

THE RUHR-POLES: A STUDY IN GERMAN MIGRATION

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ABSTRACT

The first major wave of migration of the Poles was witnessed towards the Ruhr valley and was predominantly an essential component of the industrial manufacturing of coal, steel and mining. The immigration of the Poles westwards had a deep-seated consequence on Eastern Europe, Germany, Western Prussia and the portioned portion of Poland which eventually became a part of the Western Prussian conurbations. A majority of the ethnic Polish migrants came from the portions occupied by Russia, Posen and Silesia. One of the chief causes for large scale migration towards the German Empire was Germany was the second largest importer of labour after the United States to fulfil its demand for labour. The expansion of the Ruhr Valley as the largest industrial town of Europe, experienced spatial expansion of the province accompanied with the settlement of Ruhr-Poles. Thence began the process of assimilation and accommodation alongside preserving national identity. The following research attempts to understand the socio-economic dimension of Poles living in the Ruhr in particular and the German Empire at large coupled with the bureaucratic measures undertaken by Prussia during process of Germanisation and at the start of the Great War.

Keywords: Ruhr-Poles, Migration, Immigration, Ethnic-minority, Germanisation, Citizenship

1. INTRODUCTION

The Industrial Revolution transformed Germany into a major economic power in Europe until the outbreak of the First World War. With the advent of industrialisation, migration became an inevitable ramification with the desire to uplift one's economic position. Thus, the urban conurbations began to swell. Only one third of the total population lived in the cities immediately after the Unification of Germany (1871); but by 1910, the proportion increased to sixty percent. One of the major attributed causes is the rapid expansion of internal migration, particularly the rural to urban migration. It has been estimated that about half a million population migrated to the industrial centres of Germany; amongst which the coal and steel production centres of Ruhr province (*Ruhrgebiet*) was popular. The provinces of Düsseldorf, Duisburg and Georgsmarienhütte were some of the important centres for heavy industries (Meyer 1991, 1995;

Hochstadt 1999). It has been argued that the land between Ruhr and Emscher marked large-scale industrialisation since 1880 (Koch 1954). About 230,000 tons of coal was produced at the beginning of the nineteenth century with an average of fifteen hundred mineworkers employed (Koch 1954). By 1850, production rose to 1.7 million tons and the simultaneous expansion of the workforce to thirteen thousand men (Koch 1954). It became Europe's biggest industrial region. The Poles became an important component of its workforce as they were majority in number. Moreover, they were referred to as the Ruhr-Poles as they predominantly inhabited the Ruhr area between 1870 and 1914. The first major wave of migration of the Poles was witnessed towards the Ruhr valley and was an essential component of the industrial manufacturing of coal, steel and mining (Murzynowska 1979; Kleßmann 1987). The *Jahrbuch für die amtliche Statistik des Preußischen Staates* (1867) registered a population of sixteen Poles living in the city of Düsseldorf in 1861. However, by 1890 there were about thirty thousand Poles and by 1910 there were no less than 300,000 Poles. With the rising population of the Poles in the Ruhrgebiet in particular who co-existed alongside the ethnic German populace, it becomes pertinent to look into the socio-economic conditions of this community, which this essay shall focus on until the end of the Weimar Republic.

2. IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION OF RUHR-POLES

The rapid urbanisation of the Ruhr province as a result of industrialisation attracted a number of immigrants. H. G. Steinberg (1967) argues that to an extent industrialisation was caused by urbanisation because the expansion of urban conurbations was triggered by the increase in population which in turn stimulated the need for food, clothing and shelter; and thus creating enough vacuum for the rise of industrial sectors. During the eighteenth century, the demand for labour was fulfilled by the local populace who seasonally migrated in order to substantiate their income from agriculture. However, with time as Industrialisation began taking its course, foreign workers from Sweden carried out production. Later in 1890s, they were replaced by the Poles from Central Poland which was primarily occupied by Russia who were in turn replaced by the Polish male and female labourers and the Ruthenians who came from Galicia (Austria-Hungary) (Riegler 1958a). High wages were granted to the workers from the east by the Swedish economy leading to constant replacement and migration (Riegler 1958a). Moreover, workers from the east were affordable and were ready to take up jobs irrespective of the working condition (*billiger und williger*) because of mounting monetary pressure on them (Riegler 1958a).

With the intensification of the coal and steel industry, there was a rising demand for qualified and skilled labourers. As a result a number of skilled workers were employed from the neighbouring regions out of which about eleven percent was non-Germans (Schlieper 1986). By

the end of the eighteenth century the proportion of non-Germans increased to around twenty five percent (Schlieper 1986).

The demand for labour continued to increase through the nineteenth century so much so that the recruitment from the neighbouring provinces could not suffice the demand. Thus, after the end of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) the first wave of Polish migration was witnessed from eastern prefectures of West and East Prussia, Upper Silesia and Posen. They were mostly citizens of Prussia because these Polish prefectures were occupied by Prussia. The Poles mostly inhabited the Hellweg areas of Düsseldorf, Dortmund, Bochum, Duisburg, Essen and Mülheim (Schlieper 1986) as they were one of the prosperous industrial regions. With the intensification of heavy industries, many small and medium scale industries sprang up alongside coal and steel production. The rise of these sectors fuelled the demand for more labour. Thus, the second wave of migration was propelled which mostly comprised of non-skilled agricultural workers and craftsmen from districts of Sauerland, Rhineland, Westphalia and Lippe (Schlieper 1986). At the wake of the Unification of Germany in 1871 and later in 1890 there were about 10,742 and 30,000 people born in the Prussian occupied provinces of Upper Silesia, Posen and West Prussia (Kleßmann 1978). Further, by the end of the nineteenth century the industrial regions of Rhineland and Westphalia expanded up to the Emscher River which opened the gates for mass migration from eastern Prussia. With this proportion of the Poles before the First World War was between 350,000 and 500,000 (Kleßmann 1978). In 1906 Prussia, the District Council's register records the number of foreign workers around 605,339 (Bade 1984); of which maximum were employed in the industrial sector and their population estimating to 369,271 in 1906 and 551,371 in 1913 (Bade 1984). Employment in the agricultural sector was relatively low ranging between 236,068 and 364,633 in 1906 and 1913 respectively (Bade 1984). Thus, the total number of foreign workers by 1913 was estimated around 916,004 (Bade 1984). In Prussia, the largest number of Poles came from Russia and Austria-Hungary with a population of around 210,692 and 270,496 in 1906 and 1913 respectively (Bade 1984). Mostly men migrated and the women were made to manage the estate in the homeland. The number of men engaged in industrial production was close to ninety three per cent and the relatively low was the proportion of employment in the agricultural sector (Bade 1984). Men employed in agriculture were mostly at par with the proportion of women i.e., between forty five and fifty five percent, ranging between 161,557 and 203,076 men (Bade 1984).

The chief motive of the Poles to immigrate to the German Empire was first, "relaxation of traditional bonds"; second, relatively shorter distance to travel; third, an intensive and a string network of communication with acquaintances or relatives residing in the Ruhr; and fourth, freedom of movement within the Empire without any bureaucratic restriction. Further, as the Poles were German citizens, they enjoyed complete political as well as social rights. They were

also able to establish their own organisation as they exercised complete social and political rights. These organisations did not come up until the beginning of the processes of Germanisation. Initially these organisations comprised of immigrants belonging to specific ethnic minority group guided by common language and origin. Later, it assumed the character of a national minority. Moreover, the migration processes in Prussia overlapped with the process of Germanisation leading to the rise of anti-Polish sentiments which continued up to the twentieth century. Further, there were terms and conditions added to seek an employment in the Prussian State. The State enforced a three year fixed contract for seasonal employment. The *ausländische* Wanderarbeiter (foreign workers) had to leave for their homeland during winter season.

Further, the rising number of the Ruhr-Poles did not assure them a dignified living, albeit they were recruited in the mining industries. Their work often involved hard physical labour and attitude towards them was biased. Preferential treatment was often given to the native Germans. Previously, the miners received special privileges such as they were not liable to forced conscription; and was considered as an appreciable profession (Tenfelde 1977). The presence of a number of east Prussian migrants was regarded as a threat and squalor of the mining tradition. They were often referred to as the ‘*Polacks*’. The discriminatory attitude and the use of derogatory terms made impossible the existence of any form of class cohesion. Further, the new recruits faced wage cuts (Kleßmann 1978). Many Polish immigrants were not well versed with German language and thus proved detrimental, as most safety measures, instructions and warning for underground mining were pronounced in German (Kleßmann 1978). Although, the Upper Mining Authority of Dortmund issued a notice pressing on the need to master German language, yet it was not enforced everywhere (Kleßmann 1978). Often the Poles were condemned for having immoral attitude and lacked character by the Catholic German workforce (Schäfer 1990). They were also referred to as “pathetic aliens” who consumed excessive amounts of alcohol and resided in “pathetic conditions” (Schäfer 1990).

3. THE RISE OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

At first, during the initial wave, Polish immigrants were integrated into the German church as they shared common religious affinity that blurred the language, cultural and ethnic barrier (Bachen-Rehm 2004). However, later a Polish Catholic Association was formed which was formulated on the lines of the Catholic Workers’ Association and was directed by the German clergy, albeit these efforts of integration into the church were considered as insufficient by the Catholics (Bachen-Rehm 2004). The first Polish Catholic Association was established in 1877 in Dortmund and was named as *Jedność* (Unity) (Bachen-Rehm 2004). By the end of 1893, about hundred such associations came up having a minimum of thirty thousand members in total. The main objective of these associations was “to encourage the Polish workers with a sense of order

and virtue and to defend the members of the association from any kind of threat and unrestrained behaviours". With the increasing number of Poles in the Ruhrgebiet, the German priest has lost their importance and emphasis was laid on the appointment of Polish priest who would carry out the process of integration to church. Thus, in 1884, Joseph Szotowski (Polish origin) was appointed as the priest in the Ruhrgebiet. Albeit, Joseph Szotowski was meant to take care of the Polish immigrants, but he also played an important role in enhancing the communication networks and the association of the Poles (Nadolny 2006). With this he lost the faith of the German clerics and in 1890 set back to his diocese (Nadolny 2006). The appointment of Franz Liss of West Prussia as the successor of Joseph Szotowski brought the relation between the Polish and the German Catholics at the crossroads. He continued to follow the policy of integration of his predecessors, yet he was critiqued for being a dissenter of the Polish state (Kleßmann 1974a). His primary aim was to secure the Polish immigrants from the influence of socialism which was taken up with the help of a Polish newspaper which was founded in Bochum namely: *Wiarus Polski* (Polish Veteran) (Kleßmann 1974a). With the help of this newspaper Liss was able to increase his engagement in the Polish association and simultaneously shift the focus of the Ruhr-Poles (Kleßmann 1974a). *Wiarus Polski* was an important tool which helped in combating the sense of inferiority which the Polish immigrants faced against the German sentiments. Further, a sense of national consciousness was aroused which helped in promoting their upliftment (Nadolny 2006). Moreover, to their advantage, the Polish began to follow the *Wiarus Polski* and hence, the German priest lost their importance and could no longer keep a track of their activities due to the inability to understand the language (Nadolny 2006). Thus, the German clerics persuaded Liss to undermine and later suspend *Wiarus Polski*, but the latter refused and was sent back to his homeland (Nadolny 2006).

With this the demand for a Polish cleric continued to rise and widened the gap between the German and Polish Catholics. The priests who were given the charge of the Ruhr negotiated on the idea of learning Polish language and taking care of the immigrants (Kleßmann 1978). To this the Ruhr-Poles accused the clerics of being ignorant and chiefly stressed on "Germanisation" (Brandt 1987). This led to the worsening of relation of the Poles in the *Zentrum*. The *Zentrum* was an important political party of the German Empire which was established in 1870 and represented "political Catholicism" up to the end of the Weimar regime (Bachem-Rehm 2013). In the wake of Polish immigration to the Ruhr, the *Zentrum* represented the demands and interests of the Poles

Further, any kind of politics was not permissible and was asked to refrain from "indulging in and manipulating matters of public affairs" (Peters-Schildgen 1997). Financial aid was provided by the association especially when ill and took care of widows and orphans (Peters-Schildgen 1997). With the help of lectures and evening entertainment a kind of social gathering was offered

to Polish workers which in turn strengthened relations between each other (Bachem-Rehm 2006). A push to Polish national consciousness was provided by the takeover of *Wiarus Polski* newspaper by a West Prussian proprietor Jan Brejski. However, his processes of integration were similar to the efforts laid by Liss and was structured around the Catholic association (Peters-Schildgen 1997). The first Polish Association was established in 1895 in Wanne (a district in Herne) (Peters-Schildgen 1997). The Polish Association of Wanne was a singing club. Between 1899 and 1902, various other forms of Polish Association came into existence such as gymnasium club popularly known as *Sokol* (Falcon) (Peters-Schildgen 1997; Blecking 1987). These associations were under a close watch as they were considered as the centre for Polish agitation (Peters-Schildgen 1997; Blecking 1987). In fact the real intension behind formation of such associations and clubs was not only directed towards securing a level of ethnic unification but also used as a vehicle to strive and achieve Polish influence through considerable participation of Poles in affairs of Ruhr society.

These clubs at first fulfilled the social needs of the minority and were congenial but later became political and nationalist (Kleßmann 1978). The changing nature of the organisation was remarked by the Prussian authorities as “national separation movement” and struggled against it. With this the Poles were assumed as a plausible political threat on the one hand and strengthening and intensification of the Polish subculture within the group on the other hand. According to the Chief Administrator of Münster: “that a Polish state of its own...had developed (in Ruhr area) which could be called anti-German and which showed more sympathies for France” (Kleßmann 1978). Christoph Kleßmann (1978) argues that the intensification of the Polish subculture, obstruction to Germanisation and creating suitable conditions for easy adaptation and stabilising to the new industrial work culture were important tenets for social integration. Moreover, integration becomes an easier process further, when the minorities in an ethnic plural society are amalgamated barring the cultural differences and assimilation processes (Esser 1980).

In 1894, an organisation named *Verband der Polen in Deutschland* (Association of Poles in Germany) was founded which looked after the political interest of the Poles. The *Wiarus Polski* established *Zjednoczenie Zawadowe Polskie* (Polish Professional Union) (ZZP) as the Polish believed that there was no adequate representation of them in the union (Kulczycki 1994). ZZP was founded in 1902, and gained popularity among the Polish mining workers. The number of Polish members in the association was greater than those in the German miners’ Union, the *Alter Verband* (Old Association) and *Christlicher Gewerkverein* (Christian Union) (Kleßmann 1997). Moreover, it was believed that the Poles who held a position in the German unions did not have a say as they were deprived of many rights comparatively (Kulczycki 1994). Adding to this, the inability to understand the language and the incapacity to put forth the requirements of the Polish

miners propelled the formation of such an organisation. It became the third largest union of mining workers in the Ruhr. This union was successfully able to organise movements, protests and strikes between 1905 and 1912 and election of the workers committee and safety officers (Kleßmann 1974b, 1979). The Trade Union was able to garner strength through combined efforts and cooperation at the strikes and thence marking the genius for the coming up of Polish middle class. Small-scale business activities sprang up in the Polish quarters of the Ruhr district such as grocery stores, cobblers, stationery shops and bakeries (Kleßmann 1978). Ruhr cities such as Gelsenkirchen in Schalke district was belittled as 'Little-Ortelsburg' (Kleßmann 1978). Over two thousand Poles had established their small-scale business across Ruhr. This effort was immensely supported by Polish press and brought forth a campaign "each to their own kind" (Kleßmann 1978). However, this campaign was sabotaged by the big business owners of Germany who often advertised their business in the Polish newspapers and appointed Polish salesmen to retain Polish customer (Kleßmann 1978). At every stance any effort by the Polish organisation was weakened by the German State. All meetings of the organisation including religious were observed under the impression that they might assume a political character (Kleßmann 1978). The only blockade was that the German authorities were incompetent to understand the Polish language (Kleßmann 1978). Thus, a law was enforced in 1908 which stressed on the use of the German language in any form of public meetings (Kleßmann 1978). In 1905, a Pole Surveillance Centre was established in Bochum to monitor the activities of the Poles (Kleßmann 1978). The state suspected that there was an intention to create a Polish state, West of German Empire. In this regard Heinrich von Stutt emphasised that:

"If further Polish development is not hindered then the time is no longer far away, when in individual districts the Poles will achieve control over a majority of votes... In these circumstances the movement can in turbulent times become a danger to public order"(Bachem-Rehm 2013).

Heinrich von Stutt recommended measures to combat this problem wherein he stressed that;

"close monitoring of the agitation and association activity, the exclusion from the area of national Polish priests, limiting the use of Polish language at public meetings, exclusively German schooling so as to remove the Poles in the west of the monarchy from the influences of anti-German agitation"(Bachem-Rehm 2013).

In short, the ZZP became the medium of labour organisation (Koch 1954). There were already two such organisations in the region and the Poles were permitted to seek membership in either of them (Koch 1954). By 1902, it has been estimated that there were about eighty thousand members in these organisations (Koch 1954). Max Jürgen Koch (1954) highlights the Poles

continued to have membership of other organisations outside ZZZP even after five years of its establishment. The ZZZP was viewed as an instrument to excite Polish national consciousness. The Polish alliance in Germany *Związek Polaków w Niemczech* or *Polinische Berufsbereinigung* was founded in 1894 which aimed at being an economic agent for the Ruhr-Poles but eventually assumed a political character, and thereby retarding the interests of the Poles (Koch 1954; Wehler 1966). The ZZZP thus, renounced its political movement particularly which were socialist in character. It began laying emphasis on economic considerations such as paying funds to the employed, burial expenses and money to those who were ill (Wachowiak 1916). Public meetings were initiated to discuss matters concerning the condition of workers. It distributed pamphlets and provisions with respect to labour exchange was established (Wachowiak 1916). One of the fundamental aims for the establishment of ZZZP was the incapacity and the reluctance of the union to look into the considerations and needs of the Polish miners (Imbusch 1909). For instance, the first coal miners association ‘*Alter Verband*’ was set up after the end of 1889 strike which tried to attract a number Polish miner (Imbusch 1909). In 1890, at the assembly, a demand for Union’s own publication in Polish language was put forth (Imbusch 1909). However, this demand was not fulfilled. The same demand was again raised in 1894 after the reorganisation of the Union and comprised of about three thousand Polish miners (Kleßmann 1978). They were permitted to begin their publication only when they had a minimum of four thousand Polish miners registered in their Union. If the number of registered members decreased from the actual required number, then the publication could only continue for four months. These four months was the grace period given to the Union to fulfil the criteria else the publication would cease to exist. However, such resolutions existed only on paper and were not enforced upon practically. In 1898, the Polish magazine named *Górnik* (miners) was published, but it was subscribed widely leading to the termination of the publication. Later in 1901, *Óswiata* (General Association of Trade Unions, Education) was published bimonthly, approved by the *Alter Verband*, as the official magazine in Polish language.

The spirit of national consciousness was kept alive by the Polish Press. There were a number of papers published in Posnania, Graudenz and Thorn and were in circulation in the Ruhr area. The journal *Wiarus Polski* started in the 1890 in Bochum and *Narodowiec* started in 1908 in Herne occupied special importance (Kleßmann 1974). The journals served as a medium of communication for the Polish organisations and brought to notice about the condition of the Poles to the Prussians in the west and the east “*Polenpolitik*” (Kleßmann 1974). After the end of the First World War, a number of Poles began migrating to France. It was then when the *Wiarus Polski* and *Nardowiec* first appeared in Lille and Lens respectively (Kleßmann 1986). The press played an important role in unifying the ethnic minorities into on group. The journalists and publishers of *Wiarus Polski* have been responsible for establishing a number of clubs, societies and a Trade Union for the Poles in the Ruhr province. Both *Wiarus Polski* and *Nardowiec* were

conservative in nature and had a significant impact on the Polish communities and thus stabilising them. In France, the readership of both the newspapers crossed that in Ruhr and Westphalia. It has been estimated that in 1924, the circulation of *Wiarus Polski* was around seven thousand subscribers and by 1928 it increased to ten to twelve thousand subscribers (Kleßmann 1986). However, by the 1930s, there were a series of political and social instability. It was at this time that the journals published by communist and left wing became widespread. The popularity and wide circulation of these papers helped the ethnic minorities in maintaining their connections with their homeland.

Further, the end of First World War mark significant benefits for the Polish minority in the Ruhr. The clause of Treaty of Versailles which provided for the reestablishment of a new Polish State presented an option before the Poles to choose between German or Polish nationality. However, this promulgated to large-scale internal dispute wherein they had to determine their allegiance to their home land or a political national allegiance (Kleßmann 1978). The genesis of the same was laid since the intensification of Germanisation.

4. CITIZENSHIP LAW AND PRUSSIAN DEFENCE POLICY

With the Germanisation process getting intense by the time, there were rising debates over citizenship and thus the question on “what it means to be German” was raised (Gosewinkel 2001, 2005). A ‘Centralised German Citizenship Law’ (*Reich – und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*) came into force in 1913 whose underlying basis was German descent (Gosewinkel 2005; Brubaker 1992; Kirn 2009). It has been argued that the citizenship law “replaced the concept of citizenry as a territorial community with one of the citizenry as a community of descent, which is unrelated to residence” (Gosewinkel 2005; Brubaker 1992; Kirn 2009). This during the nineteenth and the early twentieth century fuelled the ethno-nationalist sentiments (Brubaker 1992). The basis of citizenship before 1913 was region and the region in turn belonged was part of the German Empire. For instance, people were citizens of the Kingdom of Prussia, Grand Duchy of Posen and Kingdom of Bavaria and these Kingdoms in turn formed a part of the larger German Empire (Brubaker 1992).

The Citizenship Law of 1913 was systematised further for Germans living abroad on condition that they had not acquired any other citizenship especially to the country they emigrated to and were agreeable to offer military service to the nation. Citizenship to foreign workers was offered on conditional basis.

To large extent the law was persuaded by the Wilhelmine period of high imperialism (Maurer 1986; Just 1988). Further, the law represented the nationalist principles (*völklich*) in order to preserve the nationalist sentiments for Germany abroad and thus creating an ethno-nationalist

brigade to arrest the heavy inflow of immigrants from the east, also described as the “flood from the east” (Maurer 1986; Just 1988). Local administration and municipal councils looked after the proportion of immigrants entering Germany along with their registration. This enabled in keeping a track on the inflow of immigrants and their population with the State. Albeit, there was control on the inflow of migrants, yet there was a constant demand for labour which made Germany import *ausländische* Wanderarbeiter. Most of them were required to deliver hard physical labour.

Before the outbreak of the Great War, restrictive measures were enforced against the Poles from Russia. However, with the start of the war these measures became further stringent. As mentioned earlier in the Prussian States workers were required to return to their homeland during winters and were hired on seasonal basis. But after the outbreak of the war, they were not allowed to leave Germany under any circumstances or change the place of residence within Germany. Under the *Preussische Abwehrpolitik* ‘Prussian Defence Policy’, the Polish population was under a close watch (Bade 1995, 1980b; Kahrs 1993; Wennemann 1997; Del Fabro 1996). In fact the Galacian Poles were too under scrutiny, albeit Austria-Hungary was their allies in the war (Bade 1983). Unlike the Russian Poles, they were allowed to go to their homeland (Bade 1983). However, with the start of the war the immigration of Galacian Poles began to decline in Germany as they were mobilised by Austria to join the military force (Bade 1983). Those employed in Germany faced difficulty in returning to their homes due to administrative impediments (Bade 1983). Moreover, after the start of the Great War, German economy transformed into a war based economy and thence triggering the demand for *ausländische* Wanderarbeiter (Oltmer 1995, 1998a, 1998b). Majority of the *ausländische* Wanderarbeiter in Germany were the Russian Poles, but they alone could not fulfil the demand for labour both in industrial as well as agricultural space.

Thus to sum up the defence policy of Prussian Germany: this policy was brought to force for security and ethno-political causes. Further, it imposed employment constraints and compulsory return on the Polish populace (Bade 1995, 1980b; Kahrs 1993). However, practically this policy was not implemented until 1925-26 i.e., under the Weimar Republic because of the rising demand for labour especially in the agricultural sector (Bade 1995, 1980b; Kahrs 1993). The real motive of the *Preussische Abwehrpolitik* was to bring to an end the “Polonisation of the East” and help the immigration of labour population into Germany from the eastern borders (Weber 1892). Later under the Weimar Republic an effort was made to take control on the number of immigrants by limiting the replacement of workers and employing skill based workers (Bade 1995, 1980b; Kahrs 1993). With this one may deduce that the immigration to Germany was decided upon not by its *Abwehrpolitik* but by its basic principle of ‘labour and market policy’ (Bade 1995, 1980b; Kahrs 1993).

The establishment of a new Polish State enthused excitement among many and fuelled a return migration of a number of Ruhr-Poles; especially those who held position in the organisations, clubs and associations (Kleßmann 1978). However, within a short span quite a few returned to Germany due to dwindling economic status of new Poland and faced non-acceptance and belittled as *Westfalczycs* (Kleßmann 1978). The fear of forced conscription in the Polish army due to Polish-Soviet War between 1919 and 1921 also forced a number of Poles to return to Germany (Kleßmann 1978).

But on the whole one-third of Ruhr-Poles estimating around 500,000 returned to Poland while the rest either stayed in the Ruhrgebiet or immigrated to French coal mines (Kleßmann 1978; Piotrowski 2006). The immigration of Poles from Ruhr to France mounted tension between Germans and the remaining Poles in the areas. The German State authorities often looked at Poles with suspicion and believed that they had contacts with the French and the Poles living there on the one hand and on the other hand the French considered the Poles as their ally (Kleßmann 1978; Piotrowski 2006). The French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 further worsened the relationship between the Germans and the Poles (Kleßmann 1978). The Poles were viewed as sympathisers of the French (Kleßmann 1978). Thus, in *Wiarus Polski* published "*Aufruf an die Polen in Westfalen und Rhineland*" (An Appeal by the Poles in Westphalia and Rhineland) which was meant to clear any kind of doubt and suspicion in the minds of Germans about the Ruhr-Poles (Kleßmann 1978).

"The Polish workers who are German citizens know very well what is to be done under prevailing circumstances and how they should conduct. To you, fellow countrymen, that you are organised in our clubs and associations, we appeal to with our hearts and plead, everyone with respect that would be preserved and do nothing that could harm us. Take pain and strive to fulfil your duties to the State whose citizens you are. Do not interfere in matters, that do not concern you. Try to influence your surroundings in this direction as well" (Kleßmann 1978).

This appeal could not convince much and the sense of suspicion continued to persist. Moreover the Ruhr-Poles witnessed diminished opportunities which forced them to flee to France; those who remained succumbed to intensive pressure, albeit the rights for minorities was the cornerstone of Weimar Republic (Kleßmann 1978; Stefanski 2007). The networks of communication established by the clubs and associations were weakened (Stefanski 2007). The Poles lost their importance and identity on German grounds and instead cultural and social adherence came forward (Stefanski 2007). Thus, Polish associations had to adjust with the existing political structure and laid emphasis in the cultural sphere (Stefanski 2007). In 1922,

Union of German Poles was established in Berlin namely; “*Bund der Polen in Deutschland*” (Stefanski 2007). It acted as a cultural organisation for the Poles in Germany (Stefanski 2007).

5. CONCLUSION

The Age of Industrialisation developed multifaceted systems of migration. The establishment of the Ruhrgebiet as one of the largest industrial region not only attracted but also augmented the demand for labour. About 1.2 million foreign workers were involved in continental migration in the German Empire (Bade 2003). Out of the diverse ethnic groups present in the German Empire, the Poles were maximum in number especially in the Ruhrgebiet marking a multicultural mosaic within German society. The history of Ruhr-Poles in Germany has put to light two important considerations: first, the process of social integration which was carried out in full-swing; and second, alongside social integration, the national identity was promoted and preserved and thence encouraged a sense of national consciousness albeit, the intensification official processes by Prussian state in curbing and restricting the number of migration and strengthening of Germanhood through the imposition of a defence policy. Attempts also were made by the Poles to gain political influence and engage in social and political affairs particularly at the local level through the formation of a number of organisation and associations. However, with the outbreak of the First World War, bureaucratic hurdles restricted the smooth functioning of these associations on account of suspicion and threat. Further, a number of limitations imposed on migration and employment which led to drastic reduction in their population with a maximum either fleeing to France or returning to their homeland; while those who stayed had to succumb to the political pressures.

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