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German Immigration and Adaptation to Latin America


David Tock

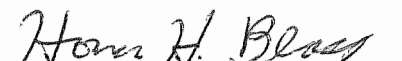
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for graduation in the Honors Program of Liberty University.


William Matheny, Ph.D.
Chairman of Thesis


Homer Blass, Ph.D.
Committee Member


David Towles, Ed.D.
Committee Member


Robert Littlejohn, Ph.D.
Honors Program Director

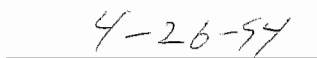

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.	1
Chapter	
1. THE GERMANS OF BRAZIL	3
The Imperial Era	
The Republican Era	
Conclusion	
2. THE GERMANS OF THE CARIBBEAN BASIN AND ANDEAN SOUTH AMERICA.	20
Mexico, Central America, and the Antilles	
Northern South America	
Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia	
Chile	
Conclusion	
3. THE GERMANS OF THE RÍO DE LA PLATA REGION.	39
Argentina	
Paraguay	
Uruguay	
Conclusion	
CONCLUSION	54
NOTES.	57
WORKS CITED.	72

INTRODUCTION

Contrary to popular perception, the presence of Germans in Latin America is not confined to fugitive Nazis. Although such notorious war criminals as Adolf Eichmann and Dr. Josef Mengele absconded to South America after the Second World War, they are by no means representative of the hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans of German descent.

Unfortunately, scholarship on the subject of Germans in Latin America has been piecemeal. Worthy monographs have been written on the development of particular segments of the region's German population, and numerous journal articles have addressed more detailed topics, but a synthesis of this information is lacking. This study briefly recounts the histories of Latin American countries' German populations and proceeds to point out their commonalities. Constraints of distance and time, and the very nature of the study, precluded extensive consultation of primary sources; rather, it is based upon scrutinization of dozens of secondary sources. Most of the sources cited are in English, many are in Spanish, and a few are in Portuguese and French. Unfortunately, lack of familiarity with German prevented the use of literature in that language.

The extensive German migrations to Latin America in the national period were antedated by centuries of intermittent involvement by Germans in the colonies of Spain and Portugal. Charles V, in debt to the German bankers, in 1529 granted Venezuela to the Welsers, and the lands of South America south of the Equator that did not pertain to Pizarro, to the Fuggers. The Fuggers did nothing with their lands, and the parties the Welsers sent to colonize Venezuela proved to be wastrels.

In the 1530s, a colony of Germans settled in the vicinity of Maracaibo, but a succession of leaders pinned their hopes on securing gold from the Indians. As a result, the German colony failed to develop and the land grant was rescinded in 1541.¹ Apparently, persons of German nationality had a bad reputation among the Spanish in America at the time, for in 1537 a document produced in Lima condemned Germans, particularly some in Panama who had contracted indebtedness.²

Despite regulations discouraging the presence of foreigners in colonial Latin America, a good number of Germans found their way to the New World as soldiers, craftsmen, and priests. In Brazil, a contingent of Germans served prominently in the Dutch conquest and brief governance of Pernambuco.³ Toward the end of the colonial period, restrictions on the entry of foreigners were eased. In 1801, the Council of the Indies decreed that Spanish America could receive foreign immigrants,⁴ but the turmoil of the wars of independence intervened.

The primary period of German immigration began in the mid nineteenth century, when the Latin American countries had stabilized and Germany was as yet still not unified. Germans pursued commerce and agriculture with a high degree of autonomy. However, Germany's ascent as a world power combined with Latin American nationalism to complicate the lives of these Germans. Although most Latin American Germans were assimilating, aggressive Pan-Germanists and Nazis polarized the situation. The progress of Germans toward acculturation seemed questionable, so many national governments acted to suppress their links to Germany. Germany's defeat in the Second World War ended the danger, and the region's Germans conclusively attached themselves to Latin American society.

CHAPTER ONE

THE GERMANS OF BRAZIL

Among the Latin American countries, Brazil was the foremost destination for nineteenth-century German immigrants, but in the twentieth century the high degree of solidarity among certain German-Brazilian populations and the apparent risk of their recruitment as operatives for the emboldened German state eventually led Brazil to coerce them to assimilate.

The Imperial Era

Unlike Spanish America, which adopted republican governments upon independence, Brazil's break with European monarchy was gradual. Brazil was the seat of the exiled Portuguese court in the first part of the nineteenth century, and it was King João VI who first introduced German colonization. He settled Roman Catholic farmers from the Rhineland and Switzerland in Bahia in 1818 and at Novo Friburgo, near Rio de Janeiro, in 1820. The Brazilian planter aristocracy opposed the projects, and the German colonists assimilated quickly into the Brazilian population.¹ Internal dissension likewise plagued the independent Brazilian Empire, which was established in 1822 and endured until 1889. To strengthen its position on the disputed, chaotic southern frontier, the national government settled Germans there. In the imperial era, the sparsely inhabited forest zones in Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, and Paraná became the pre-eminent focus of German agricultural settlement in the country, while the presence of Germans in the Brazilian business sector mounted.

The first initiative for German settlement in southern Brazil was sparked by the armed conflict over the secession of Uruguay in the 1820s. The recently installed emperor Dom Pedro I, in need of reinforcements to defend Brazil's position in the south, sent a member of his Austrian wife's entourage, Captain Georg Schäffer, to Hamburg to secure soldiers. Schäffer obtained his quota among the debtors and criminals of Mecklenburg,² but thousands of indigents from across Germany, aware only that Brazil was offering free land, assembled at Bremen and Hamburg, demanded passage to Brazil, but refused to sign contracts for military service there. Schäffer received direction from Rio de Janeiro to furnish their passage anyway. By the end of the decade, when reports of mistreatment in transit and upon settlement had finally curtailed the emigration, about seven thousand Germans had departed for Brazil.³

Brazil was unsuccessful in retaining Uruguay, but German mercenaries and colonists became established in its three southernmost provinces. In Rio Grande do Sul, the São Leopoldo colony's first 124 settlers arrived in 1824, having been received by the emperor at Rio de Janeiro and the governor at Pôrto Alegre.⁴ Among the first of the Germans to arrive, they were granted land, citizenship, supplies, and temporary exemption from taxes and military service.⁵ Protestantism was tolerated so long as meeting places remained without the external accouterments of a church.⁶ Other Germans joined the colony later in the decade. Many of São Leopoldo's first settlers hailed from the Hunsrück region of the Rhineland.⁷ In Santa Catarina, the coastal settlement of São Pedro de Alcântara contained some Germans.⁸ Others, settling inland, encountered hostile Indians and bolted to the coastal town of Florianopolis.⁹ Dr. Johann Rennow, a Prussian wed to a Brazilian, brought fifty-one German families to Rio Negro, Paraná, in 1829.¹⁰

In the years following the initial phase of immigration, few Germans

entered Brazil. Dom Pedro I's abdication in 1831 was followed by civil wars in the provinces; in Rio Grande do Sul, the Farrapa Revolt lasted from 1835 to 1845. German Protestants and Roman Catholics took opposite sides in this conflict, straining their relations for generations to come.¹¹ Brazil was temporarily unable to devote attention or funds to the promotion of colonization,¹² and the German states still smarted from the inconveniences that Brazil's impetuous 1820s immigration efforts has imposed upon them.¹³ Throughout the 1830s and well into the 1840s, the leading German-Brazilian settlement São Leopoldo received no immigrants from Germany.¹⁴

German connections with Brazil revived in the 1840s. The German element in Brazil comprised commercially-oriented urbanites as well as agricultural colonists. Germans had entered the coffee trade in the 1820s, and despite the advantages Great Britain exacted for its traders, the number of Germans involved in commercial endeavors in Brazil increased steadily. In 1844, Theodore Wille established his firm in Santos which later grew to immense proportions.¹⁵ A second phase of agricultural colonization gained momentum in the late 1840s. In 1848, Brazil's provinces were allowed to pursue immigrants,¹⁶ and governments began offering free land.¹⁷ At the same time, turmoil in Germany was impelling emigration. Unsettled by the German states' shifting political borders, industrialization, and scarcity of land, Germans emigrated in record numbers. Although the United States of America did not actively recruit Germans, an overwhelming majority of German migrants settled there.

Brazil skimmed off a fraction of this migration for itself through various means. It brought over nearly two thousand veterans of the 1848 rebellions in Germany in 1851 to fight in Uruguay against Rosas' Argentine forces. A good number of these adventurers settled in Rio Grande do Sul.¹⁸ Persuasive recruiters

lured weary Germans to numerous settlements in southern Brazil. Even Germans with comfortable livings were enticed to emigrate to Brazil by agents' hyperbole.¹⁹ Most of the German emigrants recruited were from northern and eastern Germany: Hanover, Holstein, Saxony, Silesia, and Pomerania. Most settled in southern Brazil. São Leopoldo was closed to the new arrivals in 1848 to discourage the agglomeration of Germans there,²⁰ but to the west, territory along the Jacuí River was opened. Here were established in the 1850s Santa Cruz, Estrela, and Rio Pardo, among other colonies.²¹ In southern Rio Grande do Sul, Jacob Rheingantz settled Germans on tracts of land near São Lourenço do Sul.²² Several German colonies were started in northeast Santa Catarina. At Blumenau typhoid fever and dysentery felled many Germans, but successive influxes helped to stabilize the colony by 1852.²³ To the north, Germans settled Joinville, and to the south, Brusque.²⁴ These well-planned colonies were stocked with skilled laborers to round out every sector of their communities.

Coffee planters, coping with the end of slave imports in 1852, turned to European immigrants for labor. In 1853, Senator Nicolau Vergueiro inaugurated a type of sharecropping on his Fazenda Ibicaba in São Paulo with 177 German, Swiss, Portuguese, and Belgian families. Other planters followed suit. European recruiters for these endeavors, subsidized by Brazilian governments, sent laborers of miserable condition.²⁵ Other Germans settled in Minas Gerais and became coffee farmers,²⁶ but the reputation of the conditions under which Germans agriculturalists labored became unsatisfactory enough to cause the Prussian government to ban immigration to Brazil in 1859.

This law was just one of several factors that curtailed the considerable German immigration of the 1850s. Reacting to a speculative frenzy, Brazil's imperial government modified its territorial grants in 1854, assigning each settler

less land and charging modest prices.²⁷ Complaints reached Germany that Protestant marriages were not recognized in Brazil, and this problem was only partially remedied in 1863.²⁸ Public schooling was almost nonexistent, and not until 1864 did the province of Rio Grande do Sul consent to instruction in German in the colonists' private schools.²⁹ The Paraguayan War that raged in the last half of the 1860s further curtailed German immigration.

By the time German emigration rebounded in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Brazil was indisposed to allowing the same kind of settlement that had occurred earlier. Germany's unification and imposing presence in Europe had repercussions in Brazil. Earlier in the century, Germans seemed to be safe settlers, since their individual states of origin posed little threat of interference. The emergence of Germany as a unified, powerful, and ambitious state caused Brazil's legislature to take a more cautious line towards German settlement.³⁰ Apprehensive at the implications of the lack of assimilation of the German colonies, the state of Rio Grande do Sul stopped aiding German immigrants and began favoring Italian and Spanish immigrants.³¹ Agricultural colonization of Germans continued in the last decades of the nineteenth century, albeit in modified form. Government-planned settlements composed of various nationalities, including Germans, became standard. Eventually, Rio Grande do Sul would pass laws restricting Germans to one third of the population of new colonies.³²

Brazil did not seek to exclude Germans entirely, but rather endeavored to settle them in patterns less risky to national security. Their presence among other ethnic settlement groups was also designed to promote superior German habits and techniques in these groups. The securing of German immigrants became a bit more difficult, as Prussia's ostensible ban on Brazilian immigration became applicable to the consolidated German state. In 1870, Brazil offered German immigrants free

transit via the foreign port of Antwerp.³³ An 1872 government-aided colonization was attempted in the interior of Bahia with Austrians, Germans, and Poles. Although the lands were unusually fertile, none of the colonists obtained had experience in farming. This, combined with the ravages of tropical diseases, doomed the colony, and many of the colonists had to be transported back to Europe.³⁴

In southern Brazil, the focus of colonization switched to Southern and Eastern European immigrants and to the province of Paraná. German numbers paled in comparison to those of the Italians, Spanish, and Slavs. By 1882, in Blumenau, originally a wholly German endeavor, a fifth of the residents were Italian. Germans from booming settlements south of the Rio Negro in Santa Catarina moved into Paraná. Germans in Paraná did not find open lands; the presence of Italians and Poles in the province forced the Germans into urban life or into dispersed rural settlement.³⁵ Outnumbered and scattered, Germans in Paraná were less likely to retain their cultural uniqueness than were their peers in the German settlements in Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul.³⁶

Dom Pedro II, vexed with republican insurgences in southern Brazil, sought additional German settlers to temper the region.³⁷ In southern Rio Grande do Sul, where Luso-Brazilian landowners dominated, the few German settlers suffered. Around 1880, the murder of the Thun family of São Lourenço do Sul was ignored by authorities,³⁸ and in the late 1880s the Germans there were being tapped for nearly all revenues for the county government.³⁹ Although Dom Pedro II traveled personally to Europe in the 1870s, Germany rebuffed appeals for direct immigration.⁴⁰ At any rate, the power brokers in Rio Grande do Sul resisted further immigration in the closing years of the Empire.⁴¹

Dom Pedro's efforts to attract Germans to southern Brazil eventually bore

fruit, but from an unlikely source. In Russia, thousand of Germans, seeing the revocation of the privileges granted them when they settled there decades earlier, were intent on emigrating. Through an intricate chain of events, a number of these disillusioned Russian Germans, especially the Catholics among them, became aware of the possibilities of colonization in Brazil and made their way to Germany to secure passage. The Volga Germans, arriving in the late 1870s, were given free land in the province of Paraná. Brazil was hardly hospitable for them, and their stubborn efforts to raise wheat in the manner to which they had been accustomed in Russia failed miserably. Disputes among the settlers exasperated the local police. The German-Russians were disdained by their neighbors, and even by the provincial governor. Free land grants ended in 1889 because of the Brazilian Revolution, and probably half of the Volga Germans in Brazil reemigrated to Argentina, the United States, or Europe. Most of the rest relocated to cities or to more propitious farmland.⁴²

The number of Germans in urban Brazil, whether frustrated German-Brazilian agriculturalists, craftsmen direct from Germany, or transitory employees of German commercial houses, grew greatly in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Some of the new German immigrants came of private initiative and settled in the existing agricultural colonies or in new multi-ethnic ones. Although many of these immigrants found success, there was a tendency among them, as there had been to a lesser extent among earlier settlers, to go to urban areas and establish themselves in the trades. Although such a settler might be willing to try his hand at farming in Brazil, his skills were more suited to the city.

Germans flocked to Brazil's large cities. German commercial houses had branches in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Pôrto Alegre, and naturally their preferred employees were enterprising young men recruited in Germany.⁴³ German

artisans proliferated in the cities as well, coming directly from Germany or reemigrating from Brazilian agricultural communities. Recife and Petropolis had masterful German woodworkers, and a premier manufacturer of fine furniture was the Spieler concern in Pernambuco. Germans in Pôrto Alegre and its environs began exporting leather goods made from hides obtained in the southern part of the state. Private German mercantilists expanded widely, establishing branch outlets far into the Amazon region.⁴⁴ The agricultural production of many rural German settlements was directed toward nearby urban markets. For instance, in Rio Grande do Sul, São Leopoldo and São Lourenço supplied Pôrto Alegre and Pelotas, respectively; while in Santa Catarina, Blumenau supplied Florianópolis.⁴⁵ In south Brazil, defections from agriculture were common, broadening the German element in the states' societies and facilitating assimilation.⁴⁶ Ironically, although urban German-Brazilians possessed more direct ties with Germany, they integrated themselves into Brazilian society more than did the insular agricultural colonists of south Brazil. On the eve of the declaration of the Republic, Brazil's German population had become sizable and diverse. Germans were highly concentrated as settlers in the south, while artisans and traders were dispersed throughout the country's cities.

The Republican Era

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the development of the German population of Brazil began to be a subject of increased interest in Germany and in Brazil. The establishment of the Brazilian Republic had varied repercussions on German-Brazilians. Their relations with Germany took on new aspects, as Pan-Germanists focused substantial attention on southern Brazil while less menacing German interests gained influence among them. Most German-Brazilians steadily

assimilated, but their progress was overtaken by the conflict between rising German and Brazilian nationalism, resulting finally in a policy of forced assimilation during the Second World War.

In republican Brazil, all immigrants were granted citizenship and the right to vote. The new constitution granted the states the job of fostering immigration.⁴⁷ In the newly powerful states, the role of Germans varied greatly. The initial concern of Germans in southern Brazil was maintaining an impartial stance in the clashes between republicans and rebels. They secured their lands with firearms, refusing to abet either side.⁴⁸ In 1892, frustrated Germans in Santa Catarina, fearing predation by Riograndense rebels, marched on Florianopolis to demand protection. Their dispersal came only after several residents of the city were gunned down.⁴⁹ Contemporaneously the government quashed the backcountry messianic German sect of the Mukkers. Bereft of spiritual and medical attention, some rural Santa Catarina Germans had followed charlatans preaching faith healing and free love.⁵⁰

When order was established in the states, German-Brazilians found different degrees of political participation. In Rio Grande do Sul, an arrangement coalesced between the Luso-Brazilian large landholders and the German-Brazilian population wherein the Germans proffered political acquiescence for cultural autonomy. Repeated gerrymandering limited the representation of the agglomerations of Germans in the northern part of the state.⁵¹

In Santa Catarina, Germans were embraced by the Positivist political elite. The influential republic founder Deodoro de Fonseca appointed his assistant Lauro Müller, an assimilated German-Brazilian, governor of Santa Catarina. Müller was elected three times to the post and later served in the national senate and in presidential cabinets. His cousin Felipe Schmidt served as Santa Catarina's

governor during the First World War.⁵²

The abolition of slavery provided new opportunities for Germans in urban Brazil. Rich families found their former household slaves to be unmanageable, so many turned to foreign help. It became a sort of status symbol among such families to have European servants, preferably German, whom they could pretentiously refer to as senhoras.⁵³

The unification of Germany several decades earlier had stimulated an interest among some in Germany in integrating expatriate Germans back into the new nation. In the 1890s a flurry of activity on this front began to be carried out by an informal combination of German organizations. Germany's African colonies had failed to meet expectations, so attention turned to South America⁵⁴ as a destination where German colonists could be settled without loss of affiliation with Germany. The Hanseatic Colonization Company counted the maintenance of German identity among its colonists as a primary objective.⁵⁵ Already present were the old German settlements of south Brazil, which needed to be drawn closer to the German sphere. These sentiments were summed up in Otto Tannenbergs's 1911 work Gross-Deutschland. Tannenbergs predicted that by 1950, Germany could command the entire Southern Cone of South America, including southern Brazil. This temperate area, argued Tannenbergs, was "a land fit for colonization, where our immigrants will be able to devote themselves to agriculture."⁵⁶

The closer economic, religious, and educational ties that sprang up around the turn of the century bolstered the hopes of the Pan-Germanists. German commercial ships dominated the southern coast of Brazil,⁵⁷ providing European merchandise to the region's people and thus drawing German-Brazilians into closer fellowship with Germany. Their ships also transported colonists for new German settlement schemes. The Hamburg Colonization Society was superseded by the

Hanseatic Colonization Company in 1897. Armed with a patent from the German imperial government, the heavily capitalized company purchased a million acres of land in Santa Catarina, tripling the holdings it inherited from the Hamburg Colonization Society. The new showcase was the Colony Hansa, in the vicinity of Blumenau.⁵⁸ Colonists were met at the port of São Francisca do Sul by hospitable agents of the company, put up in a hotel, transported by steamer to Joinville, then by cart to Hansa, where they were fed and provided with temporary housing.⁵⁹

In 1900, Leipzig's Dr. Herman Meyer sought settlers for his Riograndense colonies of New Württemberg and Xingu. He advertised that "Rio Grande do Sul is far better suited to the creation of a 'State within a State' than the sections to which Germans have flocked in North America."⁶⁰ Brazil was propagandized to German emigrants as a free society with an acceptably German milieu and excellent prospects for fecundity and territorial acquisition.⁶¹

Railroad companies also promoted colonization on their lands. There was much interest at the turn of the century in the huge grants of the German Rio Grande North-West Railway Company along the Uruguay River. However, colonization was not carried out because the Dresden concern failed to secure financing even for the railroad.⁶² In Paraná, the British Brazil Railroad Company settled a few Germans and Dutch at Carambé in 1911. The wheat farmers were supplied with fertilizers, but the settlement faltered for two decades until moneyed Dutch refugees from the East Indies installed themselves there.⁶³

Religious ties also strengthened Germany's estimation among German-Brazilians. In 1900, the German Evangelical Church began establishing direct ties with Evangelical congregations worldwide. A good number of Brazilian congregations eagerly accepted, although the synods retained their independence.⁶⁴ The many pastors sent from Germany to minister to Brazilian congregations

influenced their parishoners toward identification with Germany.

However, not all German-Brazilians were Evangelicals, and the other churches generally encouraged assimilation. Since Roman Catholicism was the dominant religion in Brazil, it served to assimilate German Catholics. In fact, Germans were numbered among the most faithful Catholics in Brazil.⁶⁵ German Franciscans and Benedictines in Brazil were forceful proponents of traditional Latin values, to the consternation of German-Brazilian anticlericals.⁶⁶ Evangelicals also had to contend with Missouri Synod Lutheran missionaries from North America, who entered Brazil in 1899 and by 1920 gained sixteen thousand converts.⁶⁷ Although services were conducted in German, this denomination, unlike the Evangelicals, was not linked politically to Germany. Just after the turn of the century, an Evangelical pastor in the interior told a traveler from the United States, "I hope you are not one of the Missouri brethren."⁶⁸ The pastor was exasperated that his efforts for the social enlightenment of the Germans in the vicinity was being overshadowed by the spiritual concerns emphasized by the Lutherans.

Brazil remained unable to provide public education, so private German schools proliferated in southern Brazil. These schools often were staffed by teachers from Germany, and often local Evangelical pastors taught in the schools. The Society for the Perpetuation of the German Language Abroad render financial support for educational and ecclesiastical endeavors among Brazil's Germans.⁶⁹ A native of one colony in Santa Catarina reminisced that, before the war, notebooks at his German school carried the slogan, "Remember that you are a German."⁷⁰

Despite their origins, most German-Brazilians ignored the wooing of Pan-Germanism; nevertheless, concerns about their allegiance mounted in Brazil in the first decades of the twentieth century. The fact that many German immigrants had come to Brazil before Germany's consolidation or were at odds with the

development of German state boded ill for efforts to corral them into affiliation with Germany. In the far-flung northern settlements at Novo Friburgo and in Espírito Santo, Germans tenuously survived as small farmers.⁷¹ Likewise, in isolated parts of south Brazil, Germans had become undifferentiated members of the Brazilian peasantry.⁷² In the localities of concentrated German settlement, the German culture was retained. In the vicinity of Rio Grande do Sul's São Leopoldo, lands were held exclusively by Germans.⁷³ In such communities, Germans could generally direct their internal affairs as they saw fit,⁷⁴ although Luso-Brazilians usually held the government posts.⁷⁵ In the first decades of the century, these German colonies were some of the few places in Latin America where population was booming.⁷⁶ However strong cultural affiliation remained, it did not necessarily entail political adherence with Germany.⁷⁷

In Brazil's cities, Germans' continual contact with Brazilians and other immigrant groups furthered their assimilation. Despite the relatively large size of German urban populations in Brazil--in the first years of the twentieth century, São Paulo's German population reached fifty thousand--ethnic solidarity was weak. Unlike German immigrants to rural Brazil, who often settled in intact groups, most Germans who settled in the cities came from Germany individually.⁷⁸ Commercial and political success necessitated integration. Lauro Müller, Santa Catarina's premier German-Brazilian, did not even speak German.⁷⁹ At Curitiba, the capital of Paraná, students at the German school were eager to learn Portuguese in order to shed the stigma of their German accents.⁸⁰ Estrangement could develop between established German-Brazilians and newcomers and the ideas they seemed to represent. In the vicinity of Pôrto Alegre, recent German immigrants employed the epithet Bauern, "country bumpkins," when referring to their predecessors.⁸¹ The newspaper Rio Grandenser Vaterland was founded in 1902 to combat Pan-

Germanism.⁸²

Official movements to combat supposed German-Brazilian disloyalty arose. A contract for German military advisors negotiated by President Hermes da Fonseca in 1910 was scotched due to apprehension about the effects that German advisors might have on the allegiance of the large German-Brazilian populations of southern Brazil.⁸³ Although many German-Brazilians sympathized with Germany's cause in the First World War, impolitic acts were minimal. In the cities, where German-Brazilians lived in close contact with other groups, they were generally prosperous and thus less likely to disrupt affairs.⁸⁴ Lauro Müller, as foreign minister, pressed for neutrality, but he was hardly a German partisan. The politician Ruy Barbosa, motivated by resentment, used the Liga pelos Aliados to badger Müller.⁸⁵ As happened in the United States and elsewhere, Brazil was drawn into the war by public indignation at naval losses to German submarines. In Brazil's cities, angry mobs vented their resentment of Brazilian Germans. They sacked German churches, businesses, and clubs.⁸⁶ Müller resigned, and Brazil declared war in 1917. Continued attacks on German-Brazilians prompted some of them to Brazilianize their names and otherwise assimilate.⁸⁷

Wartime concerns prompted a registration of the Germans in Paraná. It showed the diversity and movement toward assimilation of that German-Brazilian population. According to data for the city of Curitiba, the place of last residence for a third of Germans there was Santa Catarina. Another third had come directly from Germany. A fifth came from rural Paraná. The remainder came mostly from other Brazilian states.⁸⁸ Almost half of the registrants were married to Germans, while most of the rest had married Brazilians.⁸⁹ The growing prevalence of exogamous marriages in the first decades of the nineteenth century was also recorded in Roman Catholic parish records; from 1899 to 1932, more than half of the German

communicants in Ijuí, Rio Grande do Sul, married spouses of other nationalities, primarily Italians, Brazilians, and Poles.⁹⁰

Brazil's movement toward nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s rendered the steady assimilation of German-Brazilians unacceptable. Their reputation was sullied by the presence of radicals and libertines⁹¹ among the seventy-five thousand Germans that came to Brazil from the Weimar Republic and settled primarily in cities.⁹² A number of recently arrived Germans in São Paulo joined the doomed officers' rebellion of 1924.⁹³ The ravages of the 1930 depression prompted the imposition of a strict immigration quota system in the first years of the Vargas presidency,⁹⁴ but not before a last spurt of German agricultural colonization occurred. A group of Russian-German Mennonite refugees was settled in a few agricultural colonies on the Hanseatic Colonization Company's remaining tracts in Santa Catarina. Internal dissent and the scarcity and low quality of land led the Mennonites in Santa Catarina to reemigrate to various locales in southern Brazil, primarily to the vicinity of Curitiba, Paraná, where they dominated dairying.⁹⁵ A German government agency settled Catholics and Protestants in separate villages at the colony of Terra Nova, Paraná, in the early 1930s, but only the Catholic one persisted.⁹⁶

Sentiment for Nazi Germany arose primarily among those of Brazil's German population with recent ties to Germany. The Evangelical church hierarchy was especially affected. Blumenau's Pastor von Scherer's criticism of the Nazis prompted his blacklisting throughout South America and forced him to return to Germany.⁹⁷ Some German Jews found refuge in Brazil, but steered clear of German-Brazilians.⁹⁸ The new Integralist movement attracted German Brazilians sympathetic to fascism, but it was suddenly suppressed in 1937 by the increasingly authoritarian President Vargas. A nationalistic consensus for assimilation arose,

encouraging German-Brazilians to abandon their ties to Germany. Vargas's appropriation of the states' power weakened the dominance of the south's Luso-Brazilian elites, clearing the way for increased German-Brazilian political participation after his demise.⁹⁹ With his home province being Rio Grande do Sul, Vargas's public remark that he would "eat alive" his "local Germans" if they acted up no doubt kept that part of the country relatively free from Nazi collaboration.¹⁰⁰ Vargas eventually aligned Brazil with the United States. Inept Nazi agents employed collaborators who worked for German companies and were recent immigrants. The German heritage of Vargas's chief of the national police, Matto Grasso's Felinto Müller, provoked unfounded speculation about his loyalty.¹⁰¹ Significantly, Brazil's military contingent that fought in Italy contained German-Brazilians of Blumenau's 32nd Hunters Battalion.¹⁰²

Following the war, the problems of German Brazilian acculturation eased into a resolution. Germany was crushed, and no longer could the relationship between German-Brazilians and Germany be considered seriously as a threat to Brazil. German-Brazilians became regular members of the Brazilian population. Even a contingent of German-Brazilians that had returned to the Third Reich reappeared in Brazil in 1947, having used their Brazilian citizenship to escape the uncomfortable circumstances of the Allied occupation.¹⁰³

Certain continuities and difficulties existed in the rapidly integrating German ethnic group. Many Germans remained farmers. In 1950, nearly nine of every ten people of German ancestry in Rio Grande do Sul worked on private farms.¹⁰⁴ In some areas, such as Rio Grande do Sul's São Laurenço do Sul county, the political ascension of German-Brazilians provoked the enmity of previously dominant Luso-Brazilians and forced Germans to further segregate themselves.¹⁰⁵ German continued to be spoken in many homes, especially in isolated rural areas.

Portuguese became the official language of instruction at schools, and some German-Brazilian students who spoke German at home failed to become literate in either language.¹⁰⁶

Immigration of European workers was precluded by Brazil's post-war law requiring two thirds of industrial laborers to be Brazilian.¹⁰⁷ Native Brazilians from backward regions of the country, who had been passed over previously in favor of supposedly superior European workers, were encouraged to migrate to booming urban areas. In Rio Grande do Sul, the German ethnic group comprised a quarter of the population in 1950 as well as in 1975.¹⁰⁸ New generations of German-Brazilians also increasingly gravitated to the cities. The extent to which Germans have assimilated into the Brazilian populace can be seen by the rise to the presidency in the 1970s of a Lutheran German-Brazilian from Rio Grande do Sul, General Ernesto Geisel.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

For many German-Brazilians, the attention focused on them by the Pan-Germanism movement was unwelcome. The children and grandchildren of settlers who had left Europe while Germany was still a *mélange* of separate entities, they were content to retain certain aspects of their German heritage while pursuing their occupations unmolested. Overt political maneuverings from across the Atlantic, combined with domestic resentments and growing Brazilian nationalism, made the slow, steady assimilation of the Brazilian-Germans untenable.

CHAPTER TWO
THE GERMANS OF THE CARIBBEAN BASIN
AND ANDEAN SOUTH AMERICA

In most of the Latin American republics, German populations were composed almost exclusively of small numbers of Germans active in commerce. In the tropical countries of Central America and the northern Andes, attempts in the nineteenth century to establish German agricultural colonies did not prosper. Only as a result of constraint or remoteness did Germans remain at languishing rural settlements; they invariably joined their urban counterparts in the trades and business. Other Germans directed plantations. Of these Latin American republics, in which German colonization was primarily a nineteenth-century phenomenon, only in Chile did a sizable and diverse German community form.

Mexico, Central America, and the Antilles

Although numerous agricultural colonies of Germans were founded in Mexico and Central America in the nineteenth century, they all survived at most for a few years. Ports and cities close by beckoned, and Germans found better success in commerce and the operation of plantations. Germans captured much of the Mexico's commerce and assimilated into the country's society. Sizable German populations were also established in Guatemala and El Salvador. In the twentieth century, the region, and especially the Antilles, became somewhat of a haven for Jews escaping Nazi Germany.

Germans entered Mexico soon after its independence. They began directing

mining operations in the country in the 1820s.¹ By the end of the century, Germans carved out a leading position in the financial and commercial sectors of the Mexican economy. German immigration consisted almost exclusively of individual businessmen; a failed attempt at agricultural colonization in the 1840s was the sole aberration.² Germans accommodated themselves quickly and easily to the upper levels of Mexican society. The absence of German women contributed to the widespread tendency to marry Mexicans, which decisively advanced assimilation. Although legally barred from becoming citizens, Germans became accepted members of Mexican society. In typical fashion, however, Mexico's Germans formed clubs and societies, preserving a measure of cultural solidarity. Unlike other nationalities present in Mexico, Germans did not segregate themselves and thus gained a favorable reputation. Porfirio Díaz encouraged German business endeavors to counter domineering American and British interests. Alarmist propaganda notwithstanding, German scheming with Mexico during the First World War was carried out by diplomats, not established German-Mexicans.³

There was a flurry of interest in German colonization of Central America in the 1840s. The United States and several European countries were vying for advantage in the region, where a link between the oceans seemed promising. In 1841, a Belgian company established a colony on Guatemala's Gulf of Honduras coast. Appointed director of Santo Tomás was a German, Alexander von Bülow, who developed into the leading proponent of German colonization of Central America. The several hundred Germans that came to the colony soon departed for urban centers.⁴ Von Bülow turned to Nicaragua's Mosquito Coast, which was nominally a protectorate of Great Britain. Prussia had sent a party there to investigate the possibility of colonization. These officials got a tipsy Indian chieftain's signature on a contract guaranteeing German colonists special privileges. Although Britain

disallowed this, several hundred Germans made their way to Bluefields in 1849. This colony failed as well, its inhabitants dispersing to more favorable locales.⁵ Through the auspices of the Berlin Colonization Society, Von Bülow brought three ships of German immigrants to settle the Costa Rican interior in 1851. Dozens of settlers died in transit, and others perished on the arduous journey from the Caribbean coast. These Germans, and others who came in the next few years, eventually took up business in San José and coastal towns.⁶ Some unlucky Germans stranded in Central America on their way to California's gold deposits found their way to Costa Rica, as did German engineers employed in isthmian transit schemes.⁷ Magdeburg native and journalist Wilhelm Marr visited Central America in 1852, and, after a failed attempt to colonize Costa Rica, returned to Germany to publish in 1860 and 1861 Travels to Central America.⁸

By this time it was becoming obvious that large-scale settlement of Germans was not feasible. Franz Hugo Hesse, sent by Prussia in 1851 to Central America to negotiate for colonization, after failing to convince strongman Rafael Carrera to grant Protestants religious freedom, determined that colonization en mass was not feasible.⁹ Von Bülow declared, "If I cannot build villages, I am going to build cities,"¹⁰ but he died of cholera while fighting to prevent filibusterers from the United States from gaining control of Costa Rica. In Central America, the failed German agricultural colonies of the mid nineteenth century were quickly supplanted by Germans involved in commerce or owning plantations.

The two most prominent German communities in Central America developed in Guatemala and Costa Rica. Although Germans in both countries became involved in similar activities, their social positions in their respective societies diverged increasingly. In Guatemala, Germans came to dominate the coffee business and showed a strong tendency to band together. In 1868, they founded the Gautemalan

German Beneficence Society.¹¹ The ascension of Guatemalan liberalism in 1871 was accompanied by favorable attitudes toward a larger role for Europeans. In 1877, the government established the Sociedad de Inmigración; its goal was to promote settlement in the northeast part of the country.¹² Nevertheless, Germans continued to congregate in the southern, and especially the southwestern, sector of the country. The Germans' aloof position in Guatemala was reinforced by the negotiation, in 1887, of a treaty granting special privileges to Germans resident in the country.¹³ Until the First World War, the import-export business of Guatemala was dominated by German commercial establishments, whose workers were brought over from Germany.¹⁴ In 1897, Germans held 2.4% of Guatemala's total territory. About nine hundred German citizens lived in the country, 85% of them males.¹⁵

German plantation holdings were confiscated during World War I, but were returned in 1921 at the insistence of Guatemalan defense minister and fellow German Emilio Escamilla Hegel. In 1924, Germans controlled almost 15% of Guatemala's plantations. Nearly half of these were dedicated to the cultivation of coffee, and most of the country's coffee traffic passed through German firms. Although these holdings were combined into the Central American Plantation Corporation, based in New York,¹⁶ they were again confiscated in World War II. The elitist position of the Germans in Guatemala made them easy proselytes to Nazism. Nazi minister Otto Reinebeck wooed Guatemalans as well as the country's Germans,¹⁷ but eventually resentments flared against the prosperous alien element. On December 12, 1941, Germans lost their constitutional guarantees. Those Germans who did not flee the country were sent to North America for internment.¹⁸

In contrast, Germans in Costa Rica became regular members of the national society. Their alignment against the invasion by the mercenary army of William

Walker in the 1850s boosted their standing in the country. Members of early colonies dispersed, and subsequent German immigrants did not congregate. The several Germans who had turned to coffee planting by the mid nineteenth century were soon joined by many others. Marriage ties to prominent Costa Rican families speeded the assimilatory process.¹⁹ German clerics occupied high positions in Costa Rica's Roman Catholic hierarchy. Eberfield-born Bernardo Augusto Thiel came to Costa Rica from Ecuador in 1877. He carved out a role as an outspoken conservative partisan and was appointed Costa Rica's bishop in 1880. Thiel was thrown out of the country in 1884 for his campaign for the revocation of liberal legislation, but returned in 1886.²⁰ Juan Gaspar Stork, of Cologne, taught in San José's seminary for a decade before being appointed bishop in 1904. He served until his death in 1920.²¹

World War backlashes against Germans were less severe in Costa Rica than in Guatemala. During the First World War, the American Fruit Company maneuvered to dispatch its German competitors in Costa Rican banana cultivation, but the diversified activities of the German community enabled it to survive this assault.²² The Niehaus family lost its many sugar mills and land worth nine million dollars. They were compensated just two million dollars, but regained much of their property through legal action after the war.²³ During the next war, Costa Rica's assimilated Germans were largely spared from such prejudices, and even Nazi subjects were denounced reluctantly. German national Max Effinger headed Costa Rica's Ministry of Public Works in the 1930s and rendered his services in screening out Jews from the ranks of German immigrants. Although interned in Texas with other Nazi subjects at Costa Rica's entry into the Second World War,²⁴ he returned to Costa Rica after the war. He died in San José in 1955.²⁵

Since the turn of the century, Costa Ricans of German heritage have served

in the highest levels of government. As of 1980, sixteen had served in the Chamber of Deputies and nine had headed federal ministries.²⁶ Oscar F. Rohrmoser presided over the Costa Rican legislature in the early 1930s,²⁷ and the refusal of electoral commissioner Maximillano Koberg Bolandi, a failed 1932 conservative presidential candidate, to confirm the results of the 1948 election spurred a civil war.²⁸ Most notably, Francisco José Orlich Bolmarcich was elected president in 1962.²⁹

In Guatemala and Costa Rica, legal protection and intermarriage strengthened the position of substantial populations of Germans including numerous remnants of failed colonies. In other countries of the region, the German element was miniscule. Although Germans operated plantations in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras,³⁰ their position there was less established. Panama remained a mostly undeveloped part of Colombia until the twentieth century. Germans were not numerous in the Caribbean possessions of the European powers, although some were active in commerce, for example in Cuba. The United States' increasing sway in, and occasional occupations of countries in Central America and the Caribbean effectively stifled significant twentieth-century German immigration to these areas.

Numbers of German Jews fleeing Nazism, however, found temporary refuge in countries of the Caribbean Basin. Rafael Trujillo admitted eight hundred Jews to the Dominican Republic on the condition they pursue agriculture. After the war, Jews with professions left, while others continued farming. Panama benefited from a number of Jewish academics, the majority of whom departed when the war ended. Cuba received thousands of refugees, serving mainly as an intermediate sanctuary for Jews intent on reaching the United States despite its exclusionary policies. Cuban laws placing limits on the practice of certain occupations served to dissuade many Jews from permanent residence there. Those who did not go to Palestine or

the United States after the war finally fled the country when Castro seized power.³¹

Northern South America

In the German communities of Venezuela and Colombia, the commercial sectors always predominated. The Prussian-born entrepreneur Juan Bernardo Elbers established himself in Colombia in the first decades of the nineteenth century and lent support to forces seeking independence. In the 1820s and 1830s, he repeatedly attempted to organize steamer service on the Magdalena River.³² In Venezuela, Hanseatic merchants carved out a leading position in the Maracaibo district.³³

The end of slavery prompted several attempts at German colonization in northern South America. Britain's declaration of abolition in 1833 sent British Guyana's planters scurrying to obtain alternate sources of labor. They hired, among others, indentured farmers from Germany. The first contingent arrived in 1835, contracted for four years.³⁴ Their situation was inauspicious. In 1842, Freiburg native Robert Schomburgk arrived, having been hired by the British to survey the Virgin Islands and Guyana. He sent back word to Germany warning against settlement in British Guyana; nevertheless, agents directed thousands of emigrants from the Rhineland and Wurttemberg there. Nearly all these settlers succumbed to tropical diseases.³⁵

Venezuela also tried to substitute free immigrant workers for slaves. The means of doing this was just one of the issues on which Venezuela's dueling political parties differed. While the Liberals generally supported immigration from the Canary Islands, a faction of Conservatives successfully garnered government assistance to settle Germans in the country. Although a 1840 policy encouraging immigration was intended to populate the valleys of central Venezuela, the Tovar family gained the support of the director of colonization Codazzi, who switched the focus to lands near Caracas owned by the Tovars. Although denounced by Liberals,

Codazzi and the Tovars milked the colonization budget. Codazzi's plans called for the settlement of thirty thousand Germans in eleven towns and the construction of transportation links. In Europe, he recruited Germans with various skills, so that Colony Tovar could survive as a self-contained community. Soon after the settlement of a few hundred Germans, some of them rebelled. As substitutes for slaves, they encountered governance and conditions which they considered atrocious. Codazzi resigned, and Manuel Tovar assumed responsibility for the colony, motivated by his financial interests in its expansion. In 1850, he unsuccessfully petitioned the consul of Hamburg for help, ignorant of his connections with the rival Eraso clan. Two years later, Tovar was compelled by Liberal President Monagas to transfer ownership of certain lands to colonists. Wary of losing control over the colony, Tovar bestowed land only on those Germans whose loyalty was unflagging. To discourage defection from Colonia Tovar, he announced that colonists who married Venezuelans would have their holdings repossessed. A Law of Endogamy was enacted, enforcing the isolation of the population of Colony Tovar.³⁶

Although Manuel Tovar served briefly as Venezuela's president in the early 1860s, his attempts to revive immigration faltered. In the concluding escalation of civil conflicts at the end of the decade, many Germans abandoned Colony Tovar, fearing for their safety. Venezuela received its share of the the influx of Germans to the Latin American coffee industry at the turn of the century. Some settled in Tovar, joining its conservative elite. The colony's isolation continued in the twentieth century. The Law of Endogamy was not rescinded until 1964. In recent decades, with the extension of modern roads, the horizons of the colonists have expanded. Travel and trading endeavors have become important adjuncts to agriculture in the colony's economy.³⁷

In the late nineteenth century, German coffee planters joined directors of commercial firms and diplomats as members of the elite German communities of Colombia and Venezuela. Marrying into the native patrician class, these Germans and, even more so, their descendants became acculturated. Nevertheless, substantial economic, diplomatic, and cultural ties with Germany were maintained. In contrast to other nationalities, Germans did not sequester themselves into insular communities. Despite being somewhat less warm in social relations than were their Hispanic neighbors, Germans were generally well-liked. German commercial establishments developed a good reputation by generous charitable contributions.³⁸ However, the German government's attempt to parlay the success of its citizens in Venezuelan commerce into a larger role for itself in the country backfired. At the turn of the century, German troops attempting to occupy Venezuela to supervise the payment of liabilities were thwarted by United States and Great Britain.

European immigration to Colombia and Venezuela trailed off by the twentieth century. In the first third of the century, Venezuela received just thirty thousand immigrants from all sources and very few Germans. Some Jews fleeing Europe in the 1930s and 1940s ended up in Venezuela and Colombia despite bureaucratic strictures: both countries required from immigrants proof of Roman Catholic baptism. Several thousand Jews fleeing Nazi Germany, mainly prosperous individuals and their families, entered Venezuela and Colombia with hastily obtained documentation. Several hundred procured assylum without it.³⁹

Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia

The few German agricultural colonies of the middle Andean nations were not successful, but Germans in commerce prospered. In the nineteenth century, colonies were planted in Peru and Ecuador. Peru's colony Pozuzo was organized by a Baron Von Schutz-Holzhausen. Von Schutz-Holzhausen gained approval of his

colonization scheme during the brief administration of President Echenique. Fortunately, when Ramón Castilla took back the presidency in 1854, he honored the agreement. Colonization was to be redirected from Tarapete to Pozuzo, due northwest of Lima in the Andean district of Huánuco. Von Schutz-Holzhausen returned to Europe, where he recruited two hundred Tiroleans and one hundred Prussians, all Catholics. The journey to Pozuzo lasted more than a year. The colonists departed in early 1857, and seven of their number died in transit. Upon arrival in Peru, the group was quarantined for cholera. Their long trek through the Andes to Pozuzo took seven months; dozens of colonists forsook the party, six were killed in an avalanche, and barely half of the three hundred colonists recruited in Europe remained when Pozuzo was finally reached. Understandably, the colonists were disenchanted with von Schultz-Holzhausen. Joseph Egg, a priest, assumed leadership of the colony and served past the turn of the century. The failure of von Schultz-Holzhausen left German colonization without a lobbyist, and the Castilla government neglected to provide promised assistance to Pozuzo.⁴⁰

Several years after the establishment of Pozuzo, the colony was visited by Friedrich Gerstäcker, who had been employed by several German states to inspect the condition of their South American settlers. The colonists, astonished to see a German visitor, told Gerstäcker of their abandonment, and he secured a commitment from Castilla to build a road to Pozuzo, but distance and terrain precluded indefinitely the fulfillment of this pledge. Gerstäcker's report could hardly have encouraged German settlement in the region. While in Ecuador, he joined German settlers for the inauguration of the Ecuador Land Company's colony in the northwest corner of the country. The settlers were aghast at the conditions they found. Gerstäcker too was repulsed by life in Ecuador, singling out Quito's filth as extraordinary.⁴¹ Reports such as these stalled further German agricultural

settlement in this sector of South America. More convenient and hospitable sites were readily available elsewhere in South America.

Pozuzo carried on sluggishly, subsisting by farming and raising cattle. The colony's Prussian minority voluntarily formed a separate neighborhood in order to preserve its heritage. The colonists remained sequestered for over a century, and intermarriage with their Peruvian neighbors was rare. At the midpoint of the twentieth century, Pozuzo's populace retained usage of the Tirolean dialect, and women still wore the long-sleeves of the previous century. There were signs of genetic decay in the closed community. The belated extension of roads to the colony has moderated the estrangement from Peruvian society. Some of Pozuzo's fourth generation married Peruvians, and the Spanish language began to predominate. The colony's leaders had mixed feelings about interaction with the outside world. In the 1970s, Pozuzo's population reached seven thousand.⁴²

In stark contrast to the agricultural colonists, Germans involved in business in the Andes countries fared much better. In 1883, Bremen's Gildemeister family bought Louis Albrecht's plantation Casa Grande in northern Peru.⁴³ By the Second World War, the Gildemeisters held 100,000 acres, dominated Peru's sugar industry,⁴⁴ and were involved in diverse enterprises throughout South America. Despite strong ties to Germany, the family's establishment in Latin America enabled it to escape the Allied blacklisting that destroyed the Latin American operations of German firms. During the war, the family's patriarch was critical of Nazi Germany; Great Britain's dependence on Peruvian sugar also spared the Gildemeisters from retaliation.⁴⁵ No such protection existed several decades later, however, when their property was seized by Peru's socialist military governors.⁴⁶ The Gildemeister family was an exception. Many Germans who came to the region were single businessmen who married into Peruvian families. Their entry into mainstream

Peruvian society was quick and permanent. Their descendants inherited German names but were wholly Peruvian. Peruvian editors Augusto Zimmerman Zavala and Emilio Adolfo Westphalen, military chief Pedro Richter Prada, and the namesakes of the Weise corporation all had German forebears.⁴⁷

Bolivia's German population, involved primarily in commerce and mining, was small and assimilated quickly. In 1900, about five hundred Germans resided in the country, and just one tenth were females.⁴⁸ Intermarriage was common, and German-Bolivians became accepted members of Bolivian society. Perhaps the most notable German-Bolivian was Germán Busch, one of the country's rare heroes in the Chaco War, who assumed the presidency in 1937. After ordering the confiscation of Standard Oil property, he died mysteriously in 1939.⁴⁹

Chile

Of the Latin American republics that received most of their Germans in the nineteenth century, only Chile received considerable numbers and accommodated successful agricultural colonies. Half of the approximately ten thousand Germans that settled in Chile before the First World War became members of agriculturally-oriented communities in southern Chile.⁵⁰ Most of the rest were engaged in commercial and industrial pursuits in Chile's urban centers. While urban German-Chileans assimilated easily, the south's rural Germans clung to their European heritage.

German agricultural colonization of Chile took place in a succession of settlement schemes directed at different parts of the country. The introduction of German agriculturalists into the country was effected by Germans resident in Chile pursuing commerce. This sector's genesis occurred in 1822 with the opening of a Hamburg trading establishment in Valparaíso.⁵¹ Chile's liberator Bernardo O'Higgins failed to convince the country to support colonization of Swiss farmers in the early

1820s,⁵² and it was not until the 1840s that a German sailor, Bernardo Philippi, successfully brought about German settlement in Chile. Philippi had gained influence in Chile through his efforts in securing its southern territories; struck by Chile's lack of craftsmen, especially in the south, Philippi endeavored to fill this vacuum with Germans. The financial support of German merchants in Valparaiso buttressed Philippi in his designs, while his brother Rudolf had the arduous task of persuading German emigrants to proceed to Chile rather than the United States. Nine families from Rotemburg, between Bremen and Hamburg, were secured in 1846. Upon their arrival, they were settled on the hacienda of Franz Kindermann near Osorno.⁵³

In 1848, Philippi was appointed as Chile's colonization agent, charged with obtaining several hundred German Catholic families to settle southern Chile. Philippi chose the region around Lake Llanquihue as the object of this colonization. Contemporaneously, Franz Kindermann and Juan Renous purchased huge tracts of land around Valdivia in preparation for private colonization. Kindermann left for Germany to secure colonists; on his way, he meandered to Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil and to Wisconsin to inspect the German colonies there.⁵⁴ As Philippi and Kindermann arrived in Germany in the late 1840s, circumstances in Germany were propitious for immigration to Chile. Throngs of Germans were eager to emigrate in the wake of the 1848 disturbances. The Rotenburgers in Chile had sent back glowing reports. Perhaps the most important factor in convincing Germans to go to Chile was the prospects of obtaining land there. Philippi's orders included the provision that Germans who paid their own passage could choose plots of land in southern Chile through an auction. Bernardo Philippi, as a Protestant, had difficulty recruiting Catholics. Several bishops in western Germany dismissed the scheme, and Philippi successfully appealed to the Chilean government to modify the requirement that the colonists be Catholic. Ultimately, the official colonization scheme was

ignored by the German Protestants and the few Catholics who came. They preferred to purchase their own lands.⁵⁵

The hundreds of Germans who came to southern Chile from 1849 to 1852 found a chaotic situation. In the beginnings of new president Manuel Montt's administration, Philippi's star fell. An indignant Roman Catholic German settler denounced the Protestants for grave robbing and other offenses, and considerable pressure from Chile's Catholic hierarchy was directed against Philippi and against Protestant immigration generally. Philippi was sent to the far south as governor of Magallanes, where he fell to Indian aggression. Taking his place to expedite the settlement of the German colonists was Nicolacio Pérez Rosales, who commenced a burning of the dense forests around Llanquihue.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, Kindermann had hooked up with recently-founded immigration societies in Berlin and Stuttgart, assorted radicals, and private purchasers. Back at Valdivia, wealthy speculators bought up land. The huge tracts of land bought by Kindermann and his associate Renous unsettled Chilean authorities. Through selective application of laws, these officials contested the legitimacy of Kindermann and Renous's titles to the land.⁵⁷

Arriving at Valdivia, the Philippi contingent, whose lands to the south were not ready, and the Kindermann contingent, bereft of nearby tracts, shifted for themselves. The richer colonists bought land around Valdivia, while others pursued trades in the region or bought cheaper land in the interior.⁵⁸ Not until the end of 1852 were holdouts transported to the vicinity of Llanquihue, and it was 1855 before colonies around Lake Llanquihue were firmly established. Pérez Rosales was named the nation's immigration agent in 1853, but was unable to extract himself from Llanquihue until 1855. At Hamburg, he encountered difficulty in attracting German immigrants. Not only was there increasing competition from other Latin American countries, but rumormongers had tarnished Chile's reputation. In 1856,

Pérez Rosales sent to Chile seven hundred immigrants, but in succeeding years failed to attract any. He persevered in Germany until 1860, and with the end of the Montt regime the next year, governmental support for immigration waned.⁵⁹

The brief intense period of official fomentation of settlement at Llanquihue contributed to its becoming the only zone of successful German agricultural colonization west of the Andes. In this previously almost unoccupied territory, Germans were able to form a broad society.⁶⁰ Puerto Montt became the urban nucleus for the interior settlements, continuing to attract privately immigrating Germans throughout the nineteenth century.⁶¹ Among the prominent residents of Puerto Montt were Federico Oelkers Detlevsen, active in shipping, and Christian Brahm Sprenger, who established a brewery and a retail network in the decades of the turn of the century.⁶²

The lucrative nitrate fields seized from Bolivia and Peru in the War of the Pacific provided Chile's government and business community with the financial wherewithal to seek European immigrants.⁶³ In 1882, the *Ajencia Jeneral de Colonización* was established in Paris, followed by the private *Sociedad de Fomento Fabril* in 1883. These new efforts sought agricultural colonists and industrial workers from Europe. Germans made up a fraction of the total number of immigrants.⁶⁴ The lands of Valdivia, Osorno, and Llanquihue were separated from the country's heartland by the *Frontera*, a band of territory dominated by the Araucanian Indians. An 1859 rebellion forestalled the success of a small colony of Germans at Hunán,⁶⁵ but the Araucanians were finally subdued in 1882, and twelve colonies were established in the *Frontera* in the 1880s. All contained various nationalities; Germans, numbering over a thousand, made up one sixth of the total. Plagued by land sharks, the scheme ultimately failed. Its European colonists were of urban background and were surrounded by multitudes of Chilean squatters. Half

of the Frontera colonists fled to cities, although the Germans were less likely to do so.⁶⁶ Government-directed settlement of the island of Chiloe, south of Llanquihue, followed a similar pattern. Between 1895 and 1897, Chile financed the transit of Europeans obtained through the Agencia Jeneral. Germans comprised a fourth of these colonists. Many of the settlers found the island's rainy climate unbearable and fled. Again, a greater percentage of Germans persevered.⁶⁷

The far southern province of Magallanes was another region of Chile that accommodated German colonists. The southern tip of South America had been a backwater until the nineteenth century, when Chile and Argentina advanced conflicting claims. National boundaries were indefinite, and settlers there were little concerned with such vagaries.⁶⁸ According to the census of 1885, Magallanes contained ninety Germans, 4.3% of the territory's population. In 1896, the Magallanes Deutscher Verein was founded, and a German school was started in 1907.⁶⁹ In 1914, Germans owned nearly a fourth of Punta Arenas's commercial assets.⁷⁰ Land grants made for colonization were utilized for personal aggrandizement, mainly through sheepherding, and in the 1890s were outlawed by the Chilean government.⁷¹ Ironically, although a colony of Germans helped to secure Chile's claims to the region in international arbitration in 1902, it was eventually broken up by the state. In 1893, Hermann Eberhard, a retired German sailor who had raised sheep at Río Gallegos, Argentina for a decade, gained the Chilean territorial governor's permission to settle the western side of the peninsula. By 1906, his colony of Última Esperanza contained six hundred Germans and had built transportation and other requisite structural facilities. Underhanded maneuvering by Chilean authorities got the settlers' land holdings declared unlawful, and they were auctioned off. Although Eberhard was allowed to keep his property, most of the settlers were forced to move on.⁷²

Mark Jefferson, touring Chile in 1918 for the American Geographical Society, found German-Chileans occupying a much smaller role in society than what he expected.⁷³ Several reasons might account for the apparently high level of assimilation that he noticed among urban German-Chileans. German-Chileans' assimilation was made easier by the ostensible embrace by Chilean elites of German culture. Affinity for Germany was fostered by Bismarck's alignment with Chile in the War of the Pacific.⁷⁴ German educational and military missions were instigated by non-German Chileans.⁷⁵ In Raza Chilena, published in 1904, noted author Nicolás Palacios argued that Latin culture was corrupt. Chileans were not really Hispanics, for their forebears had left Iberia for the New World before the consolidation of Spanish culture had been effected. Palacios contrived a Germanic heritage for Chileans, originating from the Goths' presence in Spain. Their other legacy came from the the intrepid Araucanian Indians, creating a population vastly superior to the decadent recent Spanish and Italian immigrants.⁷⁶ The solidarity of urban German-Chileans was not strong. As businessmen, they served Spanish-speaking clients, and their fortunes advanced according to their immersion in the dominant culture.⁷⁷ Catholics obviously were able to assimilate more rapidly, and they favored the Conservative party. Protestants, especially native born Chilean citizens, supported the strongly anti-clerical Radical party. Those new arrivals active in commerce, whose orientation was towards Germany, favored the moderate Liberals.⁷⁸

Despite the substantial acculturation of Chilean-Germans, Germany's ascent in world prestige was accompanied by an increasing tendency among many of them to embrace their German identity.⁷⁹ In the first decades of the nineteenth century, this was furthered greatly by the influence of the German-born staffs of institutions such as the Evangelical church and the German schools. Communications advances

allowed the newspaper Deutsch Zeitung to achieve national circulation. An overarching federation of the country's Germans emerged in 1916: the Deutsch-Chilenischer Bund.⁸⁰ The same year, an Oelckers vessel sneaked around Cape Horn and across the Atlantic to Norway to return German sailors marooned in the Pacific.⁸¹

After the First World War, there was a small resurgence in German immigration. The German munitions firm Krupps built a factory in Llanquihue, hiring German workers.⁸² The last significant attempt to settle Germans in Chile occurred in the 1930s. With great expectations, the Chilean government inaugurated the Caja de Colonización and assigned it twenty million pesos a year. The model colony was Peñaflor, in the Central Valley near Santiago. There European colonists were to tend orchards and raise vegetables. Chile's consuls utilized many incentives to attract colonists, but those they sent were ill-suited. Among the colonists that arrived in the early 1930s were fifty-eight Bavarians. The community was designed to include settlers with diversified occupations. Besides the farmers were merchants, landowners, and scholars. The idyllic illusions of Peñaflor's designers and residents were punctured rather quickly. The cost of living, especially land prices, in the showcase colony drove settlers to relocate.⁸³

During the Second World War, German-Chilean Nazi partisans were active but were eventually suppressed. The preponderance of German-Chileans in the south enabled them to withstand the assimilatory pressures that impacted Latin America's other German communities.⁸⁴ In the German pockets of Llanquihue, many housewives continued to speak German in the 1950s.⁸⁵ In 1960, it was noted that in the predominantly Catholic German communities of Llanquihue, more residents spoke Spanish than did those in the Protestant communities.⁸⁶ Outside of the south, Germans thoroughly assimilated, serving even in the highest levels of

government. A member of the Philippi family, Julio Philippi Izquierdo, served as Jorge Alessandri's foreign minister from 1958 to 1964,⁸⁷ while the Christian Democratic Party received substantial support from private West German interests.⁸⁸ The Christian Democrat leader Eduardo Frei, who succeeded Alessandri as president, was of Swiss and Chilean extraction.⁸⁹

Conclusion

In the countries on the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean, German agricultural colonization took place almost exclusively during the nineteenth century. From Mexico to parts of southern Chile, these colonies failed to flourish. Only in Chile's Llanquihue region, where extensive German settlement occurred, was German agricultural colonization successful. Commercially-oriented Germans thrived in these countries and usually assimilated rather quickly.

CHAPTER THREE

THE GERMANS OF THE RÍO DE LA PLATA REGION

While German settlement in other parts of Spanish-speaking America trailed off at the turn of the century, the German populations of the republics oriented toward the Río de La Plata were augmented by substantial twentieth-century immigration.

Argentina

German businessmen came to Buenos Aires almost immediately after independence was gained from Spain. Among these were the banker Thiesen, ship builder Johann Reissig, and assorted proprietors of commercial establishments.¹ Many Germans were employed by English firms active in the region.² Argentina was the scene of few German colonies in the early 1800s. Luis Vernet from Hamburg came to Buenos Aires in 1817, founded a trading concern, and married a porteña. In 1829 he was named governor of the Islas Malvinas, and formed there a small colony including other Germans. Two years later, the population of Vernet's colony had grown to 150, augmented by Germans recruited from Hamburg and the United States. An attack by the U.S.S. Lexington forced the colony's liquidation and set the stage for Britain's dominion of the islands.³ In the southern end of the Buenos Aires province, between the Colorado and Negro rivers, the German colony Stroeder was launched.⁴

German agricultural colonization of Argentina was forestalled for most of the nineteenth century by the country's political turmoil and especially by President

Juan Manuel de Rosa's xenophobia.⁵ In Facundo, the exile Domingo Faustino Sarmiento revealed his preference for German immigrants,⁶ although after he became president later in the century he decried their settlement in potentially disloyal compact colonies.⁷ In the 1850s, Argentina instituted a policy of proscribing colonies made up of single ethnic groups. This discouraged German immigrants from choosing Argentina until the twentieth century.⁸

The first sizable contingent of German agriculturalists came to Argentina as part of a colony of mixed nationalities. Colonization promoter Aaron Castellanos, after failing to gain permission to settle Patagonia, in 1853 gained local and federal support for colonization in the vicinity of Santa Fe, off the Paraná River northwest of Buenos Aires. His contract with the government required him to secure a thousand Swiss settlers, who would be provided with land and supplies. In 1856, Castellanos arrived from Dunkirk with two hundred colonists. Smarting from what he considered the government's noncompliance with its obligations to him and his scheme, Castellanos left, and Santa Fe authorities took over administration of the project.⁹

Esperanza was divided into a checkerboard pattern of lots of 83 acres each, and Francophones congregated in the eastern half of the colony, while German speakers massed in the west. The preponderance of colonists were Swiss, but interspersed were former residents of French and German regions, as well as Argentinians. Political antagonisms were not transplanted from Europe. By 1869, 557 colonists were of German nationality, ranking them second after the Swiss.¹⁰

In the years after Esperanza's founding, numerous similar settlements were established in the same vicinity. Germans were outnumbered by other nationalities, such as Italians and native Argentines. In 1872, the zone of colonization had a population of 17,000, and Germans numbered nearly 1,500. For politicians,

championing the colonies' development was tempting, but could backfire. In the mid 1860s, Nicasio Palacios, governor of Santa Fe, was excoriated by his rivals for favoring civil marriage and attempting to furnish an agricultural institute for the colonists.¹¹

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, official efforts to encourage immigration multiplied. President Sarmiento hired Johann Jakob Alemann in the early 1870s as agent for northern European immigration.¹² In 1878, 150 Volga German families settled in six isolated villages in the Entre Rios province. They had intended on settling in Brazil, but the ship they boarded in Bremen went to Buenos Aires instead. Although irate, there was little they could do. Many later reemigrated.¹³ Germans also settled in Patagonia. Santa Cruz, Argentina's southernmost province, contained 35 Germans in 1895; by 1914, their numbers had increased to 295.¹⁴ The development of the idyllic community of Bariloche, across the Andes from Llanquihue, was engineered by Chilean-Germans, and in 1895 more than 98% of the territory's residents were Chilean.¹⁵ This shocked Argentina, which affirmed its hegemony of the district by extending a railroad from an Atlantic port to it across several hundred miles. The soaring land values that accompanied colonization prompted owners of previously valueless wilderness to lobby the government for more settlers. Through the Sociedad Rural, the large landowners of the Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, and Entre Rios provinces began in 1890 to petition the national government to deliver more European settlers.¹⁶ In the late 1880s, the Argentine government started paying for the transportation of European immigrants.¹⁷ The trickle of German colonists was swamped by multitudes of other nationalities. From 1857 to 1895, Argentina received more than two million immigrants. Germans numbered just 25,000, or slightly more than one percent of the total.¹⁸ Typical German agricultural colonization was not successful: Germans

blended into the rural community,¹⁹ and tenancy rather than landowning proliferated.²⁰

The majority of Germans who came to Argentina in the nineteenth century became tradesmen in Buenos Aires and other cities. German small businessmen were quickly joined by peers of other nationalities. Many Germans were unable to compete, and cheap factory products sealed their fate. Such disaffected laborers were instrumental in the founding of Argentina's Socialist Party in the late 1800s.²¹ Farmers constituted forty percent of the German immigrants to Argentina between 1876 and 1909,²² and many of them became disaffected as well. Struggling renters in the vicinity of Santa Fe rioted in 1893 to protest high taxes, and their cause was championed by Johan Jacob Alemann in his recently founded newspaper the Argentinisches Tageblatt.²³ In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, new German firms entered the Argentine market, dealing primarily in German goods and with German connections.²⁴ Germans remained in distributory rather than manufacturing endeavors.²⁵

The German community of Buenos Aires, prosperous, unified, and well-connected to Germany, changed in several important ways as a result of the First World War. A large population of unemployed Germans arose. At the commencement of the European war, hundreds of Germans of military age from throughout South America converged on Buenos Aires to obtain passage to Germany. Only a few made it to Europe; the rest remained in Buenos Aires. Marooned German sailors and fired German employees of Allied as well as German firms swelled the ranks of the German poor in Buenos Aires.²⁶ Most of the thousands of unemployed Germans were sent to the interior as seasonal laborers.²⁷ Another development of the World War I era was that, due to isolation from Germany, directors of German firms invested heavily in Argentine enterprises.²⁸

Ordinary German-Argentines resented German firms' wartime profiteering and jettisoning of their German identity.

The employment crisis in the German community was exacerbated in the 1920s. Native Argentines were moving into the professions,²⁹ and thousands of new immigrants from urban Germany entered Argentina. German firms were reluctant to hire independently immigrating Germans, who demanded higher wages and better conditions than did other nationalities.³⁰ Many post-war German immigrants joined the socialist Vorwärts society.³¹

Established German-Argentines did not support German agricultural colonization;³² nevertheless, a number of private colonization schemes were directed at the far northern Misiones province. The better lands were already held by Argentine landowners, so German colonies were handicapped by their location on inferior soil.³³ In 1910, the German Tornquist concern had begun a colony there. At the end of First World War, few Germans had settled, and Tornquist ceded the colony to German surveyor Carl Culmey. Previously employed in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, Culmey convinced many poor German-Brazilians to settle in Misiones. Among their motives for relocating were gaining larger acreages and escaping service in the Brazilian military. Culmey settled Roman Catholics in the Tornquist colony, renaming it Puerto Rico, and created a Protestant colony, Monte Carlo.³⁴

Contemporaneously with Carl Culmey, Adolph Schwelm was trying to colonize Misiones. In 1921, Danish settlers quickly deserted Schwelm's primitive colony Eldorado. Schwelm replaced them with German and German-Brazilian settlers. In 1924, Schwelm bought Culmey's colonies. Another colony in Misiones had its origin with a colonization society in Germany, which sent 165 settlers from the northern Black Forest to Argentina in 1924. These settlers, mostly of urban origins, were led to believe that they would be manning a hydraulic power project at

Iguassu Falls. Abandoned, they were mercifully rescued by Liebig's Extract of Meat Company, which took advantage of Argentine tax incentives to provide land for colonization. It continued to nurture the struggling colony Liebig, in 1935 permitting the colonists an extension to pay their obligations. Promoters of agricultural colonies in Argentina could easily obtain settlers among the throngs of European immigrants in Buenos Aires. Accordingly, colonies in Misiones landed numerous recent emigres from German cities. Four fifths of Monte Carlo's settlers, three fifths of El Dorado's, and one fifth of Puerto Rico's, were of urban origins. In Monte Carlo, settlers from Germany sneered at the provincial ways of their German-Brazilian neighbors.³⁵

Among the most notable tendencies among German settlers in Misiones were their replications of their Old World settlement patterns and the institution of the cooperative. In Europe, Germans had frequently lived in villages with lots fronting on either side of a road or stream and extending back as narrow parallel strips for some distance. This pattern assuaged the solitude of farm life and ensured that all lots were of generally equivalent value. German-Brazilians had used this method in Brazil, and Carl Culmeyer copied it for his colonies in Misiones. Germans declined to settle according to alternate formats; for instance, of the colony Caragatatay's synthetic quadrate lots, a few of the better situated ones attracted German settlers, but most remained unclaimed.³⁶ Settlers from Württemberg introduced cooperatives to Misiones; however, this only postponed for several decades the decline of the German colonies.³⁷

Of the tens of thousands of Germans who came to Argentina in the 1920s, more than half returned to Germany.³⁸ Thereafter, political and religious considerations replaced economic motives, and most German immigrants strove to enter Argentine society as quickly as possible. The 1930s was characterized by the

rapid influence attained by Nazism in the German-Argentine community. Party membership was reserved to German nationals, but the sympathy of German-Argentines was cultivated. The most avid Nazis were from the lower ranks of German firms' employees. The directors of these firms acquiesced to Nazism, but were not activists.³⁹ Both the Evangelical La Plata Synod and Argentina's Association of German-speaking Catholics received subsidies from the German government. A substantial number of Evangelical pastors were proponents of Nazism. On the other hand, opposition to Nazism characterized the missionary works of the North America's Missouri Synod and the United Lutheran Church.⁴⁰ Many German colonists in the northern provinces were taken in by Nazism, which exploited their frustration and courted them with humanitarian aid.⁴¹

Many Germans in Argentina actively opposed Nazism. The chief newspaper in German was the Argentinische Tageblatt, published by the Swiss Alleman family since 1889. Unrelenting in its opposition to totalitarianism, the daily pressed on despite violent attacks on its employees and property perpetrated by its opponents.⁴² Pressure by the German ambassador caused three years of litigation beginning in 1934.⁴³ Refugee subscriptions and contributions bolstered the Argentinische Tageblatt.⁴⁴

Ironically, despite the torment inflicted on Jews by German-Argentine Nazis, the country received great numbers of Jewish refugees, only a small portion of which hailed from Germany. The Chamber of Deputies and the Ortiz administration favored fewer restrictions on German immigration, but were frustrated by the opposition of the Senate.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, some German Jews entered the country, among thousands of poorer Jews from other European countries, and joined the small, prosperous elite minority of the Jewish community of Buenos Aires.⁴⁶ German Jewish refugees remained apolitical and tried to

assimilate quickly.⁴⁷

Argentine popular sentiment mitigated the fascist sympathies of many of Argentina's governors. The assembly of 20,000 Germans and German-Argentines in Luna Park on April 10, 1938, for an Anschluss celebration and Reichstag elections angered Argentines and drew the condemnation of the Ortiz administration.⁴⁸ Germany's naval maneuvers, including the scuttling of its Graf Spee at Montevideo in 1939 and its sinking by submarine of the Argentine ship Uruguay in 1940 brought the war to Argentina's doorstep. A May 15, 1939 decree banned German political organizations.⁴⁹ The flouting by Nazi-controlled German schools of 1938 and 1939 assimilatory decrees caused the government in 1941 to completely ban German instruction.⁵⁰ Argentina rejected pressure from the United States to join the Allies until March of 1945. All German property was confiscated then. German associations ended, and the German community began to disintegrate. Thereafter, the Argentine government encouraged assimilation.⁵¹

The post-war years saw migrations of Germans into and out of Argentina. Many Jewish-German refugees had found prosperity as urban businessmen and abided in Argentina, unmolested by the Perón regime, while their less sophisticated counterparts from Eastern Europe who had settled in agricultural colonies removed to Israel. Most non-Jewish refugees from Nazism returned to Germany.⁵² A number of former Nazis found their way to fascist Argentina. The Argentine government culled hundreds from the ranks of Germany's scattering scientific and technological sector. Perón later candidly boasted, "The German Government has invested millions of marks into the development of these people, we only paid for the airplane ticket."⁵³ The German community of Argentina, large and hospitable, was a perfect haven for Germans with compromised pasts. High-level Nazis were ushered to Argentina by the Vatican and Spain, but other Germans engineered their

own escapes. In the decade after the war, tens of thousands came to Argentina and quickly vanished into the country's German circles.⁵⁴ The German community itself was at the same time rapidly assimilating.⁵⁵

Paraguay

German immigration to Paraguay was insignificant for most of the nineteenth century. Only after the decimation of the country's population in the War of the Triple Alliance were steps taken to promote foreign colonization. In 1871, Colonel Heinrich von Morgenstern de Wisner, an Austrian who had served as an advisor to the late Francisco Solano López and his mistress Eliza Lynch, invited settlement by Germans from Paraguay's opponents in the war (Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay). By 1875, Morgenstern's colony southeast of Asunción had collapsed; its frustrated settlers, unexperienced in farming, had abandoned their inferior acreages.⁵⁶ In 1881, Paraguay passed a colonization law and created an office of immigration.⁵⁷ Benefiting from governmental solicitude, a contingent of Germans flourished at San Bernardino, in the environs of the capital. For many years the primary occupation there was dairying for the Asunción market, but eventually the colony became a resort town for the country's elite. By 1938, only one in ten of San Bernardino's residents were German.⁵⁸

Another colony of Germans resulted from the Paraguayan government's favorable disposition towards immigration in the 1880s. Bernard Förster contracted with the Paraguayan government to settle 140 German families.⁵⁹ Förster was a vitriolic anti-Semite whose wife Elizabeth was the sister of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Reeling from being exposed as an object of scorn in Germany, Förster schemed to establish in South America a utopia free from Jews, whom he blamed as his persecutors. Although the Försters arrived in 1886 with fourteen families, their isolated colony Nueva Germania had attracted only forty families by 1888.⁶⁰ Unable

to fulfill his obligations to the Paraguayan government, Bernard Förster grew despondent. Colonists were leaving at a rapid rate, and one of them, Julius Klingbeil, returned to Germany to inveigh against the project. When Förster's financial backers threatened to slash his subsidies, he absconded to San Bernardino and committed suicide there in 1890.⁶¹

Förster's widow Elizabeth signed over the colony to members of Paraguay's European community and returned to Germany, but, intent on salvaging her husband's reputation, she returned in 1892 with illusions of establishing a profitable distillery that would reinvigorate Nueva Germania.irate colonists ran her off.⁶² Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche installed herself in Germany as the manipulator of her brother's legacy but kept track of Nueva Germania's development until her death in 1937.⁶³ By that time, Nueva Germania had seen a revival of fortunes and another decline. In the 1890s, the population of the colony declined to seventy,⁶⁴ but the cultivation of yerba mate stimulated growth in the early twentieth century. Many of the new residents were Paraguayans, and the mate boom was fleeting.⁶⁵ In 1938, Nueva Germania's population of 400 contained 130 Germans.⁶⁶

Numerous colonies of Germans were established in Paraguay in the first half of the twentieth century. At first, Germans settled principally in southeast Paraguay around Encarnación. Later, Mennonites formed colonies most notably in the opposite end of the country, the Chaco. The nucleus of German colonization in southeast Paraguay was Hohenau, founded at the turn of the century. Established as a prototypical German colony, Hohenau was populated initially by Brazilian-Germans, including some who had come to Rio Grande do Sul from Russia years earlier.⁶⁷ Immigrants from Germany supplemented the population. The colony was closed to native Paraguayans until the First World War, when German immigration temporarily dwindled. Well-spaced farms proved to be a successful settlement

pattern.⁶⁸ Similar colonies were established in the proximity of Hohenau and up and down the Paraná River. At the end of the First World War, Paraguay contained approximately five thousand Germans, of whom two thousand were ensconced along the Paraná River.⁶⁹ Hohenau remained predominantly German; at mid century, four fifths of its population of three thousand were of German descent.⁷⁰

Colonies of Germans were also founded in central Paraguay. In 1914, Otto Steinbart brought to Paraguay one hundred German colonists, a fraction of the 250 families stipulated in his contract with the Paraguayan government. These settlers were not familiar with agriculture, and many soon left their settlements Rosario Loma and Chingui Loma northeast of Asunción. Even Steinbart abandoned his enterprise, since the First World War prevented the obtaining of additional German colonists. Although the struggling colonies were bolstered by post-war immigrants, in succeeding decades almost all the Germans there reemigrated to other German colonies, the capital, Argentina, or Germany.⁷¹

Germany lost its overseas empire after the First World War; some Germans who left East Africa found their way to Independencia, in southeast Paraguay. These were joined in 1924 by emigres from southern Germany. By 1937, Germans composed half of Independencia's population of 2,500. Nearby, Austrian refugees augmented the colony of Carlos Pfannl in 1934, while Germans from Czechoslovakia came to Sudetia.⁷²

Settling in the 1920s and thereafter, Mennonites formed the most successful and conspicuous German colonies in Paraguay. Their settlement in the country was expedited by the Privilegium, a series of decrees permitting them generous autonomy in religion, language, education, and internal governance.⁷³ Most of the Mennonites that came to Paraguay were refugees from Russia and could only be

considered nominally German. Their antecedents can be traced back to the Netherlands, but they spent sojourns in Prussia and then in Russia. In the late 1800s, czarist Russia began revocating their privileges. Some of the Mennonites immigrated to Canada then, but in the twentieth century Canada's efforts to assimilate them prompted another migration, to Paraguay. The Paraguayan government courted them, passing the Privilegium in 1921. A community of 1400 Canadian Mennonites was established in the middle of the Chaco, at the colony Menno.⁷⁴

In 1930 those Mennonites who had found refuge from the Soviet state in Germany, but were unable to immigrate to North America, were encouraged by the Mennonite Central Committee to settle in the Paraguayan Chaco. By 1933, their colony Fernheim, near Menno, comprised two thousand individuals. Fernheim's colonists enthusiastically constructed a vital society, including factories, schools, and even an airstrip.⁷⁵ Under their influence, Menno was invigorated. In 1937, 748 colonists frustrated with Fernheim's isolated location and cooperative structure moved closer to the country's heartland, settling northeast of Asunción at Friesland. Ironically, Friesland's residents eventually decided to revert to the collaborative organization they had deprecated.⁷⁶

The Society of Brothers, a fledgling community of Hutterite converts that had fled Nazi oppression and settled in England, was forced by national resentment to immigrate to Paraguay in 1940. The contingent settled at Primavera, near Friesland, and was composed of individuals and families of various nationalities, a quarter of whom were German. Primavera's well-educated membership inspired high expectations, but dissension prompted disillusionment, and after two decades the colony dissolved.⁷⁷

Mennonite colonization in Paraguay concluded soon after the end of World

War II. Over four thousand Mennonites who escaped from the Russian occupation of Germany were sent to Paraguay in 1947 and 1948. In the Chaco, the colony of Neuland was created; it received 2,400 Mennonites.⁷⁸ It soon flourished like its neighbors Menno and Fernheim. Another 1800 settled Volendam, nearer the Paraguay River than Primavera and Friesland. Volendam lost numerous members, many of whom joined relatives in Canada.⁷⁹ On the other hand, in 1948 a group of 1700 wealthy Canadian Mennonites settled in Paraguay at Bergthal and Sommerfeld. The colonists' expectations were dashed on their arrival, and, ravaged by disease, the communities saw a nearly a third of their members evacuate back to Canada.⁸⁰

By 1958, 7,700 Mennonites had left Paraguay, but 12,000 remained. Their situation was bolstered by financial support from their relatives in Canada and the United States, from the Mennonite Central Committee, and via indemnities from Germany.⁸¹ The extreme isolation of the Chaco Mennonites forged unity. Generally, they were more successful than their counterparts across the Paraguay River. Hailed by the government as exemplars, the industrious Mennonites gained the admiration of Paraguayans despite their clannishness.⁸²

Non-Mennonite German-Paraguayans were a mixed lot. In most German colonies, inclusive settlement hastened acculturation, as Paraguayans and German-Paraguayans continually interacted. In 1958, German diplomats visited Nueva Germania and decided that that colony's prospects were hopeless.⁸³ The endogamous remnant of Germans there exhibits obvious genetic deterioration.⁸⁴ Those who left the agricultural colonies or had never lived in the countryside became regular members of Paraguayan society. Asunción had accommodated a substantial German element since the nineteenth century.⁸⁵ Germans distinguished themselves in the Paraguayan military during the Chaco War. Alfredo Stroessner, Paraguay's military dictator for most of the second half of the twentieth century, was

born to a native Paraguayan mother and an immigrant Bavarian father who ran a brewery in Encarnación.⁸⁶

Uruguay

The development of Uruguay's German population corresponded, on a smaller scale, to that of Argentina. Germans in commerce entered the country in the 1820s. In the 1840s, a colonel Spikermann settled Germans at Canelones, but at the end of the decade Uruguay's Germans still numbered less than one hundred.⁸⁷ In the latter decades of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, Uruguay received limited numbers of German immigrants, but its political turmoil and scant territories impelled many of these to seek a better existence in Argentina.⁸⁸ Russian Germans settled along the Uruguay River in the 1870s.⁸⁹ In the early 1930s, a Uruguayan legislator descended from Polish Jews arranged for the settlement of urban German refugees on wilderness lands. By 1937, eighteen families were eking out livings on widely spaced farmsteads.⁹⁰ In 1940, Uruguayan officials announced they had uncovered a Nazi plot to take over the country. According to the plan, German colonists in nearby Brazil and Argentina would be transferred to Uruguay following its military occupation.⁹¹ After the war, Uruguay accepted several hundred Mennonites from Prussia. These colonists were detained in Uruguayan cities while their lands were being prepared. Less traditionally minded than many of their coreligionists, many of them decided to pursue urban trades. The remainder farmed in two colonies.⁹²

Conclusion

Agricultural colonization in the Río de la Plata region was impaired because of its late start. By the turn of the century, most German immigrants tended to be thoroughly urbanized, and if they decided to go any further than the burgeoning

metropolis of Buenos Aires, they were ill-equipped for farm work. Thus, Mennonites, Russian-Germans, and Brazilian-Germans predominated in the agricultural colonies of Paraguay, Uruguay, and northern Argentina, while Buenos Aires's German community expanded prodigiously and merged into the city's cosmopolitan population.

CONCLUSION

Latin America's myriad of political components, each with unique circumstances, makes generalizations about the region's history difficult. As the foregoing chapters illustrate, the history of Germans in Latin America is correspondingly complex. Nevertheless, German immigration and adaptation to Latin America followed certain patterns.

The vast majority of Germans who came to Latin America pertained to two sectors: business and agricultural colonies. Germans were early entrants in the commerce of the newly independent Latin American countries. Without the backing of a consolidated national state, the trading firms of Hamburg and Bremen were at a disadvantage to their rivals, most notably the British. Nevertheless, German establishments carved out collateral roles at the ports of the Río de la Plata and central Chile as early as the 1820s. Germany's fragmentation was not entirely disadvantageous to German commercial interests. Because their governments' international involvements were minimal, Germans were favored by Latin American countries wary of the imperialistic threats posed by more powerful European states. As the nineteenth century progressed, German traders found easy access in Central America, Brazil, and the South American republics. The role of Germans in Latin American commerce was deepened by the rise of export-import economies in the late nineteenth century. Liberal governments across Latin America championed the entry of European capital and expertise, and German commercial firms eagerly expanded their operations into the direct exploitation of Latin America's natural

resources. Their widest success was in coffee planting, but Germans participated in other agricultural endeavors as well as mining. German firms also capitalized on the burgeoning demand for imports, gaining a distinguished reputation in the provision and distribution of manufactured goods. Most German operations were staffed primarily by young bachelors recruited in Germany, and the business entailed perennial communications with Europe.

German agricultural colonists arrived regularly in Latin America during the region's first century of independence. Strategic and economic motivations underlay Latin America's inducement of German settlement. Countries in southern South America claimed expanses of nearly uninhabited land. National governments wanted to forestall challenges to their authority in these backwaters but were unable to divert native populations there, so they turned to European immigration. The earliest example of this phenomenon occurred in southern Brazil, where clashes over international borders and territorial prompted Dom Pedro I to settle Germans in the 1820s. The Brazilian government combatted regional insurgencies for autonomy by wholesale settlement of "loyal" Germans in southern Brazil beginning in the 1840s. Throughout the nineteenth century, Argentina and Chile feared the annexation of Patagonia by each other or by European countries. Hence, Argentina dispatched a German colony at the Falklands, and Chile invited Germans to colonize its southern reaches. In the twentieth century, concerns over sovereignty were factors in the settlement of Germans in Argentina's Misiones territory and of German-speaking Mennonites in Paraguay's Chaco.

Diverse economic motivations also contributed to German agricultural colonization in Latin America. In tropical Latin America, the ending of slavery prompted the seeking out of European workers. Replacement labor was attempted with Germans in British Guyana in the 1830s, in Venezuela in the 1840s, and in

Brazil in the 1850s. Germans proved to be uniformly adverse to the harsh conditions and strict governance that plantation life entailed, and labor-substituting schemes turned to other nationalities. The vast majority of German agriculturalists were colonists seeking a similar but better existence than was possible in Germany.

The Germans of Latin America have adapted well. In cities, they assimilated quickly. Nineteenth-century traders generally married into leading Latin American families, and urban Germans were strongly influenced by the constant contact they had with the surrounding culture. Those Germans who did not flourish at rural colonies made their way to nearby cities, where the existence of German institutions such as churches, schools, and clubs allowed for the maintenance of their German heritage. The Pan-Germanist and Nazi attempts to expand the nominal cultural affiliation Latin American Germans had with Germany found limited success. Their propagandizing inspired mounting concern throughout Latin America about the dangers Germans constituted. This culminated during the Second World War in campaigns to suppress ties with Germany. After Germany's crushing defeat, Germans across the region made decisive moves to cement their identification with Latin America.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER ONE

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