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Experiences and prospects of the cultural assimilation of the immigrants in Brazil

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Summary

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part studies the role played by immigrants in the southern region where, for the reasons mentioned, they settled preferably.

The second part examines the assimilation of immigrants and their conformity to the Portuguese foundation of Brazil's cultural pattern. Since the XIXth century there appeared among the immigrants people of high cultural value who settled foremost in the southern region of the country. No immigration plan existed, especially no measures were taken for their assimilation. This development has given this region peculiar characteristics. When the immigrants settle in compact groups assimilation will be a long process but if they are separated and find themselves in daily contact with Brazilians their assimilation will be shortened. The origin of immigration groups, that is the country in which they were born, the country from which they emigrate, their profession, religion and social conditions, also influence the process of assimilation. The cultural relations between immigrants and the Brazilian people cannot be viewed from a single point of view, for they present many-sided aspects, including the mutual cultural exchange between the different immigration groups.

The third part deals with the number of immigrants as enumerated in the census of 1950, and describes the flow of immigration in recent times. The two latest agreements about immigration concluded by the Government of Brazil are also studied, pointing out the present prospects for immigration in Brazil, which country, in line with its tradition, is always ready to receive additional immigrants?

* General distribution of this document is limited to the introductory summary. Participants who have been invited to take part in the meeting referred to above will receive also the full text of the paper. Other participants in the Conference will receive the full text upon request.

Pour la traduction française voir au verso.

Perspectives d'assimilation culturelle des immigrants au Brésil et expérience
acquise dans ce domaine

par Manuel Diégues Junior (Brésil)

Résumé. Ce document comprend trois parties; la première traite du rôle joué par les immigrants dans la région méridionale où ils se sont établis de préférence, pour les raisons indiquées plus bas.

La seconde partie est consacrée à l'examen de l'assimilation des immigrants et à leur adaptation aux traditions culturelles brésiliennes, dont le fondement est portugais. Depuis le XIX^e siècle on trouvait, parmi les immigrants, des éléments d'un niveau culturel élevé; la plupart se sont fixés dans le sud du pays. L'immigration ne s'est pas faite suivant un plan préétabli et aucune disposition n'avait été prise pour l'assimilation des nouveaux venus. Cette évolution a valu à cette région un caractère particulier. Lorsque les immigrants s'installent en groupes compacts, le processus d'assimilation est lent, tandis que ceux d'entre eux qui se trouvent dispersés et en contact quotidien avec les Brésiliens s'assimilent plus rapidement. Le processus d'assimilation se trouve également influencé par l'origine des groupes d'immigrés, - c'est-à-dire le pays où ils sont nés, le pays qu'ils ont quitté pour émigrer, leur profession, leur milieu social et leur religion. Le problème des relations culturelles entre les immigrants et la population brésilienne demande à être examiné à plus d'un point de vue, car il présente des aspects multiples, comme, par exemple, l'influence réciproque entre les divers groupes d'immigrants.

La troisième partie, qui a trait aux données numériques sur l'immigration fournies par le recensement de 1950, décrit aussi l'afflux d'immigrants au cours des dernières années. Les deux accords les plus récents que le Gouvernement brésilien a conclus en matière d'immigration sont enfin examinés; l'auteur souligne les débouchés qu'offre actuellement le Brésil aux candidats à l'immigration. Ce pays, conformément à ses traditions, est toujours prêt à accueillir de nouveaux venus.

^x Seule, la présente analyse d'introduction fait l'objet d'une distribution générale. Les participants qui ont été invités à assister à la séance mentionnée ci-dessus recevront en outre le texte intégral du document. Les autres participants au Congrès recevront le texte intégral sur leur demande.

EXPERIENCES AND PROSPECTS OF THE CULTURAL ASSIMILATION OF THE IMMIGRANTS IN BRAZIL

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Manuel Diégues Junior

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1 - Participation of the immigrant in the peopling of the South of Brazil. Causes of the preference given to the Southern regions. 2 - Portuguese base of the Brazilian formation. Absence of immigration plans. Characteristics of the process of cultural relations. Historical and geographical aspects of this process. Origin of the immigrant group and its influence. Present contacts conditions amongst groups. 3 - Foreigners present in Brazil. Rhythm of immigration in the last years. Agreements of immigration and its tendencies. Present immigration perspectives.

For making a study of the history of immigration in Brazil, one aspect of expressive signification immediately stands out, in the way of how the human peopling of the southern region was carried out: the participation of Germans and Italians and partly of Poles in the peopling this part of the country. Immigrants were present in the peopling of the territories of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina. Large areas were explored, cultivated, developed and riches were built up. They gave to these parts of Brazil the cultural traces they brought from their homelands.

In this way, from the historical point of view, it is evident that the participation of the immigrant was of great importance in the process of demographic, social and cultural formation of meridional region of Brazil. In certain areas of Espírito Santo the same occurred. And, it is also to be found in São Paulo, Italians, Spaniards, and recently Japanese, Syrians and Lebanese, collaborating in the development of the respective economic activities, chiefly the two first groups, in supporting the coffee production when Slavery was abolished in 1888.

It is exactly the southern regions of the country that the immigrants have gone to, in the greatest number. The four States therein included (São Paulo, Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul) and the Federal District as well show 967.606 of the foreigners recorded in the 1950 census, which represents 89,5% of the total for the whole country.

Many factors have contributed for the preference given to the southern regions, other than the generally known fact of the similarity of its climate to the european one, which helps to retain the immigrant. Besides this factor, perhaps important, but not exclusive, other ones might be mentioned. One of them is the circumstance of immigrants' colonies, that have been traditionally established there, followed by the concession of tracts of land, so as to make the immigrants as land owners. The growth of these first colonies and their transformation into prosperous towns and villages constituted decisive factors for attracting new immigration flows.

Other factor to point out is the existence of land still capable of being occupied and to work upon by the man as proprietor and not only as a paid worker or job worker. It is also well to mention the development of an industrial plant or park of foreign origin -- chiefly, Italian in São Paulo, German and Italian in Rio Grande do Sul and German in Santa Catarina, which contributes to attract new immigrants.

2 - Considering the essentially portuguese origin, on which Brazil was formed, the Brazilian inherited from their portuguese ancestors the same spirit of tolerance, of conformation to circumstances, of sympathy, and of confraternization with foreigners, avoiding conditions which might cause either reaction from the immigrant, or even to his integration into our social and political panorama. This is so true, that descendants of immigrants -- certainly, now a days, true Brazilian -- have occupied high positions in social and political groups of their respective states or in others, such as bishops, ministers of State,

governors, federal and state deputies, mayors and aldermen.

This is an indication that at least in relation to European groups, as the Italian or German, not to mention the Portuguese or the Spaniards, of cultural likeness and psycho-social identity, types or tendencies of less cordial attitudes were not formed. On the contrary, what one finds is the existence of a human group of harmonic relations, the development of a process of assimilation and cultural relations, in which the influences interlace.

In fact, this is a consequence less of principle or standing rules in the immigration plans than the own tendencies of the Brazilian population. Without a doubt, this has contributed to facilitate the degree of integration of the foreign population of Brazil. As a result of this a great number of foreigners have become Brazilians by naturalization. In 1872 naturalized Brazilians numbered only 1.288; in 1920 they were represented by 52,526, increasing their number to 122.735 in 1940; and to 128.897 in 1950. This last figure represents 10,61% of the total foreigners resident in Brazil, whilst they represented only 3.34% in 1920 and 8.73% in 1940.

One cannot say that immigration in Brazil has been planned in a sense of scientific or rational basis, through which the process of assimilation could have been foreseen. Only in the decade of 1930-40, studies on the aspects of the cultural relations of the groups of immigrants with Brazilian population began to appear in Brazil. It was during this period that the political aspects of the colonization of the various foreigner-groups became evident, chiefly in the South, where the problem of the nationalization of these groups became plain.

It is worth while to mention that, in a certain way, the word naturalization has become, among us, a synonym for assimilation. What was actually wanted, with the so called nationalization of the foreigner-groups, was their incorporation to the Brazilian cultural values; one had in view, therefore, the execution of a process whereby the foreigners accepted, or would accept, national cultural elements,

rejecting their own. It was rather a process of absorption, and so, unilateral, which in a general way, had not been similar to the conditions under which the cultural relations of the foreign-groups have been developed among us.

In the case of Brazil, a new country, of Portuguese origin, although having its own characteristics, as a result of ecological and cultural conditions, originated from other groups with which the population has had contact, the process of the cultural relations between the Brazilian and the immigrants will have to be placed under other aspects. In the first place, it never presents itself as unilateral. On the contrary, it has been bilateral and sometimes polylateral. Several groups participate of the process, that is, it does not present the sole influence of a group over another, but the exchange of cultural elements among the various groups, which as a matter of fact has occurred since the colonial days.

It must be considered that immigration period in Brazil, contrary to what succeeds in Europe, is relatively short, so as to render a comparison of the respective conditions of contact among the various groups. In a wider sense, it does not attain 150 years, if the starting point is taken from the opening up of the ports; practically, however, from 1808 up to 1870, the immigratory movement was small. Only after the abolishment of the slavery one may verify the intensification of the immigration, even though it could be noted a small increase during the years preceding May 13th (Abolishment of Slavery's Act - 1888). In this way, we have not as yet a great immigratory tradition to consider. Some groups, as the Japanese, have not reached 50 years of continuous immigration; others, as the Syrians and Lebaneses, go a little over this.

Besides this aspect, other one must be taken into account in the study of this process: the geographical localization of the immigrant. In reality, this is another angle in which the observers must

stand in relation to the process of larger or lesser assimilation of the immigrating group. The localization of the immigrant has exercised, and exercises great influence upon the results of the process of cultural relations; first, from a strictly geographical point of view, as regards the areas occupied by the immigrant; from a broader point of view, as to the manner of how the immigrant was located.

The manner in which the immigrant was located, what could be called the "type of settlement", influenced the faster or slower time taken in the development of the cultural relations. When the immigrants were isolated in colonies, as happened in Rio Grande do Sul, in the Itajaí Valley, in part of the mountainous region of Espírito Santo, the process was slow, delayed and retarded. The immigrant resisted longer to assimilation, and only in the last thirty to forty years it has shown improvement.

Then, however, the immigrants were distributed in farms --as in the case of the coffee farms in São Paulo -- or in urban areas, as in the capitals of São Paulo and in the Federal District, the process of assimilation was faster, much speedier and active. The immediate, constant and daily contact with the Brazilian elements or between different races helped the assimilation of the cultural traces, permitting a rapid exchange of values that each group possessed.

Greater or lesser speed is observed in the cultural inter-relations, in face of the origin of the migratory group. In fact, the Germans or Italians, for example, despite the external cultural unity which they present, have their own peculiarities of habits and sentiments, whether from the South or from the North, the East or the West. I had the opportunity of verifying this fact in my study of the Italians. Even among immigrants from the North of Italy, from Veneto or Lombardy, the process of assimilation has a different rate of speed. This difference accentuates, according to whether the immigrant comes from the North or the South. I even believe that same holds true

in relation to the Germans and possibly in relation to other foreign-groups.

There is always in the immigrant a psychological sentiment that must not be forgotten. That which he individually seeks -- and with him, his family -- is a bettering of his social condition, a new standard of welfare, that will give him a better situation than the one he had in his country of origin. Thus, the immigrant comes animated by a desire to become a land owner, of working his own land or to possess his own small commercial or industrial plant or store.

In this way, when the contact with the new land does not immediately fulfill his ideal, or does not give him prospects for such, the immigrant feels discouraged. This has in fact been occurring in recent immigratory currents. As a result, the problem of unadaptnent, which is the exterior aspect of his frustation and, consequently, of the return to his native land, takes place.

The possibility of the immigrant to become proprietor, with the facility afforded in the first years of immigration in Brazil, has decreased, firstly, by the existence of fewer tracts of land for occupation in the southern regions and, secondly, because the immigrant does not carry any more that pioneering spirit of the XIX century, capable of facing virgin lands, still to be conquered and populated, in other areas of Brazil.

In the other hand, the industrial development of the Federal District and São Paulo, and partly in Rio Grande do Sul has demanded labor hands, which are also required in agriculture. But this manual labor has not a very compensating salary, due to the industrie's own economic conditions and also to the competition of the national laborers coming from other parts of the country to look for better living conditions in the Federal District, São Paulo and Paraná. The influence of the internal migration, to attend to the necessities of hand labor, as well as the maintenance of low salaries, has been very strong.

The immigrant becomes, thus, an industrial worker or a rural laborer; starts discontented, unadapted, and, as a result, wants to return to his native country. It is true that the number of those who return is still small as compared to those who remain. But there is another aspect to the problem, that of staying in the country but not fixing himself in a given activity; with the result that the immigrant becomes, in a certain way, unstable in his work. Those who stay are usually qualified workers, who have certain technical knowledge. Unfortunately, we do not have actualized statistics covering the professions of those who stay and of those who return to their native homes, from which a deeper comparative study could be made.

3 - The National Census of 1950 showed the presence in Brazil, of 1.214.184 foreigners, of which 128.897 already naturalized Brazilians. We had, therefore, a total of 1.085.287 foreigners who retained, in our country, their original nationality. This figure is smaller than that of the 1940 Census, when 1.285.853 were found in such condition. The 1920 Census showed the highest number of foreigners present in Brazil, totalling 1.513.635.

It was natural this should have happened. The period between 1890 and 1910 was the one which showed the largest entries of immigrants in our country. From the first general Census in 1872, when there were 382.041 foreigners to the last one in 1950 --one finds a significant ascent up to 1920, and from then on an appreciable decline. The first Great World War in the decade 1910-1920 caused a drop in the immigration; between 1940 and 1950, also a war period, only a small number of immigrants came in during 1940 to 1945.

The immigration started to recover its uptrend in the three years from 1949 to 1951. From 1948 to 1951, 142.651 immigrants entered the country, it being worth to note that the number relative to this past year, 62.548, was higher than all of the previous twenty years (1931-1950). Of these 62.548 immigrants, 28.977 were Portuguese,

9.482 Spaniards, 8.290 Italians, 2.829 Germans, which added makes up 30% of the total immigration in that year; the other nationalities were represented by small groups, therefore, with less expression.

Such groups contributed to increase the foreign population in Brazil, sometimes, settling in towns, and sometimes in agricultural settlements, other times concentrating in colonial settlements, where there were already people from the same origin mingled with those of other countries. Unfortunately the 1950 Census has not so far published the distribution of foreigners, in the several stages, according to nationalities, and the only available data are the one referring to São Paulo and Paraná.

In 1950 Brazil signed two immigration agreements: one with Italy, exclusively for immigration, and another one with the Netherlands, for immigration and colonization. Between 1945 and 1950 predominated the spontaneous immigration, without well conducted plans capable of contributing to the fixation of the immigrant. What brought the immigrant was personal initiative, as a rule called in by relatives and friends already residing in Brazil.

The scope of the two agreements above mentioned was to direct to this immigration, planning it in conditions convenient to both sides. The statistical data have so far not revealed the exact influence of the pre-established plan. In 1951, 8.290 Italians came in, against 7.362 in 1950, and 6.352 in 1949; therefore, there was no fundamental difference. As to the Dutch, 464 of them entered in 1951, as compared to 660 in 1950 and 485 in 1949. The immigration, in the first year after the agreement was signed, was inferior to the one occurred in the two preceding years.

It is worth while to register the fact that in the agreement with the Netherlands, it was established that the Dutch immigration will be completely directed, including the colonizing immigration and the scientific, intellectual and technical cooperation. It is also

recognized the spontaneous immigration, whether individual, in families or in groups of families, subject to the laws in force in each country, or regulated specially by exchange of memoranda. In the agreement with Italy, two forms are permitted: the spontaneous, based in a family call letter or work proposal, and the planned one, based in lista previously agreed upon, by representative of both Governments, for each group of immigrants.

Undoubtedly, great prospects for immigration are opening up in Brazil. There is no question that a convenient standard of living can be assumed to the foreigners, provided that plans are established, capable of guaranteeing the immigrant adequate conditions for his establishment and fixation in the country. It suffices that, along with this first contacts with Brazilian population, through which the initial assimilation of the immigrant to the rural Brazilian ambient should be facilitated, means be arranged to enable the immigrants his future fixation as land proprietor, placing him in a position to buy under favorable conditions a small property. It is the principle of colonizing immigration, that Brazil needs, and that will open large and promising prospects to foreigners who seek us as immigrants.

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