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Emigrants into Colonists: Settlement-Oriented Emigration to South America from Poland, 1918-1932

Data opublikowania: 06.04.2021

Poleca Redakcja Pol-Int

Skrócona nazwa czasopisma Journal of Modern European History

ISSN: 2631-9764

Historia

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Starting in the late-nineteenth century, Polish national elites considered emigration a 'necessary evil' that alleviated local economic pressures. In the face of an exodus from all of the partitions, leaders of many political persuasions worked to channel the emigration of peasants towards destinations such as Paraná, where a 'New Poland' could be built. In the 1920s, the emerging inter-war Polish state created a sprawling emigration apparatus that adjusted the old policies to the new circumstances. This article traces the consecutive turns in the Polish government's attitude towards emigration to South America, demonstrating the ways in which they mirrored broader European discourses and responded to systemic changes around the globe. Moreover, in line with the recent scholarship that points to the legacies of empire in inter-war Eastern Europe, the article also examines the relationship between the post-imperial nature of the nascent Polish state and its 'colonial' emigration policies.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1611894421992682>