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A comparative study of emigration to the United States from Ireland and Poland

1. Theoretical/methodological note

All comparative studies, be they carried out at micro or macro-structural levels are based on two fundamental sets of assumptions and goals.

The first consists of isolating and identifying the nature of the phenomena and social facts and of establishing the areas of variation between them.

The second is more theoretical and boils down to a search for rules and explanations for the mechanisms of interdependence between the variables that characterise the two groups to be compared. (Nowak 1985:340-341).

Comparative studies and research tend on the whole to be; multi-dimensional, meaning that they cover several levels of a societal structure; multi-faceted, meaning they can fulfil various functions and can include language belonging to different conceptual categories while using optional methods; and multi-levelled, meaning that they are carried out independent of specific types of phenomena i.e. political, economical or cultural.

Given the difficulties, both theoretical and methodological, involved I have set myself in this article only the fundamental tasks and questions. Firstly I will limit myself to the first type of analysis, that is to the first set of assumptions and goals. I intend only to describe - and not explain - the similarities and differences between the processes of Irish and Polish emigration to and settlement in the United States. Secondly I will describe the range of these similarities only in terms of several variables and do not intend to venture beyond them. Thirdly I will limit myself to describing macro-structural phenomena, saying nothing about the attitudes or personality types of the emigrants. Fourthly, the comparison covers only a relatively obvious processes of emigration and settlement. This assumption allows us to discount the issue of ethnic groups and national assimilation from the phenomena to be analysed. Using therefore

the dynamic model of ethnicity constructed by E Francis (Francis 1976) and developed in Poland by H.Kubiak (Kubiak 1980) I assume that the comparisons will cover "an amorphous ethnic mass" or a still strictly aggregate group, namely the first generation of emigrants. The emigration process has many varied stages and phases although it is possible to assign them to and refer them back to two different national groups.

In the long, more than century old process of emigration from Ireland and Poland to the US I will concentrate on the following variables;

- the causes of emigration
- the dimensions and course of emigration
- the direction and dynamics of settlement
- the organizational development and types of group integration
- the level of national assimilation (within the framework of american society)

2. Causes of Emigration

The origins of emigration from Ireland and Poland are to be found primarily in the characteristics and course of those processes which came to create the national identities of these two groups.

Ireland has a long history. (Blessing 1980, Curtis 1960, Fallows 1979, Greeley 1972). The ethnic composition of its population has developed over the centuries and is the direct result of invasion and settlement: first by the Vikings (8th-11th centuries AD) and subsequently by the Normans and the English (11th-12th centuries AD). The Normans, who conquered Ireland along with the British Isles gradually assimilated with the local aristocracy and by the 14th century their cultural distinctiveness had disappeared entirely. The country was essentially agricultural and its structure dominated by the large quantities of land in the hands of the aristocracy. It is in this period that the feudal structures of landownership and social hierarchy developed and took hold. Amongst the ranks of the feudal classes the English gained ever more influence and in the 16th century began the colonisation of Ireland (by the English). This was the result of England's increasing power and of the expansionist policies of Henry VIII and later Elizabeth I. During the Reformation religious factors fuelled English animosity towards Ireland.

It is Henry VIII who first claims the title King of Ireland, imposes his authority upon it (Act of Supremacy) and prohibits the celebration of catholic mass. In 1579 the first major revolt against the English erupted, it ended in defeat and famine. Ireland long resisted Royal authority from England consequently Elizabeth I began settling Protestants in the north-west of Ireland (large areas of Munster), offering them considerable areas of agricultural land. By 1596 their already existed in Ulster the first settlements of English and Scottish Protestants. In 1603 Ireland finally became subject to complete English control, however this did not put an end to ethnic or class conflicts. For 50 years until the mid-seventeenth century revolts broke out consistently, in the main their target was the religious domination and economic pressure exerted by Protestants. As a result more than 75% of the land fell into the hands of the English, who numerically were in a decided minority and who on the whole resided in England and leased the land to Irish farmers. In 1695 the Penal laws were passed, (based on the requirements of the English,) prohibiting the Irish from voting, barring them from official or public office and banning them from the running of schools and businesses. At this time the Catholic church was working underground.

At the beginning of the 18th century Ireland was subject to total English occupation and domination. The population was split along religious lines into two hostile groups, comprising the 25% Protestants and the 75% Catholics. In 1775 a mere 5% of the land remained in the ownership of catholic peasants. The division along nationalistic lines overlapped with the religious and social divisions. Towards the end of the 18th century there was a brief period of prosperity, taking the form of development in agriculture, rapid growth in the numbers of livestock and the establishment of the textile industry. In reply the English issued a range of anti-competition bills and the period between 1778-1829 was characterised by increased persecution of the Irish, leading even to protests by Scottish Protestants in the Ulster area.

In the 19th century, a period which saw a dramatic acceleration in the processes that brought into being (Kula 1989, *Irish Culture and Nationalism 1750-1950* 1983) nation states, the Irish patriotic vision was built on an awareness of defeat, subservience, occupation, exploitation and hostility towards the English Protestants. Indeed, although the 19th century saw nationalistic pressure diminish (ie. as early as 1793 Catholics were returned their voting rights), this did nothing to reduce economic exploitation and by the same token the level of mutual animosity between the Irish and English did not subside.

The processes that created Irish and Polish (Greeley 1972, Zubrzycki 1985) nation states have a number of things in common: the first of these - and most important - was the lack of national institutions founded by that national group itself. In both cases the cultural principle of integration dominates. The sensation of nationality develops on two parallel tracks in both cases: under conditions of animosity and opposition to foreign governments and of glorification of their own illegal political organizations. The impossibility of creating their own national structures for the delegation of authority created mechanisms of political emigration. For both the Polish and Irish nations this type of emigration was to be a constant phenomenon until independence. The Polish emigratory trend, deriving its ideological traditions from the two post-uprising emigration waves, crystallized in the US in the form of an organization going by the name Polish National Alliance (created in 1880) likewise in the Polish Falcons movement or the initiatives of the Polish League later the National League leading to the call for the creation of a National Treasury. The Irish in America also organised themselves into a paramilitary group, with independence in mind, going by the name The Irish Republican Brotherhood (1857), a group whose members called themselves the Fenians.

The second common denominator in the creation of these two nations is the particular role played by the peasantry. In both cases farmers, being a distinct social group, defended and maintained indigenous elements of national culture, among them group's values language and religion. The lowly position of farmers led to their emigrating in search of better wages and land to settle. Both Polish and Irish farmers owned little of the land they lived on in their own country.

The third similarity in the process leading to the creation of these two nations was the religious homogeneity of their populations. Criteria defining their national identity linked to those defining religious identity and the two (came to be interdependent) influenced one another. This common national characteristic of being tightly bound to one's religion is reflected in the similar organizational structures of the two groups in the US where integration tended to be as a group and revolve around the priest or the parish. This was also one of the main causes of ethnic rivalry between the two groups in the US.

Finally a fourth common denominator between the Irish and Polish „diaspora” was the large number of emigrants with a background in soldiering. (Brown 1966, Zubrzycki 1985). The Poles and the Irish had fought to free their homelands many times (for example alongside Napoleon or during WWI). Poland and

Ireland were sources of cheap mercenary soldiers fighting for "your and our own freedom". The Polish and Irish traditions of armed struggle for independence coincided in the States with the American ideals of democracy, freedom and individualism.

These general elements affecting the creation of the Polish and Irish states are reflected in the similar forms and mechanisms of emigration. However, as far as the fulfilling their aspirations and achieving the goals of emigration are concerned they were fundamentally different. Both the Poles and the Irish made France their first ideological base, with time though America would become the stage for their activities. The causes of mass emigration from Europe to the United States have been dealt with on many occasions. The opportunities for success seemed equally good to emigrating Poles and Irishmen alike, although, the chances of success in the States varied for these emigrants and for the groups they formed.

3. Size and Course of Emigration

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Comparison over time of the dimensions - and likewise the dynamics and types - of emigration from Ireland and Poland is extremely difficult. Problems arise above all from the fact that as new emigrants arrived the generation factor : first, second or third, became ever more relevant to the make up of the two ethnic groups. In addition while Irish immigration to the States can be easily distinguished and described, emigration from Polish territory is less easy to quantify. This is primarily the result of the division of Poland between the three partitioning powers. For the Irish there are good quality and indisputable statistics. Emigration from Poland and Ireland as measured in absolute figures can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Emigration from Ireland and Poland to United States: 1820-1970

Decades	Irish	Poles	Total Immigration to U.S.
1820-1830	54 338	-	151 824
1831-1840	207 381	495	599 125
1841-1850	780 719	-	1 713 251
1851-1860	914 119	1 164	2 598 214
1861-1870	435 778	42 770	2 314 824
1871-1880	436 871	120 770	2 812 191
1881-1890	655 482	342 106	5 246 613
1891-1900	390 179	270 902	3 687 564

1901-1910	339 065	823 600	8 795 286
1911-1920	146 181	600 231(a)	5 735 811
1921-1930	220 591	247 397(a)	4 107 209
1931-1940	13 167	29 202(a)	528 431
1941-1950	25 204		1 035 039
1951-1960	57 332	400 000	2 515 479
1961-1970	37 461		3 321 777
Total	4 713 868	2 878 637	45 162 638

Sources: M.R.Fallows, *Irish Americans*, p.48, A.Pilch, *Emigracja z ziem polskich do Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki od lat pięćdziesiątych XIX w. do r. 1918*, pp. 40-41, M.Francić, *Emigracja z Polski do Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki od r. 1918 do lat siedemdziesiątych*, pp.47-52
a/Data refers to the periods: 1911-1919, 1920-1929, 1930-1939

As far as the figures for the number of immigrants of Polish descent are concerned a few additional comments are necessary.

Firstly, the figures have always been the source of controversy, particularly on the issue of the religious and national make up of the group. This is because Polish statistics came into being only after independence in 1919. For the preceding period it is very difficult to establish what proportion of emigrants was accounted for by Jews, Belorussians or Ukrainians.

Secondly, alongside emigration we see reemigration (ignoring for the moment multiple/repeat emigration). This phenomenon gained significance after the end of WWI. Between 1918-39 122,881 people returned to Poland. Reemigration can be seen amongst the Irish likewise (as Ireland declared Independence on 11th June 1921).

Thirdly, the lack of accurate historical notation of certain events between 1911-1940, whilst not rendering it impossible, does complicate the task of comparison.

Of the figures in table 1 few contradict the general conclusion that emigration from Poland to the States lagged some 50 years behind its Irish counterpart. Given such a dynamically developing country, as the US was at that time, this headstart gave the Irish a great advantage in the "race" for a better rung on the ladders of income, status and power.

In order to more closely compare emigration from Poland and Ireland to the US I propose that we define of the time periods.

1. Colonial: which ended in Europe with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1793 and in America with the US's Declaration of Independence (which took place in 1776 but was not complete until the 1790's).

2. Liberal: which covers almost all the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th - right up the Congress's decisions in 1921, 1924 and 1929 to introduce immigration restrictions.

3. Selective (restrictive): which runs from the 30's to the present day.

In an effort to enhance their own prestige most ethnic groups in America have created a mythical portrait of colonial traditions. Neither the Poles nor the Irish are exceptions to this rule. The Irish sought to find the discoverers of America from amongst the Vikings. Americans of Polish descent have Jan of Kolno who is said to have set foot on American soil many years before Columbus. Belief in this kind of myth is a cultural phenomenon and is not backed up by scientific evidence.

Essentially there was no colonial emigration from Poland. There are examples of individuals from Poland settling in the British colonies, however these were rare exceptions. One cannot rule out sporadic individual emigration but before 1800 those involved failed to make any lasting mark on American history. The exceptions that prove the rule is T. Kościuszko and K. Pułaski. Both became heroes of the American War of Independence. Their time in America did fall within the colonial period, however, their emigration was about soldiering rather than settlement.

Ireland, under complete English control from 1603, and was subject to her economic and political influence. Between 1600 and 1800 many Irish sought work in the Netherlands and in England or took up with foreign armies on a mercenary basis. They also made it to the New World (mostly on English boats). A few Irish in America were part of expeditionary teams. The first significant group of Irish arrived in the colonies in 1636 when Thomas Anthony transported a "shipment" of emigrants from Cork to America. In exchange for the price of the crossing they were sold into the service of wealthy Protestant settlers. Settlers taking this route to America were called "Redeemers" out of the fact that they had to work off some or all of the costs of the voyage. This type of emigration resembled temporary slavery. (*Harvard Encyclopedia*:525-528, Fallows 1979, Wittke 1964).

The second type of emigrant arriving from Ireland to America was the political or criminal exile. A good number of these arrived in the colonies under Cromwell.

The third type of emigration was that of farmers in search of economic good fortune. The largest part of this group arrived into Maryland and South Carolina. Even before 1660 there were 12,000 Irish in the colonies. In order to limit their numbers, the Protestants, ill-disposed towards the "papists", introduced a

number of measures aimed at limiting their influence (ie. South Carolina introduced restrictive regulations targetting Catholics in 1698 and Maryland did likewise in 1699). Shortly these restrictions would be extended to cover all Irish, Protestants included.

Very few Irish arriving in America had paid their own passage. As a result the first Irish settlements were established relatively late. The most populous Irish colonies of Tipperary and Waterford were founded in New Jersey in 1683. It is true that there were settlements in Maryland in the 1630's but, surrounded by Protestants, they disappeared. Of the Irish settlers in Maryland was one Charles Carroll, whose grandson Charles Carroll III would be the only catholic to sign the Declaration of Independence.

The census of 1790 showed the number of Irish in the now independent US to be 44,000. Emigrants from Ulster accounted for half this number, among them some Protestants (max.10%). On the whole Protestants were farm owners.

On the threshold of independence therefore we see a large number of Irish. Testimony to their status, amongst other things, is the fact that the only catholic to sign the constitution of the United States was Thomas Fitzsimons (1760-1839), a merchant from Philadelphia. Before 1800 Philadelphia was one of the largest centres of Irish settlement in America (they made up 7% of the town's population). Another notable Irish in the US was John Barry (1745-1803), the famous father of the American navy, who was born in County Wexford.

In the colonial period (pre 1776) most new emigrants came from north-east Ireland. Towards the end of the period, during the fight for independence, an increasingly large role was played by those from western and southern Ireland.

It is generally held that if one is to define boundary between the periods of colonial and liberal immigration to the US then it is the date of American Independence. The political and economic situation in the US stabilised only around 1790. It is after this that mass immigration from Europe begins, initially Anglo- Saxon, then Irish and later from Central and Eastern Europe.

The period of "liberal" immigration to the US is characterised by the relative abundance of available land, which was settled according to local law (standardisation of regulations came with the Homestead Act of 1862 when most land had already been allocated). This land was the magnet attracting farmers with little or no land of their own from Europe. This period saw the colonisation of the west and internal

consolidation of the US, particularly as a result of the North-South civil war.(Turner 1920).

There were few immigrants from Poland at that time. The first organised group of settlers from Silesia appeared in 1854 (Brożek 1985) when there were already 1.5 million Irish in the country.

The period between 1793 and 1815 was an auspicious one for Ireland. Farmers had a guaranteed market in Europe because of the war there. Following Napoleon's defeat in 1815 the situation changed markedly for the worse. The economic boom brought with it a significant increase in the population. In 1821 Ireland boasted 6.8 million inhabitants, in 1841 8 million. The non-agricultural sectors were not able to absorb the excess population. Leased land stopped being economically viable.

In 1800,1801 and 1802 6000 people were leaving Ireland annually. In 1817 the number of emigrants to the US rose to 9000, in 1818 20,000. In 1842 92,000 people left Ireland (this was the beginning of the "famine" or "potato" emigration wave), in 1845 - 77,000, in 1846 - 106,000, in 1851 - more than 200,000. It is worth noting that the majority of emigrants were Catholics of farming stock. In 1840 only around 10% of the Irish in the US were Protestants. (*Harvard Encyclopedia:528*)

The sharp rise between 1820-50 in the number of emigrants was the result of two basic factors: the crisis in the agricultural sector and rural overpopulation. These factors accentuated one another and were reinforced by a series of catastrophic crop failures. The structure and organization of agriculture in Ireland was built upon small leased farms. As a rule in Ireland a period of food shortages preceded each new harvest. (the same was true of Polish lands). The failure of the potato crops in 1822, 1831, 1835-37, 1839 and 1842 rendered the situation in rural Ireland tragic. In the decade between 1842-52 the population fell by 2.5 million.(Fallows 1979:17). This sharp fall was the result of emigration, an increased mortality rate and a lower birth rate. The US was a strange far off land offering immigrants land and an escape from poverty and hunger. The emigration of farmers from Ireland took place on a massive scale and reached its peak between 1820-60. In the decade 1820-29 the Irish made up 40.2% of immigrants to the US, between 1830-39 31.7%, between 1840-49 the figure jumped to 46% and fell only marginally between 1850-59 to 36.9%. Even between 1860 and 1880 the Irish accounted for 20% of total immigration to the US. It would fall to 4.2% for the decade 1900-19 and 2.6% for that from 1910-19.

These statistics show us two things : that over time the number of immigrants from other European countries grew (while in absolute terms that from Ireland fell significantly) and that the Irish settled in the

US earlier than catholic immigrants from Italy and Central and Eastern Europe.

The Polish community had been deprived of a nation of their own throughout the 19th century - it was annexed between three neighbouring countries - and its structure was decidedly rural in nature. The feudal nature of societal structures (at a time when capitalism was developing in the West) was the basis on which the "expulsive economic model" was created. Like in Ireland the situation of the Polish farmer was determined by rural overpopulation and a low standard of living and was accordingly unfavourable. The socio-economic status of the Polish farmer, together with persecution for being Polish and the ever more widespread myth that America was a country one could get land for free, all lead to an exponential increase in emigration to America in the 1850's. Emigration from Polish territory began from the Prussian annex. By 1890 300,000 people had emigrated from this annex (of that number not more than 40,000 between 1850-70). Between 1891 and 1914 119,000 people left this annex for the US. (Pilch 1988:39).

By the mid 1870's "emigration fever" spread across Polish territory to the Russian and Austrian annexes. It is estimated that up to 1890 around 200,000 people left these areas for the USA. Between 1891-1914 841,000 people left the "Kongresówka" (Russian annex) for the USA and 626,000 from the Austrian (although data is not available for the years 1891-94). (Pilch 1988:40).

Emigration from Ireland and the Polish lands had throughout the 19th century many factors in common: both were predominantly catholic peasant groups. The fundamental differences arise out of different cultural characteristics (being part of the British Empire and speaking English it was easier for the Irish to begin their new life in America) and the period of the two groups' arrival. The majority of Irish arrived in the USA long before significant numbers of Poles appeared.

The First World War years, during which began the restrictive US policy towards immigration saw a drastic cut in immigration from Poland and Ireland. The negative impact of the war effort more greatly affected immigration from Poland.

Table 2. National origin and generation of Polish and Irish Immigrants:1900- 1950

	Foreign Born First generation	US Born Second generation	Total
Irish			
1900	1 615 232	3 375 546	4 990 778
1910	1 352 155	3 304 015	4 656 170
1920	1 037 233	3 122 013	4 159 246

1930	744 810	2 341 712	3 086 522
1940	572 031	1 838 920	2 410 951
1950	504 961	1 891 495	2 396 456
Poles			
1900	383 392	326 764	710 156
1910	937 884	725 924	1 663 808
1920	1 139 978	1 303 357	2 443 329
1930	1 268 583	2 073 615	3 342 198
1940	993 479	1 912 380	2 905 859
1950	861 184	1 925 015	2 786 199

Source: Hutchinson E.P., 1956, *Immigrants and Their Children: 1850-1950*, New York- London, p.5, Table No 3.

Other data shows us that for the years 1900-1950 the number of Polish immigrants (from 1st and 2nd generations) exceeded the number of Irish emigrants in the same categories. This data can be seen in Table 2.

The figures below show that most Irish were assimilated into the American national community. This confirms one of the theoretical truths, namely that the Irish were the first and indeed the only catholic ethnic group to divest itself of its own ethnicity. (Leve and Kramer 1973:139).

4.The directions and dynamics of settlement

Irish and Polish emigrants settling in America had come along way, and not just in the geographical sense of the word. It was for the majority "a journey from one extreme of society's structures to the other". These emigrants, for the most part rural populations living from the land, settled in large urban agglomerations. Even in 1860, when there was no shortage of land in the US, (especially in the west), most Irish stayed in the States of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New England. Nearly 3/4 of immigrants were unqualified labourers.

In its early days Irish and Polish settlement in the US was characterized by the creation of local, close-knit ethnic clusters having something of the ghetto about them. Within the confines of the ghetto there reigned a peculiar law based essentially on the old systems and social norms transferred from their country of origin. Between 1840-1870 the Irish found getting out of the ghettos difficult and rarely did so, despite the high crime rate, poverty and high mortality rates there. In 1855 the Irish made up 28% of New York's population (203,000 Irish out of 806,000 inhabitants). (Coleman 1972:325). In the same year

the 74,000 Irish in Philadelphia made up 21% of the population. (Fallows 1979:34-36).

The traditional paths of Irish immigration held good until the 1970's. In 1970 13.5 million claimed Irish extraction (they accounted for 6.5% of the population), of these 2/3 lived on the East Coast, 1/6 in the Mid West (mainly in Chicago) and 1/7 in California. (Levy, Kramer 1973:124).

The Polish expatriate community was also concentrated in the eastern states. Although it is true that the first organised settlers from Silesia arrived via the Gulf of Mexico and Galveston to found the pioneer settlement Virgin Mary in Texas that does not change the fact that Poles arriving later did so from the East. Just like the Irish. In 1970 around 90% of the Polish community lived in 10 states (the largest numbers in New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Michigan, and New Jersey). (Znaniiecki-Lopata 1978). The two groups were settling therefore almost the same areas. In recent years an ever increasing percentage of Americans of Irish and Polish extraction have moved to states in the South West, mainly to Texas and to California.

The Irish and the Polish shared a point of departure. However half a century and the experience thus gained separated the two groups. English and Anglo-Saxon "Nativist" movements engaged in xenophobia and discrimination against the Irish (some discrimination was religious, and began with the blatant burning in 1834 of the Catholic monastery in Charlestown, Mass.). In the face of this the Irish began to lay the foundations of their own communal organizations, inter alia church and professional. With the arrival en masse of the Catholic Italians and Slavs began the rapid socio-economic advance of the Irish. After the First World War, when the Polish ghetto was flourishing the Irish began to leave their own in large numbers.

In the 1850's most Irish found themselves in the lower echelons of society. In 1850 in San Francisco and Los Angeles only 14% of Irish workers were "white collar" (in Boston it was only 6%), 25% were blue collar workers (mostly unqualified), 25% domestic servants, 10% tailors and the rest farmers and unemployed. Testimony to the position of the Irish is the fact that between 1845-1855 55% of all those arrested on criminal charges in New York were Irish. By 1880 20% of the Irish were white collar workers, today the figure is 40%. (*Harvard Encyclopedia*: 530-531).

Whilst after 1870 the Irish in the US were making their way up the social ladder, emigrants from Polish lands were just starting out and still had a long and difficult road ahead of them. Some ethnic

prejudices were transposed from the Irish to the Poles. Taking over the most arduous and worst paid work the Poles pushed the Irish up that ladder. In 1900 a large percentage (>80%) of Poles in Pittsburgh were unqualified blue collar workers. Labour survey data from Detroit in 1900 shows that 47% of Polish men were blue collar workers (76.1% of women), 13% were domestic servants. Only slightly over 4% were white collar workers. Current statistics are similar to those for the Irish community. According to Hutchinson the proportion of Irish among white collar workers is the same of Polish. (Hutchinson 1956:338-340).

Of the other indicators characterizing the two communities, education (measured in number of years at school) is often compared.

If we look at annual earnings (data for 1972) in dollars they are: for men of Irish descent 7536, for women 2612; for Americans of Polish descent it was slightly higher: 8366 for men and 2801 for women.

The Polish and Irish immigrants in the US were cousins in their monotheism. For the Irish and Polish religion was linked to their idea of ethnic autonomy. Immigrants from Polish lands rarely and unwillingly converted, even having married a member of another faith. The Irish on the other hand converted to Protestantism as they moved up the socio-economic ladder. According to H Abramson's figures in 1964 8 million Americans of Irish descent were Catholics, the rest, 5 million, protestants. Despite the fact that most Protestants came from among the emigrants from Ulster, around 20% were converts. (Abramson 1973:19). In 1970 70% of Catholics of Irish descent were residents in large urban areas, protestants however the exact opposite, 70% were farmers or residents of small settlements and towns.

Analysis of the dynamics of settlement patterns and the structural changes within the Irish and Polish immigrant communities in the USA shows that they were similar in many respects. The social, religious and ideological characteristics of these groups meant that their members had similar chances for social advance. A comparison of the "job indicator" (which shows prestige and rank on a scale of 1.5-6.5) for first generation Polish and Irish immigrants shows almost identical results: 2.97 for Poles and 2.99 for the Irish. There is however a difference for the second generation: for those of Polish descent 3.24, for Americans of Irish descent 3.91. (Babiński 1988:130). This shows us that despite a similar start the Irish managed to move up the socio-professional hierarchy much more quickly than the Poles.

5. Organizational development and types of group integration

Ethnic integration took place on various levels (economic, religious, ideological and cultural among them). The basis for this integration were the common values and group symbols imported from the immigrant's home countries. The most significant factors affecting ethnic integration are to be found in the religious and national systems of values. Structural and cultural change took place on the basis of the immigrants' own group heritage.

Ethnic integration for members of the Irish and Polish immigrant communities was two track: taking place on religious and national planes. The organizational development of the two groups shows that these two types of integration were both common and fundamental. The main social unit for the Irish and Polish in USA was the parish, and on a wider scale the church as an institution. Both locally and on a general level within the group its religious requirements were a point of departure in the establishment of principles for the formation of social structures, among them organizations. For the Polish the main role in integration at local level was played by the parish and by associations linked to it. It was only on the basis of this that the idea of one overarching ethno-catholic organization was born, it came into being in 1874 and was called the Polish Roman Catholic Union (its headquarters were in Chicago). From the beginning this organisation was closely linked to religious values, Polish spirituality and the Church and it created an integrationist tendency within the confines of the ethnic group. The later initiatives taken by the PRCU, for example the establishment of Polish League in the US, Polish Catholic Congresses (1896,1901,1904), Federation of Roman Catholic Poles, Polish National Council were all the result of, and an indicator of, the influence of religious values in the formation and functioning of group organizations.

Likewise for the Irish the first ethnic organizations were formed on the foundations of religious values and links with the church. The large organization of Irish immigrants was the Catholic Total Abstinence Union founded in 1869 (with its headquarters in Philadelphia). The CTAU was based on formal and informal groups of parish activists attempting to counter the stereotypical image of the Irishman as an alcoholic. Subsequent large scale organizations formed by Irish immigrants also included the word "catholic" in their titles, as for example the Irish Catholic Society for the Promotion of Actual

Settlement in North America founded in 1856. The latter was an insurance company growing out organizations that had been around since 1700 approx. - the Charitable Irish Society in Boston, and the Friendly Sons of St Patrick in New York.

The first large scale Irish and Polish organizations had religious, parish and church roots. At one and the same time a trend for national consolidation sprung up, using nationalistic slogans and based the mother country's on national values. A creation and symptom of this type of ethnic integration among Poles in the US was the Polish National Alliance (founded in 1880, headquarters in Chicago). It was created in the wake of political immigration from Poland in Europe (following the failed uprisings of 1861) and led to the creation of a paramilitary organization in the US, the Association of Polish Falcons. The PNA contribution to both the development of the ethnic group and to Poland's winning independence is documented. This organization typically put national goals above religious ones, which led to a certain conflict between two organizations with differing approaches, the PNA and PRCU.

Accordingly the nationalist integrational trend accompanied the organizational development of the Irish immigrant community. As early as the 1860's various associations supporting Irish immigrants and defeated Ireland sprung up. Nationalist tendencies found expression in republican, anti-English organizations. The initial basis for this trend was the conquest of Ireland by the English. Even between the years 1790-1800 the activities of the Society of United Irishmen had reached such a scale that federalists considered them a threat to the very existence of the USA. Against a backdrop of constant opposition from the English young Irishmen formed the paramilitary organization the Irish Republican Brotherhood in 1857 (the founders were John O'Mahony and James Stephens). This organization had members both in the United States and in Ireland (when it was founded J. Stephens was in Dublin). The Fenians as the members of this fraternity called themselves, publicly expressed a desire to see the US go to war with the UK. In 1863 the members of the fraternity, soldiers of the "Northern Army" convened the Chicago Convention of Fenians, following which there was a sharp rise in nationalist sympathies among the Irish in America. After 1865 there were divisions in the organization and in 1870, following pressure from the US government it was disbanded. In its place was formed the underground group Clan na Gael, which began the "New Era" movement. In 1891, against the backdrop of conflict and divisions between supporters of assimilation and the extremist terrorist wing of the Gaelic clan, the Irish National

Federation of America was formed. It became the main pressure group lobbying the US government on Irish matters and Irish independence.

The national (and ideological) integrationist trend amongst both groups faded after their respective homelands won independence at the end of the First World War.(Paleczny 1999). Before this however national integration - alongside religious integration- had been one of the defining factors in the shaping of the Irish and Polish ethnic groups in the US.

6. Degree of National Assimilation

During the period of their mass immigration the Irish took on a particular and exceptional role within the multi-ethnic American society. We might call them a "buffer" group. They took the entire weight of the collision between the old Anglo-Saxon, pioneers and the new arrivals from backward Europe. The Irish were an "intermediary", a "go between" these two large social groups. Initially the level of mutual prejudice was so great that it hindered assimilation, forcing the Irish into ghettos and to the lower echelons of society.

Surviving this period (more or less 1820-1870) hardened the Irish and created in them the energy and desire to move up to higher social standings. This task was made easier by later arrivals from Europe, particularly catholic peasants from Italy and Poland.

After 1870 began the accelerated assimilation of Irish immigrants which ended in the 1920's. The First World War did much to help the Irish in their socio-economic advance. In the 1930's the number of immigrants from Ireland fell dramatically. By this stage the assimilation process was already complete.

A measure of their standing and prestige is the fact that Alfred E. Smith, the first catholic candidate for President, in 1928, was Irish. In the years of J.F.Kennedy's presidency no one doubted that the standing of the Irish Americans was firmly entrenched. In the 60's the Irish had their own State governors, federal senators and city mayors, ie. in New York, Chicago, Boston, Pittsburgh. The best known among them, J. Daley, who was mayor of Chicago on several occasions, was one of the symbols of American democracy.

Other indicators of the position of the Irish in the USA are the Church and the unions. In 1970

Americans of Irish descent made up 17% of all Catholics in the USA, but made up 50% of all bishops and 34% of priests within the church hierarchy (Poles despite representing 20% of all Catholics claimed only 1.5% of bishops. The first Irish bishop was ordained in 1800, the first Polish, P. Rhode in 1908. The Irish had their first cardinal, J McCloskey, in 1875, the Poles in 1967, J. Król).

Many other facts also bear witness to the fact that the Irish have - unlike any other catholic ethnic group - completed the phase of cultural and personal assimilation. This was made possible in large part by their being English speaking. Thanks to this fact the Irish were able to make their mark in literature, science, the arts, participating (as creators and consumers) in all areas of American culture. In the years 1930-60 the Irish became fullyfledged Americans. As A. Greeley wrote, "the feeling of ethnicity embraced the Irish Americans too late. They were the only group of immigrants that was completely acculturated". (Greeley 1972:263).

In the 70's, when the ethnic renaissance took place, it failed to embrace only the ethnically Irish group, since it had ceased to exist.

The Polish ethnic group has also passed through the assimilation phase, a fact demonstrated by indicators of their socio-professional status and the educational level of its members. Although acculturation has not yet been completed and because of the growth in the positive appreciation of their own cultural heritage in the USA and the continuing if not increasing immigration of Poles to the States it is difficult to forecast whether this will happen quickly.

This fact does not make it easier for Americans of Polish descent, and particularly those of the first reconstructed generation, full participation in American cultural and political life. This is essentially the reason why, despite many similarities between the Irish and Polish groups in the past they are still a long way apart in terms of standing and influence on the political and cultural stages in America. We can't either determine whether the fate of the Polish community will be subject of the same rules that governed the fate of the Irish Americans. Everything points to the fact however that although the Irish have passed through a process of complete assimilation the Poles consciously and deliberately halted the process at its zenith, when due to advanced structural assimilation neither aculturality nor Americanisation of the immigrants personalities had been achieved .

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