Immigration and Economic Development: Brazil and Argentina (1870 – 1930)

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Abstract

Between 1870 and 1930, Latin American countries passed by several economic and social changes. The two most representative examples of it were Brazil and Argentina, the two biggest economies of Latin America at that time and the ones with similar development processes with similar results. This paper aims to analyze, link and compare the role of European immigrants in the economic development of both countries from 1870 to 1930. On this period, changes on the international demand allied with the fall on costs of freight and improvements on maritime transports led to the inclusion of both countries on the international trade route. Their agrarian-export economies expanded. In Brazil, the expansion of coffee production to the northeast of São Paulo’s state and, in Argentina, the growth of the cereal productions and cattle rising stock were the motors of those two economies. At the same time, in both countries, the industrial development and modernization of their infrastructure began. Moreover, both countries were characterized by the great availability of land, scarceness of population and growing demand for labor force to sustain the agrarian-export economy expansion. The policies seeking to solve these problems led to the massive entrance of immigrants. Accordingly to the historiography, immigration led to population growth, monetary circulation, development of commerce and several authors highlight their role in the industrial development. The theory of growth induced by exports explains the industrialization in both countries and its theorists also present data showing the immigrants as fundamental components for it.

Keywords: Immigration; Brazil; Argentina; Industrialization; Society.

1. Introduction

The period of sixty years between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th is marked, in Latin America, by several changes, derived from some key-factors. First, the growing demand in the industrialized countries markets and in the industries, especially United States and Europe, for primary products produced in Latin America and the increasing of the Latin American population’s demands for manufactured goods, was leading to the development of commerce and monetary circulation in the region, almost inexistent before. Secondly, the technological development on maritime transports occurred during the period can be considered one of the most important factors for the development the region lived in the decades following the 1870’s. It allowed the reduction on the costs of transoceanic freights, by using the steam-power transatlantic ships, increasing the frequency and speed of voyages and setting the Latin American continent into the international trade route. New technologies also allowed the transportation of perish goods across the ocean, what allowed the exportation of frozen meat from Argentina to Europe. Third, the transoceanic telegraph cables and the railway net settlement in Latin America created new means of communication and transportation between the New World and Europe. All these factors combined led to the development of the Latin Americans’ countries and economic boom lived in the period. The two most representative examples of it were Brazil and Argentina.

The agro-export economy of both countries – the Brazilian based on the coffee production and the Argentina’s on the cereals and cattle-related products – had a main role in the economic development they lived during the end of the 19th and first decades of the 20th Centuries and by the policies that originate the presence of immigrants, especially Europeans, in those regions. Generally, the bibliography review showed that the immigration process was related with the need for territorial occupation and as supplier of labor force to the expansion of the agricultural economy. To several
authors the increment of the immigrant population constituted an important factor to the social and economic development and changes lived by both countries between 1870 and 1930. The immigrants were responsible for the growth of the population, the development of the monetary economy, rise on the demand of specific goods and gave dynamism to the commerce and service sectors in both countries. Also, the immigrants are often related to the industrial development of those countries.

The beginning of industrialization in Latin America is a subject widely discussed by historiography and marked by divergences within its theorists. Several authors date the beginning of industrial development as earlier as 1880-1890; others defend the argument that one cannot discuss about industrialization before 1930. Historiography shows that a common frame in many Latin American countries lies in the fact that the conditions to the appearance of industry occurred during the cycles of growth induced by expansion of exports. As stated by Lewis (1991, p. 245), with the expansion of the export sector, centered on the primary goods production, allied to the expansion of the remunerated labor market, led to the consolidation of a monetary economy between 1870 and 1920. According to the author, the period was also marked by the political stability, insertion of the countries into the world-economy system, modernization of transports and communication, entrance of foreigner capital and growth of population through the arrival of a great number of immigrants. All these factors allowed a general economic expansion which led to a social, juridical and institutional context where the expansion of manufactures destined to the internal market took place.

This theory can be found in the bibliographical review to explain the industrialization process both in Brazil and Argentina in the period between 1880 and 1930. Industrial census and statistics show the evolution of manufactures in the mentioned period and point to the industrial sector as dynamic and in expansion. Both countries suffered the effects of the Frist World War and from the 1929 crisis, but even so, the industry could still develop although at lower rates than preceding periods.

Furtado (2007, p. 173-174) also relates the beginning of Latin American industrialization with the increase in productivity of the export sector, due to the growth of internal and external market demand by the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, allied with the modernization in maritime transports, fall on freight costs and increase in the purchase power of the local populations. This caused modifications into the local demand, oriented, then, to manufactured goods and to the installation of an appropriated infrastructure.

The present paper intends to analyze and compare the influence immigrants had on the economic and, more specifically, industrial development of Brazil and Argentina during the mentioned period. Moreover, compare these processes on two important agro-export regions such as the province of Buenos Aires and the state of São Paulo. The studied period is characterized by the similitudes both countries present on theirs economics sceneries and on immigration and industrialization processes. Both were exporters of primary products for industrialized countries and from them imported manufactured goods. Brazil and Argentina used the foreign labor force for theirs growths and both received the majority of the immigrants that entered Latin America. This paper is made with the preliminary results of an ongoing investigation which aims the composition of the master dissertation to the presented to the University of São Paulo.

2. Immigration process in Brazil and Argentina

The agro-export economy characteristic of Brazil and Argentina was responsible, in a way or another, by the policies that led the presence of Europeans in these regions. The immigrants, associated with the development of these economies, had their share of responsibility on the industrial development of these countries.

The migratory movement to Brazil took place mostly in the 1880’s, with governmental policies aiming the attraction of foreign labor force to the dynamic center of the economy at the time, the coffee production. Immigrants worked at the coffee farms under the colonato production system on which the land owner hired the immigrant (or a family of immigrants) – colonos - and paid them a monetary remuneration for their work on the coffee harvest and provided them with a plot of land on which to grow subsistence crops allowing them to sell the overproduction of those products (Fausto, 1986, p. 780).

On the middle of that decade, the coffee farmers and the provincial government of São Paulo implemented successful measures that assured a continuous income of foreigners until the 1920’s. The immigrants, mostly Italians, came to Brazil on a subsidy scheme. Both Brazilian and São Paulo’s government paid for their transportation overseas and, beyond that, provided infrastructure to receive the foreigners. Reception centers were constructed during the 1880’s aiming to provide the immigrants with housing, food, medical assistance and medicines, if needed, during the period between their arrival and their allocation on the coffee farms in the countryside. The transport via railway to the farms
was also free of charges. Between 1890 and 1930, over 3.5 million immigrants arrived in Brazil and the Census of 1920 showed around 1/5 to 1/3 of immigrants in the composition of populations on the cities of São Paulo State (Bacellar&Brioschi, 1999, p. 141-147; Gifun, 1972, p. 70-71).

The international migration was related to the political-economic scenery in Brazil and also to the international context. The decade of 1890 was the period when the entrance of immigrants was higher. Brazil was living a period of transformations, on the economic side, by the peak of the coffee harvest development and, on the political scene, by the abolition of slavery in 1888 and the proclamation of the Republic in 1889. On the international context, the European countries were living an economic crisis and unemployment. From 1895 to 1897, more the 145,000 foreigners entered the country annually; between 1911 and 1913, this entrance was between 135.000 and 192.000; on the decade of 1920, only the year of 1926 received over 100.000 immigrants. From the total amount of immigrants that entered the country, the great majority, 1.156.472, were Italians, followed by 1.030.066 Portuguese and 551.385 Spaniards. The fall on the arrival of foreigners in the 1920's can be explained by overproduction of coffee and the crisis on the sector (Petrone, 1997, p. 100-104).

The incentives to immigrate to São Paulo attracted about 60% of all the foreigners that entered the Brazil between 1884 and 1933, representing an average of 800.000 immigrants per decade (Versiani, 2002, p. 206). At the same period, the exponential growth of Brazilian and São Paulo state and city population and increase in urban population is highlighted by several authors. In 1872, before the massive immigration to Brazil and São Paulo, the city of São Paulo had mere 23.000 inhabitants. In 1920 it reached 580.000, being almost 2/3 of them foreigners (Dean, 1971, p. 58).

The population of São Paulo State grew from 1.221.380 inhabitants in 1886 to 2.279.608 in 1900 and to 6.433.327 in 1934. It can be noticed that in only 14 years the population increased almost two times. And on the second period, from 1900 to 1934, it triplicated. These increases in the population can be associated to the natural growth but is especially the massive entrance of immigrants that had the major influence on it (Carvalho, 2007).

In the leading coffee producer region of São Paulo State and one of the most important during the period for the Brazilian economy, in the Northeast of São Paulo, called Alta Mogiana due to the railway line that connected it to the capital and the exporting port in the coast, the immigrant presence was strong and had several effects. The population increased from 63.229 in 1884 to 414.499 in 1934, over 650% in less than 50 years. If compared to the beginning of the century, the great majority, 1.156.472, were Italians, followed by 1.030.066 Portuguese and 551.385 Spaniards. The fall on the arrival of foreigners in the 1920's can be explained by overproduction of coffee and the crisis on the sector (Petrone, 1997, p. 100-104).

The major role of immigration in Argentina was colonization and settlement. The several presidents and their migratory polices, starting on 1860 with President Juan Bautista Alberdi and his vision towards the immigrants when he affirmed that they should “civilize (the territory) and create a new Argentina”. With Bartolomeo Mitre (1862-1864), the immigrant’s paper was to “change the reality but integrating to the existing country without the need of creating a new one”. But it was during President Domingos Faustino Sarmiento’s government (1868-1874) that migratory policies took greater place. It was created the first “Colonization and Immigration Law” which led to the creation of the General Department of Immigration, responsible for bringing and assisting on the arrival and installation of the immigrants in Argentina; on the biggest cities, it was created the “Committee of Immigration” as an organ destined to assist the immigrants (Oliveira, 2011, p. 4-6).

Many authors quoted statistic data to show the influence of immigrants in the population growth. Argentina was the second country that received the most European immigrants, Spanish and Italian on its majority. Accordingly to the National Census, immigrants represented 12.1% of the total population in 1869, 25.4% in 1895 and 29.9% in 1914. In 1869, the total population of the country was over 1.897.000. 26 years later, in 1895, it grew to 4.123.800. By 1914, argentine population had reached over 8.162.000 inhabitants. Estimations show a population of 11.935.700 in 1930. Between 1871 and 1914, almost six million foreigners arrived in the country and little over a half of those returned to their home countries. Immigration had an active participation not only on the population growth, but also on the rise of the annual growth rate and offer of labor force (Lattes&Lattes, 1974, p. 23, 33, 59-63; Irigoin, 1984, p. 5-6; Conde, 1986, p. 335-336).

Data show that during the period after the World War I and the crisis of 1930, immigration in Argentina fell and almost ceased for almost a decade after 1913. From 1921 to 1930 the net balance between the arrival and return of immigrants in the country was much lower if compared with the decade previous to the war.

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1 On this subject, see: Fausto (1986, p. 779), Dean (1971, p. 58) and Carvalho (2007)
The immigrants, by their expression on the composition of both countries’ population, had great influence on the society and economy and brought countless changes into them. Since immigrants corresponded always to a significant part of the population, and their majority – Spanish and Italian, as mentioned above - came from countries with similar linguistics, cultural and religious characteristics, the integration process was easier and smoother. The presence of immigrants in the daily life in Argentina affected the quotidian life of the local society. “Values, habits and the European taste began to be shared with the criolla elite, giving to Buenos Aires the atmosphere of a modern, European and progressive capital” (Conde, 1968, p. 87-88).

A great part of those who settle permanently in Argentina did so on the littoral, in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, Córdoba and Entre Ríos, increasing their participation on the composition of total population from 48% in 1869 to 72% in 1914. Urbanization was greatly influenced by immigrants as well. While in 1969, urban population represented 29% of the total population, in 1914 this ratio raised to 53%. Buenos Aires saw its population exploded from 181,838 inhabitants in 1869 to 1,575,814 in 1914. Other important province’s capitals had gone through the similar effect. Rosario’s population grew from 23,139 to 224,592 in the same period. Córdoba rise from 28,523 to 121,982, Mendoza from 8,124 to 58,790 and Tucumán from 17,438 to 92,824. The number of small villages in the countryside, the settlements, increased due to the expansion of cereal cultivation into the pampas from 20 in 1869 to 211 in 1914 (Gallo, 1986, p. 363-365).

From the data presented it is clear the influence immigrants had on the growth and development of regions and cities in Brazil and Argentina. Their presence stimulated investments in infrastructure, urbanization, development of commerce and services.

3. The roots of industrial growth: theories and immigrants.

On the following paragraphs, it will be discussed the several theories used to explain the beginning of industrialization in Brazil and Argentina.

Irigoin (1984, p. 1), in his work regarding the evolution of the Argentine industry, made an analysis of the most accepted theories to explain the process in the country. Accordingly to the author, most of those theories support the idea that the industrialization process occurred only in the 1930’s, derived from the substitution of imports’ policy, after the 1929 crisis. Other theorists state that industrialization in Argentina only took place after the 1940’s. Only few of them took into consideration the industrial advance that happened much earlier, in the 1880’s [2].

Di Telia & Zymelman (1967) affirm that the 1930’s crisis had a hasten effect over the industrial development and the 1940’s provided a new impulse to industrialization with government policies towards it. These authors do not deprecate the effects of the First World War associated to the existence of a basic infrastructure, affirming that it created, in 1914, the necessary basis for the industrial growth. Dorfman (1970) recognize the origin of Argentinian industries in the 19th century, nevertheless, he states that as there were no adequate fomentation policies or protection, until 1913, the industry possessed primitive characteristics. Ferrer (1981) claims that the industrial development began with the 1929’s crisis, being initiated in 1930 and ending with the end of the first phase of the industrialization of substitution in the 1940’s (Irigoin 1984, p. 1-2).

Among the authors defending the beginning of industrialization in Argentina in the 1880’s, there is a consensus about the factors that influenced it: starting in 1870 Argentina had the political power concentrated in the national authorities leading to the unification of the country; the indigenous invasion problem was solved; Buenos Aires became the federal capital; an enormous mass of immigrants arrived into the country; foreign investments occurred in infrastructure; raw material was abundant, which was the basis for the nascent process manufactures. Also, after the federalization of Buenos Aires and unification of Argentina, the Desert Campaigns started with the objective of expanding the frontiers and conquer the region of the pampas, what would open them to the expansion of economic activity. The Conquer of the Desert was fundamental to attend the increase in the global demand, since it allowed the exploitation of the new land and consequently increase on the meat and cereal productions. Investments in infrastructure, mainly in the transports and communications was essential at that time (Conde, 1986, p. 329-330).

Irigoin (1984, p. 4) supports the idea that the industrial activities developed as earlier as in the 1880’s, dedicated to processing raw material from the agro-export sector [3].

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[3] Lenz (2004, p. 150) presents some quantitative data. In 1822, the capital Buenos Aires possessed 674 industrial establishments, evolving to 1,265 in 1855. In 1895, the number had multiplied by seven, reaching to 8,439 establishments. In the province of Buenos Aires, establishments grew from 2.144 in 1881 to 5.576 in 1895.
From the First Industrial Census of Buenos Aires City of 1887, Irigoin (1984, p. 9) highlights the existence of 6.128 establishments using 42.321 workers. The Second National Census of 1895 indicates that at the time, the industrialization process had already begun. Buenos Aires possessed 38% of the total industrial establishments of Argentina, 48% of the labor force and 51% of the capital. The city was the most important contact area with the internal and external markets. To the author, the Buenos Aires Port and the immigrants were the most important factors for its development. Between 1887 and 1895, the growth of manufactures in Buenos Aires is 4.4% per year and the labor force grew at a rate of 6.6% per year (Irigoin, 1984, p. 9-11).

The Third National Census shows, in 1914, a huge evolution, as in terms of industry as in changes on the Argentinean society. The number of industrial establishments doubled, grew at 3.8% per year, reaching 48.779 establishments. The number of people working in industry grew at a rate of 4.6% per year, reaching 410,201 workers, representing 39% of the working force in 1914. The invested capital, at 12% per year. Urban population rose from 42% to 58% between 1895 and 1914. Up to that year, the spontaneous process of substitution of importation, according to comparative advantages, allowed the local manufacture of goods previously supplied through imports. The sectors where this was more evidently were: food, textile, construction and furniture. In 1914, the national industry provided 71.3% of the industrialized good consumed (Irigoin, 1984, p. 18-19).

Rock (1986, p. 425) points that the Argentinean industry, after 1913, grew at the same rate as the economy, despite increases at a superior rate after the war. During the 1920's, the industry became more diversified in areas as durable consumption goods, chemicals, electricity and metallurgy. At the end of that decade, the metallurgic industry had an outburst growth.

To Lewis (1991), the industry gained representatively in the Argentinean economy. In the country, the relation between the agrarian sector production and the manufactured production changed from 2,1:1 in 1900 to 1,3:1 in 1929. The agrarian index rose from 29 to 117 while the manufacture from 9 to 46 (using 1950 as 100). To the author, these index show a restructuration of the economy (Lewis, 1991, p. 243)

To explain the industrialization in Brazil, Suzigan (2000) indicates four main theories. The first one is the Theory of Adverse Shocks, that has on Cepal and Celso Furtado its biggest theorists, concentrates on the external shocks and its effects over importation of manufactured goods. The second, industrialization leaded by the expansion of exports, defended by Warren Dean (1971), establishes a direct relation between the primary sector exports and the industrialization, especially for the state of São Paulo. The third theory is known as the industrialization by “belated capitalism”, stating that industrialization occurred due to the development of capitalism in Brazil, being influenced firstly by internal factors and later by extern factors. This theory is defended by Mello (1975), Silva (1976) and Cano (1977). The last theory analyses the governmental policies to the development of industry, having on the study made by Versiani&Versiani (1977) its great exponent.

In this paper, we focus on the second theory as an explanation for the rise of industry in Brazil. This theory is also presented in Argentina, as mentioned above on the thesis of Irigoin.

Dean (1971, p. 9-14) in his study regarding the industrialization of São Paulo, states that the coffee, as a primary good, was responsible for the needed infrastructure to the appearance of industry in the paulista state: “São Paulo’s industrialization depended, from the start, on the demand provoked by the growing foreigner coffee market”. The author points the coffee as responsible for the basis of industrialization in the way that it provided the needed infrastructure for it. The railways appeared thanks to the coffee expansion and were built aiming the profit coffee could proportionate, as well as the Port of Santos, through which the needed raw-material for the nascent industry arrived and through which the bean was exported to Europe. The coffee market proportionated the hiring of free working force, formed by European immigrants, in exchange for a monetary remuneration.

Such remuneration in currency allowed the increase of the demand for a variety of goods, what also led to the production of manufactures inside the country. The presence of immigrants as working force and technical European professionals was of great value to the first industries installed in the state.

Lewis (1991) dates the beginning of modern industry in Brazil in 1880. During that time, there was a sectorial deepening, with the manufacture of goods different from the perish ones and capital goods. In 1930, the production dominated the national market in several sectors. In São Paulo, industry showed to be linked with the regional economy. This phase has to be seen as one of industrial deepening and diversification more than a phase of industrialization (Lewis, 1991, p. 277).

4 To a deeper analysis on the theories, please see Suzigan (2000, p. 23-42).
4. Immigration in the economy

In Brazil and to Argentina, immigrants had an important role on the economy, especially on the industrialization of those two countries.

Several authors agree and affirm that immigrants were responsible for the growth and consolidation of an entrepreneur class, with qualified technical professionals occupying the most diverse working places at factories and industries through the São Paulo State. They agree as well on the main responsible for it, the Italians.

Immigrants were a fundamental piece for the process of industrialization in São Paulo. Those who dedicated themselves to agricultural tasks and engaged at the colonato system, with the incomes they could buy products they needed, contributing to the development of urban centers. Immigrants with greater qualification and capacity began to take part on the industrial and worker field of São Paulo:

The inflow of European immigrants, demanded by that state [São Paulo], mostly due to the skilled politics of immigration and colonization, which would allow the emergence of a manifold entrepreneurial class besides a elevate number, relatively to the rest of the country, of qualified laborers who would occupy the most important positions in the productive system of the industry (Suzigan, 2000, p. 89-90).

This can be verified by the following data: in 1893, 83,6% of the industrial working force of São Paulo was composed by foreigners, increasing to 92% in 1900. In 1912, 82% of the workers in the textile sector were immigrants being 65% of them Italians. In 1920, 51% of the workers in the industrial sector were foreigners (Pinheiro, 1997, p. 139).

In the northeast part of São Paulo state, the region of Ribeirão Preto deserves special attention being one of the greatest coffee producer cities in Brazil and the one that attracted the greatest part of immigrants arrived in the state to work at the coffee farms during the period, and so composing a significant part of the local population and having great effects on the economy and society. Also, in Ribeirão Preto it can be noticed the influence of immigrants in its industrialization.

To the exam of the city's industrial development, the following primary sources were consulted: Anuário Commercial do Estado de São Paulo of 1904, Almanach Illustrado de Ribeirão Preto for 1913; Estatísticas Industriais do Estado de São Paulo of 1928, 1929 and 1930, all of them can be found in the Historical Archive of Ribeirão Preto. The analysis of the existent industrial branches and the name of the entrepreneurs comprehended in the mentioned sources and the reviewed bibliography revealed the existence of industrial establishments since 1980 and the presence of immigrants as owners. Many of the entrepreneurs revealed by the documental sources were immigrants and producers of goods of difficult importation, such as perish aliments and that were known to be needed or common to theirs compatriots. Others, after some time in coffee farms, decided to try their luck in the cities, being part of the urban economy, with the development of commerce and also acting as immigrants importers. Immediately in 1904, it can be noticed the existence of six factories of alimentative pastes, all of them belonging to entrepreneurs with Italian surnames. In 1913, Italians once again appear in the paste sector and also on the beverages, mechanical workshops and other sectors. In the years of 1928 to 1930, an ascending growth of industries and investments in the industrial sector of Ribeirão Preto, always with the presence of immigrants – mostly Italians – as industrial entrepreneurs, is observed.

In Argentina, the process is similar. For Irigoin (1984, p. 7) the migratory stream of 1880 must be considerate an influential factor on the industrial development of the period. Immigration solved the labor force and population problem.

Immigrants as workers in the industries were 63.3% of the total (Lenz, 2004, p. 150-151). Lenz (2004, p. 150-151) shows that in 1895, immigrants were owners of 84.2% of industrial establishments of Argentina, what corresponded to 18.706 immigrants owners against 3.498 Argentineans. On the work-force, 93.294, or 63,3% of the total workers were immigrants and only 52.356 were natives. The author justified these data by the lack of interest of the land-owners, mostly Argentinean, in the industry and by the system of tenancy, it was difficult for foreigners the access to rural properties.

In 1914, immigrants were responsible for 62,1% of the employment in commerce, 44,3% in industry and 38,9% in agriculture and cattle rising. In Buenos Aires city, immigrants were present in 73,5% of the commerce jobs and 68,8% in industry. In the rural area of Buenos Aires province, immigrants employed on the sector were 55,1% and in Santa Fe,
this number was 60.9%. The participation of immigrants in entrepreneur level in 1914 in industry and commerce was 68.4%. In the rural sector, immigrants were present in 40.7% of the agriculture and 22.1% in the cattle rising. The greater participation in urban activities can be explained by the fact that those were concentrated on the littoral, where the majority of immigrants were settled (Gallo, 1986, p. 372-373).

5. Conclusions

As we could see, the bibliographical review showed that for Brazil and Argentina, the period of 1870 to 1930 was of great economic growth and development. Until 1870, both were countries with low population density and great empty spaces and low economic rhythm. The economy based on export of primary goods brought several investments in infrastructure, population growth based on the incentive to European immigration to act as work force or as settlers. The entrance of these foreigners had great influence over the two countries. Several authors pointed the influence of the immigrants in the industrialization of Brazil and Argentina and the analysis of primary sources confirmed that. They also present the presence of manufacture enterprises as soon as in the 1880's, in consonance with the expansion of the primary sector of the two countries’ economies, what comes to confirm the theory we choose to explain industrialization in them. The research still has a long way to go and the data presented here are preliminary and partial results of a larger investigation process which will culminate in a master thesis.

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