which the information about “foreigners” reflects the presence of the migration flux from the previous century. The Rio de Grande do Sul highlighted column shows that the Poles maintained the fourth position amongst the existing groups in that state in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first positions were occupied by Germans, Italians and Uruguayans. For comparison, the table offers the data for the neighboring states. Worth noting is the importance of Poles in Paraná, the Brazilian state which received the highest numbers of Poles until the 1940s, when it was surpassed, by absolute numbers of individuals, by the state of São Paulo.

**Table 1.** Foreigners coming from Poland and their place among the groups of foreigners from Rio Grande do Sul State, Brazil

	RIO GRANDE DO SUL	SANTA CATARINA	PARANÁ
1920	10.451 (4°)	3.065 (3°)	16.444 (1°)
1940	11.172 (4°)	2.862 (3°)	14.392 (1°)
1950	9.345 (4°)	2.123 (3°)	12.978 (2°)
1960	4.995 (4°)	673 (4°)	7.080 (5°)

Source: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística

According to Capuchin friars, in the first years of the 20th century, there were around 20 thousand Poles, which was twice the number registered by the census of 1920, but “still considered a small number in comparison with Italian and German colonies<sup>3</sup>, and even with Polish communities of other Brazilian states” (D’APREMONT and GILLONNAY, 1976, p. 46). According to the registries of Polish families, one can conclude that Poles settled in cities historically related to Italian immigration, which affects the visibility of the group under the eyes of the host society.

Another observer, before the Capuchin clergymen, was priest Antoni Cuber (parish priest of the city of Ijuí 1896 and 1915), who published in *Kalendarz Polski 1898* (Polish almanac edited in Porto Alegre) the text “In the margins of Uruguay”, which was translated to Portuguese almost 80 years later. Cuber’s account exposes that ethnical diversity of the first immigration groups, formed of “Lithuanians” and “other Poles”, is hidden under other ethnic groups. The first immigrants, who arrived in 1890, not only had not found in Brazil their promised

<sup>3</sup> About the polysemy of the term “colony” in southern Brazil, see Lima Jr. (1996, p. 55).

“paradise”, as claimed by immigration agents, but were also subjected to cold, misery, and lack of shelter. These conditions, in many cases, resulted in repression of government agents. Another example of exploration were the high prices for living supplies asked by merchants (many of them were Germans). This context influenced the forming of a negative opinion of the Poles.

Edmundo Gardolinski (1956, p. 5–8), one of the pioneers in the studies of the Polish immigration to Rio Grande do Sul, convincingly questioned the official records in the 1950s, which would indicate an inexpressive unimpressive number of Poles entering the state between 1885–1927 (around 24 thousand). He argued that: 1) populations from Pomerania and Silesia (territories annexed by Germany) could have been constituted by Poles; 2) there was an elevated number of Russians in the official statistics; according to the observation of Gardolinski himself, the presence of Ruthenians and Ukrainians who did not assimilate the Russian culture would suggest that they could have been Poles; 3) many “Austrians” were Poles from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Edmundo’s father, Marian Gardolinski, came to Brazil as an employee of the Austrian Consulate in Rio de Janeiro, and in 1912, he was sent to Paraná to follow up fluxes of farmers. (GARDOLINSKI, 1956, p. 19). The necessity to question the number of “Russians” in Rio Grande do Sul, is also demonstrated in Stawinski’s research (1976, p. 27)

The most recent research studies not only help the discussions thanks to new documents, but also offer a more complex understanding of questions related to identity. However, if on the one hand contemporary discussions about ethnicity like “atribuição categorial” categoric attribution (POUTIGNAT and STREIFF-FENART, 1998, p. 142) help us in the interpretation of a phenomenon, on the other hand they put the historian in a uncomfortable position of being the judge of the identity of a person, without being able to ask those to whom the identity is to be attributed. Phenomena like “*ethnic revival*” (GANS, 1996), of descendents of future generations, when given opportunities to demonstrate ethnicity, tend to meet with the research studies. Via new sources or via identity of contemporary expressions through oral history, new research of “being Polish” is made more complex since regional identities, which were once put aside, are now taken into consideration. Neither Germans nor Poles, who came from Pomerania, and settled down in the extreme south of Brazil in the 19th century, are Pomeranians. (WEBER and BOSENBECKER, 2010).

Ruthenians or Ukrainians are denominations given by Guérios (2008) to the immigrants who settled down in Prudentópolis in Paraná in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, coming from Galicja, area of dispute between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Russian Empire. Even though Galicja was a region of Polish immigrants, the group studied by Guérios has embodied signs of a Ukrainian past, such as squares with the statue of the Ukrainian national poet, churches with oriental Catholic rites and Byzantine domes as well as documents written in

Ukrainian. Guérios returns to the question of ethnic separation in classes of the society suggested by historians: while the nobles would speak Polish and professed the Latin rite of the Roman Catholic Church, the dominated groups spoke their mother tongue and were related to the Orthodox Church, which resulted in the classification of those servants as “Ruthenians”. Gardolinski (1956, p. 6, 18), also using a religious criterion, identifies the “Ruthenians” as Poles or “a separate ethnic group”. In summary, the ethnic definition in history, in quantitative terms is rarely possible, since we lack the information which would allow us to quantify.

What makes the job of the historian hard is that he has to deal with an unstable geopolitical picture of the society of origin, as well as the reformulations of identity in the host society. An example of this is Alexandre Fortes’s research (2004) on a working class neighborhood in Porto Alegre during the Vargas Era, which was known for the concentration of Poles and where there was the so-called “Church of the Poles” (NIEVINSKI FILHO, 2002, p. 89). The difficulties of the researcher appear already in his/her choice of a specific term for the subject of studies. Trying to find out how the immigrants saw themselves, Fortes (2004, p. 127) avoids both the identification of the official registries (working as a criterion of nationality, given mainly by the passport) and the exo-attribution of “Pole”, a homogenizing term which would simplify a multi-ethnic picture, whose diversity is hard to understand. If, on the one hand, part of these so-called “Poles” was effectively constituted by real Poles, on the other hand, the registries of two associations (which existed during the 30s and the 40s), composed by Ukrainians and Byelorussians, showed that they included immigrants from Western parts of Galicja and Byelorussia. Those Ukrainians and Byelorussians not only didn’t consider themselves Poles, but also were predisposed to appreciate the Soviet Union, thanks to their working condition and the higher level of autonomy from regions under Russian rule. (FORTES, 2004, p. 156–158).

These contemporary works have, therefore, proven the modern theories of ethnic identity, which say that identity representations are under constant re-elaborations and the characteristics and internal motivations of a group together with their context act as factors of these elaborations.

## 2. INSTITUTIONS, LEADERS AND PUBLICATIONS

This article focuses on academic texts, prepared by descendents of immigrants and, therefore, already not related, at least in the first place, to their own group of origin. However, earlier publications and the institutions where these memory-reports were produced, have influenced the upcoming publications, since they produce a rich source of studies, mainly if the researcher understands the language

in which they are written, and constitute the cultural basis in which lies the work of contemporary scholars. In this sense, the following descriptions are an attempt to place the reader closer to the institutions and publications, based on the presupposition that the emigrated communities, when organizing their members, allowed the projection of leaders and of an intellectual space for descendents of immigrants and the following generations.

Already in the first decades in Rio Grande do Sul, the Poles were responsible for publications directly related to their own group.<sup>4</sup> The oldest Polish almanac was *Kalendarz Polski*, published twice, first in 1896 and then in 1898, by the founders of the first Polish association in Porto Alegre in 1898, “*Zgoda*” (Consent). *Zgoda*’s fusion with two other associations, the *Águia Branca* (White Eagle) and *Tadeusz Kościuszko*<sup>5</sup>, resulted in the foundation of “*Sociedade Polônia*” (Poland Society) in 1931, which is still the main organization of the community in the city. Another institution, *Kultura*, with essentially cultural goals, was founded in 1928 by a free-thinker of “Czech origins, but Polish from will”. A third institution was founded in 1905 as Workers’ Association, *Naprzód* (Forward). It is worth mentioning that Porto Alegre was the headquarters for a kind of a federation of Polish associations, present in the states of Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul. Malczewski (2007), also mentions that in Porto Alegre there were the *Echo Polskie* (Polish Echo) and *Sportowiec* (Sportsman), published by the end of 1920’s, the biweekly journal *Odrodzenie* (Rebirth), the publication *Polonia*, not counting bulletins, edited in the 1930s. In the multi-ethnic context of the city, the first half of the 20th century, the Poles, just like other ethnic groups, announced their festivals in the main periodical of the region, extrapolating, therefore, their own group in terms of acknowledgement. (WEBER, 2008).

The immigrants who arrived to the port city of Rio Grande in 1890 founded, in 1896, the Recreational and Beneficent “*Água Branca*”, and maintained a school until 1924. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, workers in the textile and mechanic sectors arrived in Brazil and were shortly assimilated to the local labor market. The improvements in the economic sector allowed the immigrants to “expand intellectually”, launching in 1905 the periodical *Naprzód*, to be considered the first newspaper published in Polish in Rio Grande do Sul.

In Ijuí, father Cuber was not only the organizer of the Polish chapel and school, but also collaborated in the edition of two newspapers, *Kolonista* (1909–1910) and *Kolonista Polski* (1914–1915). The report allows us to get

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<sup>4</sup> The following information on the cities of Porto Alegre and Rio Grande, were taken from Gardolinski (1956), Wachowicz and Malczewski (2000) and Stawinski (1976).

<sup>5</sup> Tadeusz Kościuszko, who gives his name to several entities of Polish immigrants, was a revolutionary who led the first armed uprising of the Poles against the occupation regime and was exiled by the Russians; in America he was engaged in the struggle for independence of the United States (GARDOLINSKI, 1956, p. 66).

to the information that delegates from Poland arrived in town and boosted the foundation, in 1896, of a cultural association called Tadeusz Kościuszko (CUBER, 1975). Lots of Poles from the region of Ijuí moved to Guarani das Missões, next to the border with Argentina, which is the place father Cuber recommended to all Polish immigrants. In Guarani, a chemistry teacher who arrived in 1916 founded and directed an orchestra and the newspaper *Tygodnik Związkowy*, part of the National Polish Union of South America, which was fighting for the independence of Poland (WACHOWICZ and MALCZEWSKI, 2000, p. 146). From Guarani the Poles emigrated to the *Provincia de Misiones* in Argentina, during the Prestes revolution in the 20s.<sup>6</sup> There have been efforts to articulate the societies of Misiones, Guarani and Ijuí in order to congregate all of these colonies. (GARDOLINSKI, 1956, p. 84). In Guarani, just like in many other places of Polish settlement, churches and associations were named after *Matka Boska z Częstochowy* (the Black Madonna of Częstochowa) whose centre of worship is located at *Jasna Góra*<sup>7</sup>, constituting an ethnic symbol for the sacred issues.

According to reports from elderly Poles gathered by Gardolinski (1956, p. 48), the immigrants who settled down in areas before they were occupied by Italians, in the so called “*região serrana*” (mountain region) did not adapt themselves to the mountainous landscape having been used to plains appropriate for wheat culture and to villages of high population density. The immigrants, whom Gardolinski mentioned as “the refugees”, are part of the group of Poles who have settled in the region of Erechim since the 2<sup>nd</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As it is going to be mentioned shortly, one of the thesis of this paper is that this exodus of the first waves of immigrants to the north of the state influenced the historiography of Polish immigration.

Before analyzing the more academic aspects of the text, is it necessary to mention the first authors who aimed to show the Polish immigration to Rio Grande do Sul as a whole. Gardolinski, who was born in Paraná and settled down in Porto Alegre in 1941, is responsible for the workers village IAPI. In a text from 1956, which is still a reference for research studies on the subject, the author emphasized that he is “neither a historian nor a writer, just a civil engineer”(GARDOLINSKI, 1956, p. 103). On the pages of this long article, we can find some of the interpretations consolidated in the historiography of Polish immigration, like the motivating role of immigration to Brazil, the phenomenon of the so-called “Brazilian immigration fever” of the last decade of the 19th

<sup>6</sup> A migratory farm settled in Misiones from 1897 (PYZIK, 1944, p. 278, 321).

<sup>7</sup> In the *Jasna Góra* Monastery in the city of Częstochowa, there is an image of Our Lady, by an unknown author, which became famous for its miracles. In the year 1656 it was named the “Queen of the Polish Crown” (GARDOLINSKI, 1956, p. 92).

century in Poland. (GARDOLINSKI, 1956, p. 16).<sup>8</sup> Gardolinski, still having a fruitful intellectual activity, passed away in 1974 during the preparations for the celebration of the centennial of Polish immigration in Rio Grande do Sul, which was coordinated by him. Gardolinski is described in the historical report of Stawinski (1976, p. 220) as the great leader of the “Polish colony of Rio Grande do Sul”:

The Mansion of the Eng. Edmundo Gardolinski became a sort of headquarters of the Poles. Although Gardolinski had no official nomination, he was considered an Ambassador, Consul, Delegate of the Polish colony, leader, factotum, center of attraction and irradiation of everything related to the subject: “Polish”.

Also in 1956 an original memoir from Nos Peraus do Rio das Antas was written in Polish by a religious Capuchin João Wonsowski. (WONSOWSKI, 1976). The memoir is about a nucleus of Poles in the current town of Veranópolis and only reached a wider public after 20 years when it was translated and commented by Stawinski.

In 1971 the magazine *Estudos Leopoldenses*, edited by UNISINOS, published the research of Libia Wendling about Polish immigrants who settled in Guarani das Missões. It is a research containing written and oral sources, based on the information about cultural traditions considered to be Polish and almost always defined by words of the Polish language; the research also suggests how to delimit the ethnical borders, mainly because of the growing contact of Polish descendants with other groups of immigrants. These descriptive methods are distant from the contemporary academic papers, since they stay too close to the accounts of the interviewed and it is not clear how the author got much of the information shown.

In the beginning of the 70's, in Curitiba, the *Annals of the Brazilian-Polish Community* were published and mentioned in the *Origins of the Polish Immigration of Rio Grande do Sul*. This solid work by the writer and historian Alberto Stawinski juxtaposes memoirs with analysis, in an academic way, and guided some later researches. The career of Stawinski was always divided between “apostolic and cultural activities”: he had worked as a teacher, school director, and rector in many cities. From 1971 on he held the chair of director of the Historical Institute of Capuchin Friars of Rio Grande do Sul (STAWINSKI, 1976, p. 7).

In comparison to other immigration groups, particularly the Germans and Italians, the academic production of the Polish is much smaller in the state of Paraná, which received considerable waves of Polish immigrants. (OLIVEIRA, 2009). One of the focuses of this article is to analyze the interpretations of this quantitative factor. The pioneer studies of Octávio Ianni (1966), from the

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<sup>8</sup> The term “fever Brazilian immigration” was coined by Polish nationalist intellectuals in the late nineteenth century, according to sources consulted by Wachowicz (1974, p. 112).

sociological trend of USP from the late 50s, and the important researches of Ruy Wachowicz (the first great academic historian of Polish descent) which are a reference for current historians of Polish immigration from Rio Grande do Sul, gave way more recently to new works, developed mainly at the federal University of Paraná. One can realize that Boris Fausto didn't specifically mention Polish immigration in his fundamental work *Fazer a América* (Making of America), where information from Klein (2000, p. 26) is constantly used. Symposia and congresses related to this subject are not only rarer but also more recent. The journal "Projeções", devoted to the Polish-Brazilian studies and published in Curitiba, was first published at the end of the 90s.

In the case of Rio Grande do Sul, the academic production and other studies are from authors native to a region from the latest colonization, Erechim. In this area, an institution of higher education also exists with the initiative of conducting research on Polish immigration, where many scholars work or have worked on the subject, namely the Regional Integrated University of Alto Uruguay and Missões (URI). In Erechim there is also a Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Poland since 1998. Is impossible not to mention the Polish immigration when studying regional histories, like those by Cassol (1979) and Marmilicz (1998); however the first academic research about the pioneers of the colony from the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was elaborated by an exterior researcher in the field of anthropology, when studying the reaction of the farmers to the building of a dam for energy purposes in a Drainage Basin of the Uruguay River, which meant expropriation of lands (LIMA JR, 1996). The oldest academic work from someone of the region was written by Bernardete Popoaski, who defended her PhD thesis in 1998 here, at the Jagiellonian University. The research is in the area of pedagogy about the art of Polish Immigration in Brazil and was not yet translated.

From the beginning of this century, there have been more studies about Polish immigrations, some of them supported by the International Symposium of Polish Ethnology in Brazil, which took place in URI in 2001 (MALCZEWSKI SChr, 2002). Among the most recent publications, two PhD theses are the highlights, one defended at the University of Passo Fundo and the other at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul between 2002 and 2007. The PhD thesis by Isabel Gritti, finished in 2002 at the Pontifical University is a work about immigration, in the traditional meaning of the word with all the characteristics of graduate papers. Following methods which are more familiar to historians, Gritti uses such resources as the criminal records, which so far have been scarcely used in the studies of Polish immigration in the south of the country. Both the thesis and its text have received a strong criticism from Zdzisław Malczewski SChr, who takes into account the fact that Gritti had no provenance in the Polish immigration chain. (GRITTI, 2004, p. 8). The importance of the aspect of fighting



for the “monopoly of scientific authority” (BOURDIEU, 1983, p. 122) is present in Malczewski’s argumentation (2007); for example the author’s observation that the Poles were subject to a prejudice (topic of the thesis), common to all immigration groups – his arguments stimulate reflection.

The dissertation of Thaís Janaina Wenczenovicz focuses on the region of the new colonies established in the region of Erechim, analyzing a specific nucleus, the place of Aurea, which upon emancipating from Gaurama, became a town in 1988, with a population in which the Polish presence is estimated to be of 90% (WENCZENOVICZ, 2002, p. 19). The period of studies is 1910–1945; using oral testimonials, official and religious documents, the author tries to bring back the characteristics related to identity, education, to land possession, and to physical and mental health. In her thesis, Wenczenovicz, keeping the same place and time, suggests “a debate about the causes of disease and death during the process of Polish colonization and immigration in Rio Grande do Sul, analyzing health practices, sickness and their healing, as a subject of interesting historical value”. (WENCZENOVICZ, 2007, p. 15). The thesis, fixed in references of “new story”, uses parochial sources (baptism and death registries), observations, memoirs, tombstones and local historiography. The author describes traditions of rural catholic communities, permeated with traces of Polish culture, like prayers in Polish during the burial. (WENCZENOVICZ, 2007, p. 227).

“Poor cousin of a family which is getting richer” (MAESTRI, 2002, p. 10), “tardiness of the investigations” (WENCZENOVICZ, 2007, p. 17), “shortage of bibliography” (GRITTI, 2004, p. 13), are actual terms in the contemporary historiography of the Polish immigration in Rio Grande do Sul, inevitably compared to the studies of German and Italian immigrations. Such a picture has parallels in the Polish immigration’s own vision which highlights, almost always by comparative observation, the presence of Catholicism<sup>9</sup>, the agricultural vocation<sup>10</sup>, and the importance of the prejudice<sup>11</sup>. Without denying them, there is an attempt to give a different approach, always bearing in mind the inter-ethnic fusions which happened in the south of Brazil.

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<sup>9</sup> To Gardolinski (1956, p. 107), the Poles “intimately linked to their religion, are subject to ecclesiastical authority meekly”. The author attributes a positive bias to this behavior because it predisposes them to receive the action of the clergy. Ruy Wachowicz (1974, p. 136, 164), has a milder vision, highlighting the social role of the Church, both in Europe, where it was one of the institutions that were less influenced by foreign occupation, and among immigrants, resulting in an equation between faith and “Polishness”.

<sup>10</sup> We find in Wachowicz (1974, p. 112, 202) interpretations that became recurring: only the humble part of the population emigrated, formed by farmers (95%) with nationalist consciousness undeveloped.

<sup>11</sup> Since the studies conducted by Ianni in the 1960s, the theme of prejudice against the Poles in southern Brazil received an academic approach, and this subject was the central thesis for Wachowicz (1974) and Gritti (2004).

Firstly it is necessary to observe that, just like common sense, the intellectual vision is impregnated by an over-valorization of the “national”. The process which brought the darkening of regional identities which were typical of the first waves of immigrants is the consequence of the strength of nations in managing identities in contemporary societies. The “representation of the trinity” of European immigration to Rio Grande do Sul (WEBER, 2002), which defends the idea of three great immigration chains, the Germans, the Italians and the Poles, is a picture which is also based on national differentiation and is given, not only by official registries, but also by the outside view of the group of immigrants, and, as any external view, has the tendency of simplifying the complexity. The idea is not to deny that those are the main chains, but to argue against the solidification of this vision, which obscures details and leads to interpretations. Alexandre Fortes (2004, p. 127), produces a detailed work to show the heterogeneity of the Poles, but at the same time embodies the typical vision of “Germans” and “Italians” as homogenous groups.

Because of their influence in the production of historiography, we are now going to analyze: 1) the effects of a late settlement of Poles in certain areas, which delayed the arising of urban entrepreneurs 2) middle class intellectuals of Polish descent; 3) the difficulties of the Polish government in exile to support the emigrated Polish communities and 4) the identity question of Polish-Jews.

### 3. A PERSPECTIVE VISION OF THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF POLISH IMMIGRATION.

The fact that the Poles arrived after other groups of immigrants is strongly emphasized by historiography and should not only take into account the bad quality of lands that were designated to the Poles, but also consider that key-positions in the small local economy, like commercial intermediates or small manufactures were already taken by other groups. Wonsowski (1976, p. 10, 23), one of the first to describe the situation of the Poles who settled in places already occupied by Italians, complained that the Poles stayed in the highlands and the Italians on the river borders thus, allowing them to become commercial intermediates. The agricultural prosperity of the São Marcos colony aroused the interest of the Italians from neighboring places, who settled in *San Marco dei Polacchi* with commercial properties, lumber-mills, and mills (STAWINSKI, 1976, p. 118). The Poles, in a “logical strategy” from the economic point of view, tried to search in re-immigration a way to settle as “landlords” of an area, apart from solving the problem of lack of parcels of land for the numerous children, who were to become adults.

On the other hand, the constant displacements in search for better places, resulted in the march to the north (lively described by Stawinski), since he took part in the “long walk” to the “New Poland”<sup>12</sup> in 1915. Due to these migrations, the formation of urban centers and establishment of enterprises, especially in the industrial sector was delayed. Not only plantations had to be restarted, but also the schools and chapels which were left behind. The account of Singer (1968, p. 159) shows the colonial evolution, it testifies the necessity of overcoming the deforestation phase, as well as agriculture for subsistence in order to finally reach the level of agricultural production good enough for commercialization.

Concerning the industrial settlements it is hard not to compare the Poles to the achievements of the German immigration, which, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, already led to the origins of “industrial dynasties” (SINGER, 1968, p. 165). In the Polish settlements, together with the agricultural activities, there were also manufacturing activities, like in the case of Erechim, where some years after the arrival of immigrants, handicrafters, merchants, and small manufactures, mainly millers, already existed (GARDOLINSKI, 1956, p. 67). Industrial settlements of bigger proportions were rarer to be found.<sup>13</sup> What the German, and in a later moment, Italian examples suggest to us is that the concentration of enterprises with ethnic characteristics either due to the insertion of immigrants who aimed directly at the cities or due to the creation by immigrant descendants of commercial and industrial settlements played an important role in the projection of these ethnic groups.<sup>14</sup> The resourcefulness of Antônio Warpechowski in the extraction of oil from linseed and soybean during the 30s (WENDLING, 1971, p.12) together with the technological contribution of professor Czesław Bieżanko resulted in the first industrialization of soy oil in the region of Missões and constitute an almost isolated example amongst the Poles.

We are not valorizing urban life over the rural one. We are based on the presupposition that the promotion of ethnic identities beyond their own group depends, usually, upon the intellectualized layers of the society. Therefore, if the process of urbanization occupied by Poles was late, compared to that of the Italians and Germans, we can deduce that the appearance of laics or religious intellectuals was also late. In this analysis the term “intellectual” refers to “cultural mediators” responsible for the “consecration of the way of life, social practices and cultural

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<sup>12</sup> New Poland was the name given to the town of Rio do Peixe when he became district Erechim in the 1930s. During the campaign of nationalization, the site received its current name, Carlos Gomes (STAWINSKI, 1976, p. 142).

<sup>13</sup> Gardolinski (1956, p. 109) mentions a plywood factory in Pelotas and a shoe factory in Porto Alegre.

<sup>14</sup> For the Italian case, see the provocative study Cappellin and Giuliani (2010, p. 57), who observe a combination between the market and the alchemical tradition by which assets accumulated by Italians express a dimension of “Italianness”.

values under different layers, like the intellectual, the academical-scientific, the artistic, the political-bureaucratic and the religious” (SEIDL, 2007, p. 78).

The disclosure of images that connect a municipality with a predominant migration chain (a common phenomenon in Rio Grande do Sul), catalyzed in the last decades by touristic interests, depends on the actions of “agents” which are driven according to their own “interests”, thus producing non-neutral actions “because any realization presupposes, necessarily, a set of different interests” (Ortiz, 1983, p. 22). The promotion of settlements to the status of municipality is quite recent. *Áurea* was promoted in 1988 and *Carlos Gomes* in 1992. Even though not all of those who write about these settlements are able to act as community leaders, the publications of dilettante historians as well as academic works have in common the fact of confirming the existence of a certain ethnic group to the hosting society. The mere presence of ethnic intellectuals indicates the formation of a middle class layer of a certain group. Gans (1996, p. 430) affirms that ethnics, particularly Catholics, ascended to the middle class in America and started to be announced by the media and finally got some visibility. The printed culture of academic intellectuals also helped in the development of this visibility. The late presence of intellectuals (journalists, writers and professors) of Polish origin was already pointed out as an explanation for the small written production of this ethnic group. (WEBER, 2009).

According to Isabel Gritti (2004, p. 60, 69), the explanation given by Ruy Wachowicz, about the prejudice against the Pole in relation to the acceleration of urbanization in *Paraná*, does not apply to the case in Rio Grande do Sul, where the sources of a negative approach to the Polish immigrants were the administrators of the social centers. Even though Wachowicz, gives little importance to the role of laic leaderships, the appearance of intellectual groups of laics and clergymen, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, and the opening of the Polish Consulate in *Curitiba* in 1920, started to improve the situation (WACHOWICZ, 1974, p. 208). Based on the theory of ethnicity, what is suggested is that: ethnic labels are always a result of external factors, transmitting a negative picture, and of internal factors, suggestive of a positive outlook (POUTIGNAT and STREIFF-FENART, 1998, p. 147). To contrast with the picture created by colonial managers (urban personalities) there had to be layers interested in spreading positive pictures of the social group to which they belonged.

Gardolinski (1956, p. 11–12), regretted that there were few members of the “intellectual classes” among the Polish immigrants, the great majority being people who came for “bread and better life conditions”. The other explanation given by the author for the lack of publications in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in *Porto Alegre* was that the “literate and enlightened at that time would choose *Paraná*, where the preference was mainly *Curitiba*” (GARDOLINSKI, 1956, p. 101). As mentioned before, between the 40s and the 70s Gardolinski

was the connection between the Polish immigrants and their descendents in Porto Alegre, and considered by them and the host-society as the greatest speaker for this ethnic group. In Pelotas, Bieżanko, along with his wife (an opera singer), were considered “a representative couple thanks to their cultural and social skills” (GARDOLINSKI, 1956, p. 33). There were other Poles who had political positions, like the writer and journalist João Krawczyk, who enlisted as a volunteer to fight for Poland during the Second World War. (WACHOWICZ and MALCZEWSKI, 2000, p. 205).

In a perspective analysis, one should observe some factors that resulted in the extensive bibliographic production about the Italian and German immigrations, which serve as counterpoint to the evaluation of the production about the Poles. Recent studies relate those works to the historiography produced by intellectuals of religious character, interested in keeping influence over their communities of origin. (SEIDL, 2007). Thanks to the important role of the Superior School of Theology São Lourenço de Brindes (EST) and the University of Caxias do Sul studies about Italian immigration were promoted and made public. Even though Polish clergymen had written about the Polish immigrants, their works were not connected to the Polish-Brazilian congregations with resources that allowed the publishing for wider groups, at least not in Rio Grande do Sul in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The situation was the opposite in Paraná, where priests from the São Vicente de Paulo Congregation, who arrived from Cracow in 1903 (WACHOWICZ, 1974, p. 161), founded the Vicentina Publisher and Printer, which has been publishing books about Polish immigration in Paraná and, in the end of the 90s, was responsible for the printing of “Projeções”, a “Journal of Polish Studies”.

In Rio Grande do Sul, EST itself published, during the Centenary of Polish Immigration in Rio Grande do Sul, the collection on Polish Immigration, including books by Stawinski and Wonsowski from 1976 and, posthumously, the book “Schools of Polish colonization in Rio Grande do Sul” by Gardolinski. In 1972, at the University of Caxias do Sul, Gardolinski organized a debate about “Polish immigration and its contribution to the Brazilian Culture” and his discourse was based on “historical documents and facts personally collected and verified” (STAWINSKI, 1976, p. 145).<sup>15</sup> The idea of a recent literary production, by Letícia Wierzchowski, is to give more visibility to the Polish immigration in Rio Grande do Sul, since very little is known about the “third biggest colonization parcel in the south of Brazil” (*apud* WEBER, 2009, p. 38). As we have seen, only recently,

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<sup>15</sup> As in Rio Grande do Sul, during the 1970s, there were events that gathered researchers from German and Italian immigrations, whose conversations were published in “Annals,” so, in Paraná, entities related to “Polish” edited, still in 1970, Proceedings of the first Polish-Brazilian Community.

intellectuals (of Polish descent or not) are trying to turn their interests to the studies of this immigration chain in academic places. Recent studies, however, have the challenge of overcoming the “multicultural” question, avoiding homogenization and always aiming at the complexity of identities, which, in the Polish case, means not to ignore the Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Jews, and Ruthenians.

Summing up, since the beginning of immigration there were intellectuals, no matter if laics or religious, in the waves of Polish immigrants who settled in Rio Grande do Sul. In the interethnic context of the new land their numbers seem to be low, particularly because they have less visibility outside their group. The comparative effort of this article is to explain different outspreads of the emigrated communities, which are self-influential without the necessity of a higher education center. (MAESTRI, 2002, p. 10). Using Bourdieu’s model we can suppose that such investments only appear when there is a group of interested people in a cultural capital, which will later guarantee a dominating position in the field of scientific researches. (ORTIZ, 1983, p. 22).

The influence of the state of origin in the economic promotion and cultural expression of and about the emigrated communities is the third factor analyzed in this topic, and, in this context we have to see what happened with the political representation of a country with its sovereignty in a fragile situation. The events in the recent history of Poland had effects over the emigrated community which, mainly in the first generations, assumed a political position related to the European events.

The well-known three partitions of Poland in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (1772, 1793 and 1795), always solving the diplomatic disarrays of Russia, Prussia and Austria, bequeathed the immigrants not only the problem of losing Polish nationality but also important cultural marks, like the commemorations of the Constitution of May, 3<sup>rd</sup> 1791 (WEBER, 2008, p. 246) and the veneration of Tadeusz Kościuszko, leader of the national and liberal insurrection in 1794, after the second partition. The counter-revolutionary attack practically led to the vanishing of Poland after the third partition. (ANDERSON, 1995, p. 297). In 1918, in the context of the First World War, after the dissolution of the Austrian Empire and the German Revolution, Poland obtained her independence. In 1919 the election of Piłsudski as Chief of State would also be a reference in the memory of the immigrants in the south of Brazil.<sup>16</sup> In 1939, after the invasion of the German army and Soviet army, Poland is once again divided between Germany and Russia, forcing the government to exile, first to France and later to the United Kingdom. After the “liberation” of Poland by Soviet troops, the period of control by URSS began.

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<sup>16</sup> See a relation in the newspaper *Correio do Povo* (10 maio 1951, n. 179, p. 6) on honorary conference in homage to Marechal Piłsudski, held in the promises of the Sociedade Polônia de Porto Alegre Sociedade.

As we have seen, the great waves of immigrants came to Brazil in the 19th century, when Poland was still under foreign domination from the previous century, but the troublesome history of the country in the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought new immigrants to Brazil and changed the Polish-Brazilians. A notable action of these immigrants, written in a historical romance by Leticia Wierzychowski (2006) was their return to Europe to fight for the usurped motherland.<sup>17</sup>

Poland's unstable politics also causes unstable national representation abroad. By the beginning of the II World War, there was a Polish consulate in Porto Alegre, where volunteers would enlist to fight on the Allies' side. By the end of 1945, the state of Rio Grande do Sul received a telegram from the Minister of Foreign Relations stating that "the interests of the Poles were to be entrusted to the Consulate of France" and, in 1949, another telegram informed about the incorporation of the jurisdiction of the states of Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul, Mato Grosso and Parana to the consul in Curitiba.<sup>18</sup> The government in exile in London was a reference for many Polish leaders, like Jan Rain, one of the founders of the society *Kultura* in 1928 and always a defender of Polish independence. (WACHOWICZ and MALCZEWSKI, 2000, p. 316). The Polonia Society sold a property to financially help the Polish government in London (NIEVINSKI FILHO, 2002, p. 90). Despite the symbolical support from the government in exile, for example the medal "Great Cross for Merit" awarded to Helena Lesinski for her campaigns in favor of the Polish immigrants in Porto Alegre, the lack of consular delegates certainly curtailed the emigrated community of an important support.

Another aspect of the loyalty to the government in exile was the denial in recognizing consular agents who represented Poland under Russian manipulation. The Polish institutions which celebrated collectively civil festivals also manifested against the Soviet profile of the new Polish embassy in Brazil. Under the headline "The Poles salute the position of the Brazilian government" it is announced, in 1951, that five associations published a joint manifesto supporting the preventive measurements of the Brazilian government towards the Embassy of Poland, accusing it of obeying orders from Moscow and claiming that the legal government of Poland is in London.<sup>19</sup> The leaders of the local Polish community tried to fulfill the emptiness of the representation of the motherland, but had trouble with the Brazilian bureaucracy. A petition from the Polonia Society to the governor of the state, asking to be allowed to represent the Polish colony in

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<sup>17</sup> Also during the First World War there have been recruitment of volunteers.

<sup>18</sup> "Interesse da Polônia", *Correio do Povo*, 27 nov 1945, n. 48, p. 6; "Cônsul da Polônia", *Correio do Povo*, 1 maio 1949, n.178, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> *People's Post*, 22 July 1951, n. 239, News, p. 5. About the joint commemoration *Mail People's see*, May 6, 1951, n. 176, p. 6.

front of public offices, was answered that the demands should be directed to the Minister of Foreign Relations<sup>20</sup>.

Certainly the difficulties of old leaders of the Polish institutions to be acknowledged by the host society, was one of the factors that opened the way for Gardolinski as a leader of the Poles in Rio Grande do Sul, a “consul” in the words of Stawinski. According to Núñez Seixas (2006, p. 26), the approval of a major society has influence upon the definition of leaderships of adventitious groups. Let us remember that the engineer’s father was an officer in the consulate of Austria, during the times of the partitions of Poland, and Gardolinski got married in 1941 as soon as he arrived, to the niece of the General Consul of Poland in Porto Alegre (STAWINSKI, 1976, p. 219); this means that, on the one hand Gardolinski had close relations with the delegates of the Polish government before the Soviet influence, on the other hand he was born Brazilian.

A secondary aspect of the consular presence, but still valuable in the midst of the intellectualized class, is the possibility of promotion of the intellectuals from immigrant descent, through support of publications and concession of fellowships. The doctorate program of Bernardete Popoaski in the Jagiellonian University in 1998, as part of an exchange program between Brazil and Poland (through the Center of Latino-American Studies of the University of Warsaw; WENCZENOVICZ, 2002, p. 19), is practically the only example amongst scholars from Rio Grande do Sul.

The last factor that we are going to mention is the influence of the Jewish Poles in the identity of the Poles in the south of Brazil. They considered themselves Jews and joined Jewish institutions, helping the expression of this group in Rio Grande do Sul, despite the fact that we lack quantitative data about their role.

The percentage of Jews amongst the Poles in Argentina in the first decades of the 20th century, estimated by Pysik (1944, p. 308) through information obtained by religious confession, is quite high: 45% of the immigrants considered themselves Jews, 20% of Ruthenians of Galicia, 35% of White Russians (confession Greek Catholic and Orthodox). Gardolinski (1956, p. 107) considered that the “great majority” (93%) of the Poles was Catholic, which would indicate a low expression of Jews amongst Poles in the south of the country. Other data, however, may suggest that this percentage could be higher. Between “Poles” or, to be more specific, Ukrainians from the 4th district of Porto Alegre, Jews were the most active in the associations (FORTES, 2004, p. 137).

The foundation of a specific association of Polish Jews, the Poilisher Farband, in 1931 in Porto Alegre, bound to the Central Committee of Polish Jews in Rio de Janeiro EIZIRIK, 1984, p. 57), is a concrete demonstration of the presence of Polish Jews. Many Jews from Erechim, who in 1934 founded the Beneficent

<sup>20</sup> “Cologne Polish”, *People’s Post*, 22 February 1952, n. 120, Various, p. 6.



Jewish Cultural Society of Erechim (EIZIRIK, 1984, p. 117), were Poles. According to data from documents from the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> decade, 46% of the Jewish settlers from the Farm Quatro Irmãos (now the municipalities of Erechim and Getúlio Vargas) (EIZIRIK, 1984, p. 117) were Poles and 36% were Lithuanians (GRITTI, 1997). From the 50s on, one of the Jewish families has initiated the mechanization of farming, thus, starting production (EIZIRIK, 1984, p. 25). Even though they were seen as “Poles” by the majority of the society, these Jews hardly occupied leading positions, which used to be attributed to successful immigrants (NÚÑEZ SEIXAS, 2006, p. 26) of the catholic Polish peasantry of the region. In the end, along decades, the Jews moved to the capital of the state, reinforcing the group of Jews from Porto Alegre.

The creation of the State of Israel in 1948, enabled the Jews and the Polish Jews to receive a diplomatic support, which contrasted with the unstable diplomatic situation of the Poles. The trip of the Ambassador of Israel to Brazil to Porto Alegre in 1952 was widely celebrated, with the presence of delegates of Jewish communities from dozens of cities in Rio Grande do Sul (EIZIRIK, 1984, p. 100).

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Conclusively we can state that: the number of studies and publications about immigration groups depends upon many factors. We have to remember that expressive production is related to the existence of urban classes of the later generations interested in finding their space in the publishing and academic areas. We cannot forget that the absence of a generation gap, breaking with collective identity, recognized, in and outside the group, gives forth a homogeneous aspect. This paper tried to make plain what was produced and in what context. We also suggest that an evaluation in perspective with other ethnic groups with higher expression of the studies of immigration can help in understanding the evolution of formation of identities between descendents of Polish immigrants and the effects of this process on the production of historiography.

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