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THE CURING OF COMPLEXES POLES ON BRAZILIANS, BRAZILIANS ON POLES, UP TO 1939

Towards the end of the 19th century, Brazil became the destination of a mass migration of peasant settlers from the Polish lands. The magnitude of this migration is estimated at around 100,000 up to the First World War; this number was increased by an estimated further 40,000 who emigrated during the inter-war period. The majority of these emigrants settled in the three southern states of Parana, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul.

The appearance of a sizeable mass of emigrants from Poland brought into being a concurrent phenomenon: the moulding of a certain opinion of the Brazilians on the part of the emigrants and *vice versa*. In each country, too, the interest of wider opinion in the other country's problems grew, as did the arising of a number of assessments of that country.¹ Before the birth of this mass emigration, knowledge about Brazil was practically non-existent in Polish society. In Brazil something was known about Poland. Whilst staying in Paris, Pedro I even shouted out "*Vive la Pologne*" when he found himself at the theatre by chance, at a play put on for Polish émigrés from the November Insurrection (the audience reciprocated with a shout of "*Vive l'Empereur du Brésil*").² However, the knowledge was rather

¹ The current article is based on my works, *Polonia brazylijska* [The Polish Colony in Brazil] (LSW, Warszawa 1981), and *Ameryka Łacińska w relacjach Polaków. Antologia* [Latin America in Accounts Given by Poles. An Anthology] (Interpress, Warszawa 1982), and on a collective work under my editorship, *Dzieje Polonii w Ameryce Łacińskiej* [A History of Polish Emigrants in Latin America] (Wrocław 1983).

² R. Bender, *Ksiądz Karol Mikoszewski (X. Syxtus), 1832 - 1886, członek Rządu Tymczasowego Narodowego 1863, emigrant, zesłaniec* [Father Karol Mikoszewski (X. Syxtus), 1832 - 1886, Member of the National Provisional Government, 1863, Emigré, Exile], ODiSS, Warszawa 1982, p. 127.

that of the Polish question, as being one of the questions vital for 19th-century Europe — with which knowledge Brazil was well supplied — than that of Poland herself. There is no need to add that even this knowledge about the Polish question was shared by a quite minute section of Brazilian society. On the other hand, it is worth noting that in the circles where it did exist, it rendered the Brazilians rather favourably disposed towards the Poles — as a heroic nation ill-treated by Fate and fighting for freedom. Consequently Brazil took up a very firm position in the international arena on the question of Poland's independence. The distinguished Brazilian statesman Rui Barbosa spoke in these terms at a conference in The Hague in 1907. Replying to the Pope's peace proposal in November, 1917, the Brazilian government pointed to the need for the restoration of an independent Poland as one of the conditions for world peace. In August, 1918 the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nilo Peçanha, informed the French Envoy in Rio de Janeiro that Brazil would recognize an independent Poland. He emphasized that in taking up such a position, the Brazilian government was acting "not with a view to the conventional establishment of yet another new state, arising as a result of the treaties and great wars of Europe, in consequence of the convolutions of the politics of the great powers," but was declaring itself in favour of "the restoration of an oppressed nation, which, often undermining foreign rule with the blood of its heroes, had never relinquished its sovereign power." ³

The peasant emigrants who arrived in Brazil from the Polish lands towards the end of the 19th century were characterized by a dual attitude towards the new country. In the letters which they wrote to their families remaining overseas, it is difficult to miss the echoes of rapture:

³ Nilo Peçanha to Paul Claudel, 17.08.1918, Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (hereafter, AAN), *Akta Janiny i Kazimierza Warchałowskich* [*Janina Warchałowska and Kazimierz Warchałowski files*], binder 38, p. 13.

"Now as to the harvests [...] South America is the richest country in the world in harvests, for even on the rock enormous castuses grow, and along the roads enormous oleander and orange trees grow, not to mention the gardens and what grows in them, for the most delicate fruits and flowers which will not grow in pots at home grow everywhere here;"

"And the beetles are of various sorts, there's some, when they flies of an evening they shines so, like electric was lighted up, they's very beautiful;"

"I'm telling you that you's none of you never in all Europe seen such tree as we got in our colony, it's even a shame to be cutting down such beautiful trees;"

"people here is very good, decent and obliging, the black people the same, the local goverment's very good and keeps the order." ⁴

One can quote many such utterances, testifying to admiration of the natural surroundings and respect for the people. But of course this was not the only attitude.

The newly arrived peasants were shocked by the primitive state of Brazilian agriculture in the districts they came to. "And we was travelling so many days, but that we saw nothing in the way of plough-land, only they have these little huts and plants themselves a bit of maize and a bit of water mellons and lives like animals," wrote one of the emigrants.⁵ "They don't do much, just rears a fair number of mules, horses, and cattle and pigs, for they don't have nothing to do thereby, they can graze themselves;" "they rears plenty of horses and mules and cow and pigs, as these live off the fields," wrote others.⁶ As the peasants rated the land as being exceptionally fertile, the negative impression was that much greater. In these circumstances, accustomed as the Polish peasants were to utilizing every scrap of land, and to the fact that working the soil was

⁴ *Listy emigrantów z Brazylii i Stanów Zjednoczonych. 1890-1891* [Emigrant Letters from Brazil and the United States, 1890-1891], ed. W. Kula, N. Assorodobraj-Kula, M. Kula, Warszawa 1973 (letters 27, 51, 65, 68).

⁵ *Listy emigrantów...*, letter 77.

⁶ *Ibidem*, letters 68, 74.

a duty arising from the very nature of things, the Brazilians appeared to them to be squandering God's gifts.

The well-known Polish politician Roman Dmowski, of nationalist tendencies, who visited Brazil in 1900, noted that "The standard of living of the Brazilians with whom our settler comes into contact is too low to be very impressive, on the contrary, it generally provokes scorn and derision."⁷ The peasant settlers did not have much chance of seeing that the whole of Brazil was not made up of forest backwoods, that even at that time São Paulo was a great industrial centre just then developing, or that the coffee-producing states of Brazil were going through a period of flowering prosperity just at that time.

With such an approach it is not surprising that the peasants saw themselves as something superior, as people who, in contrast to the locals, did not "live like animals." Not realizing that they were a tool in the hands of Brazilian groups aiming at the development and modernization of the country, they lived in the conviction that they were the givers, bringing under cultivation the land whither Fate had cast them.

The few intellectuals to be found amongst the Polish ethnic group shared the attitude of the mass of settlers. Even those of them who could hardly be said to belong to the nationalist trend maintained, for instance, that "if Brazil [...] possesses anything, she owes this entirely to the foreigners who contribute their energy, labour and capital",⁸ or that in the country in question "all the productive work, from tilling the land, to the factories and the railroads, is carried out exclusively by Europeans — Poles, Germans, Italians and so on".⁹

Against this background a legend began to spring up of the civilizing mission of the Polish farmer in Brazil. In a version

⁷ R. Dmowski, *Z Parany [From Parana]*, "Przegląd Wszechpolski", 1900, Nos. 2, 3, 6.

⁸ Witold Stanisław Zongolłowicz [Błażej Stanisław Czarniecki] *Polityka wewnętrzna Brazylii [Brazil's Home Policy]*, undated (1915-1928), Central Archives of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, Warsaw (hereafter, CA), *akta W. S. Zongolłowicza [W. S. Zongolłowicz Files]*, binder 328/8, p. 36.

⁹ J. Hempel, *Tomek. Opowiadanie z życia osadników polskich w Paranie [Tomek. A Tale from the Life of Polish Settlers in Parana]* "Kurier", 2-4 July, 1909.

from one of the peasant's letters from the early stages of Polish settlement, this was expressed in the words "when we begins to work then everything'll be otherwise".¹⁰ In the formulation of an intellectual from 1933, it was expressed in a fuller-blown, certainly, but, at bottom, similar text: "Whilst in the United States the Anglo-Saxons lash out at us with their urban culture and deprive us of our national character, in the south of the continent the mission of cultural hegemony belongs to the settler, and the natives acknowledge this fact. We brought the plough and the scythe here, and the ability to bake bread and build houses, we left a trail in the shape of carriageways and railroads, the growth of whole states rested on our shoulders."¹¹

In the inter-war period the attitude of the Polish community recounted was backed up by Polish institutions interested in emigration problems; like the entire state administration of that time, these institutions existed in an atmosphere of dreams of power. The director of the Polish Emigration Office, B. Gili-czyński, stated *expressis verbis* that the emigrant should be aware of the fact that the Brazilian government "has a lot to be grateful to him for."¹²

The logical corollary of the legend of the civilizing mission of the Polish settler in Brazil was bound to be the conviction that the "natives" were inferior. "The local inhabitants — native Brazilians (*caboclos*), creoles and mulattos — are a racially, culturally and economically inferior element," wrote, in 1933, the Polish emigrant figure whose words have already been quoted in the context of the actual creation of the said legend.¹³ Towards the end of the inter-war period the Consul-General of the Polish Republic in Curitiba made it known that the immigrants were in no hurry to adopt the Portuguese culture and language, as they felt that "this would bring about their degrada-

¹⁰ *Listy emigrantów...*, letter 77.

¹¹ Letter of P. N., one of the leading emigrant figures, to Jozef Pilsudski, 10 March, 1933, AAN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs group (hereafter, MSZ), binder 10982, p. 150.

¹² Record No. 4 from a meeting of the Commission for Establishing the Principles of Colonization and Settlement, held at the Emigration Office, 4. Oct., 1928, AAN, MSZ, 9890, p. 80.

¹³ Cf. note 11.

tion economically and in respect of their civilization.”¹⁴ Even as late as this cases were noted where children had not been sent to learn Portuguese on the grounds that it was not desirable “to have savages in the home.”¹⁵ “Savages” — this is something extremely characteristic — is what the settlers called the native population.¹⁶

In one of his reports the Consul-General referred to above quoted a symptomatic little episode. During a trip through the state of Santa Catarina he came to one of the settlements, the inhabitants of which, third generation immigrants, kept up pure Polish speech and a sense of Polish national identity. In the local store, he entered into conversation with a young, fifteen-year-old assistant, who spoke good Polish. At one point another boy came into the store. “When I asked the young assistant,” writes the Consul, “if the other boy was also a Pole, he scornfully replied: ‘Of course not, that’s a savage!’ ”¹⁷

The Polish outposts operating on Brazilian territory backed up the attitude of the emigrants even in this sort of context. The Consul described the little scene witnessed in the store with approbation; he remarked approvingly the prevalence amongst the Polish emigrants of “attachment to their mother tongue, and national pride, which emerged in the fact that they regarded themselves as something superior to the natives.”¹⁸ In the reports of Polish representatives references occur to the “actual inferiority, both intellectual and economic, of the indigenously Brazilian element,”¹⁹ or to the “idle and degenerate *caboclos*.”²⁰ Polish

¹⁴ Józef Gieburowski to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 30 Jan., 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10026, p. 5.

¹⁵ Bohdan Teofil Lepecki to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 29 Nov. 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10387, p. 43.

¹⁶ A play on words. In Polish the noun “dzik” (wild boar) is related to the adjective “dziki” (wild, savage), equally applied to people in a figurative sense.

¹⁷ J. Gieburowski to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 Oct., 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10381, p. 115.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ Tadeusz Skowroński to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 11 May, 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10382, p. 29.

²⁰ B. T. Lepecki to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 Oct., 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10387, p. 80.

diplomatic circles allowed themselves to act towards Brazil in a way which they would not have dared to act in towards a country which they regarded as an equal. Polish envoys in Brazil did not hesitate to conduct activity which can only be termed an attempt to incite irredentism. Here, on the border with Argentina and Paraguay, the lesser, but often influential officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw dreamed up the organization of a concentrated area of Polish settlement, which could act as a bridge between the Polish settlements in the southern states of Brazil and the Argentinian Misiones, and in the future would provide the opportunity at least of "exerting a certain influence on economic and even political relations" in all three states.²¹

But despite everything which has been said above, one still gets the impression that neither the economic primitiveness of the Polish settlement areas, nor the activities of Polish official agencies fully explains the attitude of the emigrants as presented. One's attention is caught by the fact that the latter's superciliousness towards the Brazilians went hand in hand with actual inferiority. This was expressed in an interesting way by one of the authors amongst the emigrants: "One of our obsessions is ranting about what the Polish farmers have done for Parana, for Brazil. Without question they gave proof of their tenacity, having immersed themselves in the tropical forest, where they tore off tracts of plough-land from wild nature, and endure on them by virtue of invincible doggedness and superhuman industry. But let us take a look at how our famous farming really appears. Can one see in it the progress dictated by science? Do we compare with our fellow-citizens of German, Italian or French descent? Year in, year out, fire destroys tracts of forest, the mine of national wealth. Dismally lean spikes of corn away in the fields, and a crowd of our children, transformed into beasts of burden, pummel the parched soil with hoes [...]"²²

The supercilious Polish emigrants did not register too highly

²¹ From a record of the Consular Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21 Jan., 1935, AAN, MSZ, 9577, p. 161.

²² J. C e h a, *Więcej autokrytycyzmu!* [*More Self-Criticism!*], "Gazeta Polska w Brazylji", 10 March, 1935.

on the prestige scale in the Brazil of those days. In 1900, according to Dmowski, "dirty, tattered, submissive, grovelling to the first swindler who came along, choosing to push and shove, beat and cripple with impunity, to the half-savage *caboclos*, full however of the cavalryman's bravado, they were creatures infinitely lower than themselves."²³ During the inter-war period a Pole to the Brazilians was still a "poor emigrant, with minimal demands, allowing himself to be endlessly exploited at work."²⁴ Observers remarked that in the face of the prevailing stereotype of the emigrant Pole treated with contempt, it was difficult for Brazilians who knew the names of the great Poles from history to comprehend that they belonged to the same nation. It was the same when they came across an educated Pole.²⁵ At the beginning of the century there even prevailed the epithet *Polaco burro* — Pole ass.²⁶

In the situation outlined, it is intriguing to ponder the question of whether the "soaring presumption" on the part of the Polish emigrant community (as one of the emigrants described the phenomenon) was in fact presumption — or whether perhaps it was not rather the opposite: compensation for inferiority, an unconscious off-loading of complexes. The more intelligent emigrants realized that superciliousness towards the Brazilians and the dissociation from them which went with it would lead nowhere, and might even be harmful. The policy article of the periodical "Nasze życie" [Our Life], founded in 1922 and aiming to be a platform for the Polish intelligentsia in Brazil, proclaimed that "One can love this land with all one's heart, for our life has been put into it — the blood, pain, sweat and toil of tens of thousands of Polish emigrants; finally she is already feeding and

²³ R. Dmowski, *op. cit.*

²⁴ M. Swirski, *Polacy w Sao Paulo* [The Poles in São Paulo] 30 April, 1929, AAN, MSZ, 10372, p. 29.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, and R. Dmowski, *op. cit.*

²⁶ Cf. W. Wierzbowski, *Ruch niepodległościowy wśród Kolonii Polskiej w Brazylii od roku 1914 do 1920* [The Independence Movement amongst the Polish Colony in Brazil from 1914 to 1920], 1 Feb., 1933 AAN, J. K. Warchałowscy filles, 33, p. 2. An attempt to systematically trace elements of the genesis of the negative stereotype of the Pole in Latin America has been made by K. Smolana, *Sobre a gênese do estereotipo do Polonês na América Latina (caso brasileiro)*, "Estudios Latinoamericanos", vol. V, 1979, pp. 43 - 68.

raising the third Polish generation. There can be absolutely no question of spiritual conflict between her and the Pole who lives here.”²⁷ The Brazilianization of the Polish youth gradually made progress, despite all kinds of psychological resistance from their environment. An emigrant poet even included the following stanza in one of his epigrams:²⁸

<p><i>Kawaler, aby zadać ton, Polskości wyzbywa się on, Ojczysty język ani zna, Aż ha, aż ha</i></p>	<p>Just to add some colour the cavalier throws his Polishness overboard and doesn't even know his mother tongue, it's really such a joke</p>
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An observer who in 1938 took part in a course organized for the activists of the emigrants' youth organization in Marechal Mallet, i.e. in a settlement with an active Polish life, found “total lack of acquaintance with the Polish language amongst many of the participants”²⁹ — and after all she was dealing with the more active of the emigrants. There also appeared within the colony — especially amongst youth circles, interestingly enough — declarations *expressis verbis* calling for co-operation with the Brazilians. At the 2nd Regional Council of the Central Union of Poles in Brazil (1932), the words were heard, “So that we should not be concerned with brushing them [the Brazilians — M.K.] aside, but quite the contrary, we should be intent on co-operating with them.” The speaker maintained that if the emigrants were to enter into co-operation with them, the Brazilians would like-wise “respect” them.³⁰

However, things took a different course. It was not formulations like this last one which were primarily to be heard amongst

²⁷ “Nasze życie”, 7 Sept., 1922 (article written by Stefan Szumowski).

²⁸ W. S. Zongolłowicz, *Parańskie Polki takie są [That's the Way the Parana Polish Girls Are]*, CA, W. S. Zongolłowicz files, 328/9, p. 57.

²⁹ Report of Cecylia Kuncewiczowa, 21 Feb., 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10611, p. 53.

³⁰ Statement by Piotr Flenik, leader of Youth Section, Central Union of Poles in Brazil (AAN, World-Wide Union of Poles from Abroad Group, binder 131, p. 74).

the emigrants — and Brazilian reaction was not long in the coming either. This time the emigrants were regarded as something inferior, or, *tout court*, bad.

In 1938 all the newspapers carried a charge of political conspiracy on the part of foreigners, the creation by them of a state within a state, and the cultivation of national distinctions. The press carried slogans to the effect that Brazil should “belong to the Brazilians and to them alone”³¹ and that Brazil should be “made Brazilian.”³² The catch-phrase “We are the bosses in our own country”³³ was accompanied by the contention that “Visitors are enemies.”³⁴

Of course, the attack was directed not only, and perhaps not even chiefly against the Polish emigrants, but they too were caught in the middle of it. The Polish state also found itself under fire — which was all the more distinctive in that the structural similarities between the system built up by Brazil's President, Getulio Vargas, and the system created by Józef Piłsudski in Poland appeared to conduce rather to the closing of ties, which in any case had hitherto been good on the whole.

A number of complaints were raised against the immigrants and their mother countries. They included the fact that the immigrants clung to their own nationalities, and did not want to become Brazilians. “It would indeed be an absurdity if all citizens of foreign descent commenced to cultivate a feeling for their ancestors' mother country — the Portuguese-Brazilians for Portugal, the German-Brazilians for Germany, the Italian-Brazilians for Italy, the Polish-Brazilians for Poland, and so on. We should come at last to the comical and insupportable state of affairs whereby no-one would any longer care about Brazil.

³¹ “Gazeta do Povo”, 20 April, 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10026, p. 124.

³² “Diario dos Campos”, 16 May 1939, AAN, MSZ, 9939, p. 18.

³³ T. Skowroński to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, AAN, MSZ, 10382

p. 29.

³⁴ “Gazeta do Povo”, 12 Jan., 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10610, p. 85.

with the exception of our poor Indians. We would be left with no other choice than to pack our bags and take ourselves off, returning the land to its original inhabitants, or else to divide it up in such a way that each national grouping would occupy its own section under the rule of the European nations. This kind of absurdity in itself goes to show that we could no longer tolerate malicious foreign influences in our homeland.”³⁵ The complaint was raised that “the majority of the children, and even the grandchildren, of Poles, born and brought up here, who ought to be proud of their Brazilianness, cannot speak Portuguese, and if you ask them — one of these descendants from the Poles — who he is, he will say at once — from ignorance rather than ill will — ‘I’m a Pole.’”³⁶ Brazilian nationalist circles were convinced that these children were brought up with a sense of allegiance to the country of their forefathers.

Institutions of emigrant life facilitating the preservation of national distinctions for the newcomers and their children came to be regarded as something thoroughly evil. The use by immigrant circles of their own national symbols, foreign-language publications, schools using a foreign language for instruction, and the churches maintained by the immigrants all came under attack. An earnest journalist from a provincial newspaper exclaimed, “Do not tell me that a Pole, a German or a Ukrainian cannot recite the Lord’s Prayer or Hail Mary in Portuguese, for everyone can bring himself to do this. Guided by religious fervour, they can learn to pray in Portuguese in the same way as they learnt the language from the need to acquire money, from the need to sell their hens, onions or manioc.”³⁷ Another journalist called for the children to be taught Portuguese so that they would be capable “of describing in good Portuguese language the beauty and abundance of this beloved land, worthy of the warmest affection.”³⁸

An attack was directed against the family, as the institution of immigrant life least subject to the control of the Brazilian

³⁵ “Gazeta do Povo”, 17 April, 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10026, p. 123.

³⁶ “O Estado”, 12 Jan., 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10610, p. 80.

³⁷ “Diario dos Campos”, 16 May, 1939, AAN MSZ, 9939, p. 19.

³⁸ “Gazeta do Povo”, 3 March, 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10381, p. 20.

state authorities. Organizations founded by immigrants were attacked. Needless to say, all forms of direct contact between immigrant circles and their mother countries were criticized, as was the policy of the authorities out there (including the Polish authorities), set on inciting irredentism and often directly expansionist towards Brazil.

Shortly after the attack described, there followed the publication of legal regulations, on the face of it aimed at accelerating the assimilation of immigrants, but in practice essentially at suppressing various forms of their independent life (their own organizations, press, educational system and so on).

The attack on immigrants, the corner-stone of which was painting them in black, had various underlying reasons. The attitude of the interested parties themselves provided a pretext rather than representing the actual cause. A reaction against far-reaching segregation on the part of immigrants was bound to occur in one form or another at some time in each case; it is difficult, for instance, to imagine a modern state renouncing long-term control over its educational system, especially a state which has received a vast number of newcomers. To some degree the attack against immigrants was explained by anxieties about the rôle they could play in the politics of the expansionist states: taking into account the all too recent European experiences of the time, this anxiety was not without foundation, and it is worth remembering that right up until the eve of the Second World War, when she unequivocally cooled relations with Germany, Poland was perceived as one of the aforesaid states.

To some degree the attack against the segregation of immigrant concentrations was explained by the internal logic of the political system (the "New State") built up by Vargas, which presupposed the linking of the citizens directly with the state — the only organization for assembling an atomized and patterned community. Again, to some degree the attack performed the function of a tool for unifying the nation (from which, of course, those under attack were excluded) — in the same way as anti-Semitism in European fascism. Lastly it satisfied the nationalist inclinations of broad groupings, strongly aroused at the time throughout Latin America in the context of the Great Depression.

And when all is said and done the violence of the attack suggests not only a function in respect of modernization, politics, or as a tool; it points to tremendous emotional commitment on the part of the attackers. Where did this strength of emotion come from?

We are not in a position to give the answer in full. For that matter it is difficult to give such an answer in the case of other manifestations of ethnic antagonisms, too, and in each case the answer would be a little different no doubt. In the concrete campaign here being analyzed, however, we would be inclined to seek the key to the answer in one of its threads: a reaction of irritation to the supercilious attitude of the immigrants.

"it is difficult for us to comprehend," wrote one of the newspapers, "why the descendants of foreigners, born here, should not have felt proud of their Brazilianness, and as such did not want to participate in working towards the building of a great Brazil. It should have to be regarded as a crime if citizens of foreign descent were to look down on Brazilian nationality, displacing it in Brazil with the nationality of their ancestors."³⁹

"They cut themselves off from us with a barrier of racial prejudice such as we have never contemplated. Living amongst us and staying in our company, they have avoided entering into blood relations of any kind with our people, as if our ethnic structure was something offensive to them," railed another.⁴⁰

The Brazilian press upbraided the Japanese emigrants for not marrying Brazilian women.⁴¹ Details were quoted of the existence in Parana of German publications, in which Brazil was called a backward country, and a country of Negroes and wild Indians, and the Brazilians a dirty, insignificant, base, ignorant, lazy and scurvy people.⁴² The Brazilian Consul in Warsaw, de Magalhaes, alleged with indignation that during the 2nd Congress of Poles from Abroad, which was held in Warsaw in 1934, one of the Polish personages speaking defined "the Brazilians

³⁹ "Gazeta do Povo", 3 March, 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10381, p. 19.

⁴⁰ "Gazeta do Povo", 10 April, 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10026, pp. 92 - 94.

⁴¹ "Folha da Noite", 14 March, 1939, AAN, MSZ, 9641, not paginated.

⁴² "Diario da Noite", 23 May, 1939, AAN, MSZ, 10015, p. 19.

as Negro barbarians, and Brazil as a country in which the Poles, with the help of internal disturbances, could gain themselves complete independence.”⁴³ In pronouncements against clergy of foreign origin in Brazil, characteristic reasoning was employed: “We do not need to be catechized, like wild peoples, by foreign missionaries.”⁴⁴

The groups which were aiming at the modernization of Brazil towards the end of the 19th century attracted immigrants from Europe. In the settling of empty portions of the country by European peasants they saw one of the means of making it like Europe, in which they perceived the essence of modernization. Of course, they were primarily after the arrival of immigrants from the respectable countries of western Europe; when this did not come off, the peasants from the Polish lands were promoted to the rank of Europeans. Anyone from overseas was better than the labour which could, of course, be equally well drawn from the north-east of Brazil.

For half a century the successors to these groups could not forgive the immigrants that they did not respect the Brazilians. The complex in respect of Europe continued. The nationalist campaign at the end of the thirties in its own way offloaded this complex — accomplishing this task as one of various objectives which it realized *de facto*, partly irrespective of the intentions of its propagators. And just as the complex in respect of Europe had impeded the Brazilian élite in perceiving the qualities of their own nationals from other regions of the country at the end of the 19th century, so towards the close of the thirties it falsified the image of the immigrants from Europe. For when all is said and done, even if there was an element of truth in the accusations laid at their door, the image built on the foundation of those accusations was certainly exaggerated and unjustly generalized.

⁴³ Record taken down of Z.M. on the issue of the position adopted by the Brazilian Consul, de Magalhaes, 19 Aug., 1934, AAN, MSZ, 9857, p. 109.

⁴⁴ Quoted after T. Skowroński to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 Dec. 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10387, p. 74.

Delegates of Polish settlers, peasants from the deep interior, could explain to the Brazilian state authorities in Curitiba, in a memorial lodged with them, that "they had always been true and loyal citizens of this country, ready to shed blood in time of need in defence of her integrity and independence." They might justifiably argue that when their ancestors arrived in Parana "they found here an almost uninhabited country," that "impenetrable forests stretched everywhere, and there was an absence of roads and the most elementary conditions of safety," that "the Polish settlers conquered the virgin forest on their own, with practically no help at all, transforming it into a land flowing with milk and honey," and finally that many of them perished in this struggle.⁴⁵

The Polish ambassador might reject as well as he could the opinion that "certain circles had far-reaching plans with regard to Polish political expansion in the southern states of Brazil, and were even putting forward the concept of the armed capture of Parana — as if it was a colonial territory in Africa for instance."⁴⁶ The Polish state might fall in 1939, thus providing the final proof, surely, that there was a lack of real potential for realizing such dreams, which in any case had never been examined at the higher decision-making levels.

However, in response to each and every explanation, the activists of Polish organizations interrogated by the police heard the words, "You all pretend to be little angels who don't do anything wrong and don't know anything."⁴⁷ Brazil's suspiciousness of the Polish state was also felt by the emissaries of the Polish émigré government when they arrived for the purpose of carrying out recruitment amongst the emigrants for the Polish Armed Forces in the West. One of them reported to London: "At the present time it is of no use at all to explain that these

⁴⁵ J. Gieburowski to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28 Oct., 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10381, p. 91.

⁴⁶ The words of the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs; T. Skowroński to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1 June, 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10384, not paginated.

⁴⁷ Report of the interrogation of J.S.K., engineer, by military and police authorities in Curitiba, 10 May, 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10384, not paginated.

things were not after all serious, that they were done without the knowledge of the Legation and so on. Everywhere, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Parana voivode (interventor), right down to the starostas, we come up against distrust and suspicions: "The Poles were organizing the cutting-off of part of the country from Brazil [...], before the war they wanted to cut off part of Brazil from that country and make a Polish colony out of Parana".⁴⁸

As far as the Brazilians were concerned no arguments were of any use, for at least in part it was not arguments which counted in this affair. Frustrations and complexes played some part. The latter induced the Brazilian élite, frustrated on account of the inferiority of the country, which they wanted to see as powerful, to call upon the school youth and public assembled at a ceremony held in April, 1938 in honour of the hero of Brazilian independence, Tiradentes — including immigrants and their descendants — to swear the following oath: "Brazil, great Brazil, my beloved homeland, I believe in Your noble destiny and swear to carry out the nationalization⁴⁹ campaign with zeal — for Your greatness and sovereignty."⁵⁰

But what conclusion comes out of all this? A fairly banal one. Namely that the perception of reality within the function of complexes of each of two sides is not conducive to the building up of a truthful image of the other side.

(Translated by Phillip G. Smith)

⁴⁸ Quoted after R. Stęplowski, *Rekrutacja w Brazylii do oddziałów Sikorskiego* [Recruitment in Brazil for Sikorski's Detachments], "Przegląd Polonijny", 1976, 1, p. 75.

⁴⁹ A term from the period, occurring habitually in the sources for designation of the activities discussed, aimed at eliminating segregation of immigrant groups. In modern parlance one could use the term "nationality campaign" or "nationalist campaign," depending on the aspect of the campaign as a whole which is being considered and on one's emotional attitude towards the latter.

⁵⁰ B. T. Lepecki to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 April, 1938, AAN, MSZ, 10026, p. 92.