# Germany and Brazil, 1870-1945: a relationship between spaces

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Abstract

Relations between Germany and Brazil were influenced by different spatial orders which co-existed and influenced each other between 1870 and 1945. The article discusses the idea of living in different worlds, and being worlds apart. It argues that the concept of distance changed slowly, but surely, with the rise of modern communication technologies. Hierarchically structured spatial orders of centers and peripheries dominated the relationship in this period. Not only the Germans considered their own space superior, and on a higher level than the Brazilian, many Brazilians of the time agreed with this point of view, but also, since the First World War, were not willing to accept this allegedly natural order of the globe any longer.

Keywords: Germany and Brazil, 1870-1945; international politics; economic, political and cultural relations; spatial orders; global history.

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One hundred years ago, the world still was an orderly and solid space, or so it seemed. Those were the good old days given the discourse of the time. The stories of the rise and decline of world powers that characterized the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are well-known (Kennedy, 1989). According to these narratives both Germany and Brazil were part and parcel of a stable spatial order: two elements of a system of nation states – both still considered to be young – in a hierarchically structured world: Germany as part of the industrialized European center on its way to become a world power, and Brazil as part of the semi-colonized export-oriented Latin-American periphery. This spatial order of center and periphery was firmly implanted in the discourse of world power which dominated the turn of the century. Indeed, this interpretation of space set the frame of mind for generations of historians who investigated the nature of the relationship between two countries that seemed so distant, and were yet closely connected.

Much has changed since then. In recent years, the contemporary globalization experience has induced both social sciences, and humanities, to ask for the movements that form and transform space, and spatial orders. In this context, the transnational approach to history has proved as a productive perspective. As a consequence of the focus on contact zones and cross-border entanglements, a transnational perspective is actor-centered. The focus on actors transcends the hitherto dominant scholarship on macro processes of historical world power constellations in order to embrace those micro- and meso-levels where networks and entanglements produce spaces between and beyond the national and the global levels (Pries, 2007).

The history of Latin America in the period under study here can indeed be understood as a process of growing entanglement. Modern historiography interprets the years from 1870 to 1930 as a period of intensive globalization while the years from 1930-1945 are often understood as a rupture (Osterhammel, 2011; Conrad, Sachsenmaier, 2007). Looking at Latin-American history, we can see that this process was not linear at all. Major ruptures were happening already during and due to the First World War. However, on the whole, entanglements between Germany and Brazil did increase considerably in this period. Indeed, from a Brazilian perspective they seemed so strong that some talked about a "German danger" to the young nation (Gertz, 1991; Seyferth, 1989).

This paper asks which types of movements and actors contributed to these entanglements. My hypothesis is that Germany and Brazil were not worlds apart but did rather interact in dynamic constellations shaping their own spatial characteristics. This relationship between spaces offers a myriad of voices if the perspective goes beyond the purely national level of big power politics. This is not to say, of course, that power was not important. On the contrary, power constellations were an essential precondition for understanding what was going on in transatlantic relations at the time and impregnated all levels of contact.

In the following, the article will give first an overview of relations up to the First World War. Second, it concentrates on the short period of democracy in Germany when the parameters of interaction changed and when non-state actors were more important than ever to stabilize the relationship. Third, it will sketch with a few words the nazi period. The perspective will be informed mainly by the German side.

## Brazil and Germany before the First World War

Economic interests dominated the relationship between Germany and independent Brazil in the nineteenth century. The Hanseatic cities of Northern Germany and their commercial houses on the one side and the Brazilian government on the other were important actors in this early period (Fiebig-von Hase, 1986, p.62-67). Below the surface, there were also the German emigrants who formed settler communities especially in the Southern states of the Brazilian empire. Despite their very modest beginnings in the 1820s, these expatriates were to become important pillars of the relationship in the following century.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, there were major waves of Germans leaving Germany and going to Brazil where they settled mostly in Rio Grande do Sul, Paraná and Santa Catarina. Their settlements were more often than not located in backward regions where they toiled as farmers. Later there developed small urban centers where early industrial development was to be noted. In addition to the mass migration, there was a continual flow of members of the elites who came to South America for a certain time or to stay for good. These experts, tradesmen, bankers, journalists, military officers and so on were never a large group but they were qualitatively important for the influence they exerted on Brazilian elites. Knowledge and money were the main pillars of their power which was reflected in their control of the community of Germans or Brazilians of German descent in the places where they lived – the so-called "German colony" (Delhaes-Guenther, 1973, p.112-242; Rinke, 2008).

In economic terms, relations between the two countries saw a continual increase since the late nineteenth century (Fiebig-von Hase, 1986, p.14). The German demand for agrarian products like coffee, cacao, cotton, tobacco, rice and sugar was growing due to the general population increase. At the same time Germany became an important supplier of industrial products for Brazil, where, in some states, industrial initiatives were budding. German commercial houses like the coffee broker Theodor Wille in São Paulo or Scholz & Co. in Belém's rubber business were influential actors in this sector. They were supported by the increasing number of steamship lines that connected the northern German ports with Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (Brunn, 1971, p.245-246).

Another important sector that developed since the 1880s was banking. Up to that point, the commercial houses had acted as creditors, but, with the massive growth of commercial exchange, more professional financial structures became necessary. Thus, the big German banks founded branches like the Banco Alemão Transatlântico in Brazil – a daughter of Deutsche Bank. Indeed, the second largest German bank abroad, the Brazilian Bank for Germany, was founded by the Disconto trust (Lück, 1939, p.94-103).

With the big banks came big industry. Frequently German overseas banks negotiated tied loans, which meant that the debtor – more often than not the government of Brazil – had to spend the loan money by buying German products. With this backing, German industrial concerns were able to establish direct representations in Brazil. The roots of well-known enterprises of German origin like M.A.N., and Philipp Holzmann & Co. can be found in this period. In comparison to British investments, the German element remained weak until the turn of the century. Especially in the crucial sector of railway construction, Germans hardly participated with the important exception of the Santa Catarina-Railway in the South. At the

beginning of the twentieth century, however, German industry had a competitive advantage in the most modern branches of development: that is chemistry and electronics. Indeed, Bayer, Basf, Siemens and AEG came to dominate the Brazilian markets. Siemens even set up two of its main offices abroad in that country, one in Rio de Janeiro and one in São Paulo (Brunn, 1971, p.249, 258-260).

There was doubtlessly a boom of German capital investment in Brazil until 1914. These investments provided the basis for the rapid growth of commercial exchange in these years. Brazil had become the second largest partner in German-Latin-American trade by 1914 and its share was constantly growing. From the Brazilian perspective, the same held true. Germany still held the second place after England, but the distance between the two was shrinking. The city of Hamburg was the largest European marketplace for Brazilian coffee (Fiebig-von Hase, 1986, p.140-141).

Parallel to the rise of economic interests the political dimension of the relationship developed at a much slower pace. Due to US interests for reciprocal accords, the negotiations for a German-Brazilian commercial treaty were very difficult and did not lead to the desired end before 1914. Protectionist lobbies on both sides of the Atlantic further complicated the picture. Indeed, despite the growth of bilateral trade commercial policies were conflict-ridden since the 1900s when both Germany and Brazil introduced protectionist import duties hurting the other party (Brunn, 1971, p.268-272).

However, this disappointing framework did not have stark negative effects because other dimensions of political relations proved quite stable. Thus, the German government encouraged the creation of telegraph lines using since the 1900s the modern wireless technology (Pauli, 1914). There were plans for creating a global radio net in which Brazilian stations played a crucial role. Yet, these plans were not to be realized before 1914. In addition, the formation of powerful lobby groups like the Deutsch-Brasilianischer Handelsverband (DBHv; German-Brazilian Commercial Association) gave diplomats a subtle tool to influence the course of relations.

In 1896, the new German government started its new course, the so-called *Weltpolitik*. This new form of aggressive and expansionist foreign policy gave rise to radical nationalists like the Pan-German League. Some of their followers demanded a more active policy in those regions of the world where Germans had settled. The idea of "saving German blood" on foreign ground was clearly an expression of a highly dichotomic spatial order. Brazil, of course, entered as one of the main regions in these discussions. Although the Pan-Germans and other radical nationalists never dominated foreign policy, the noise they made had an influence on diplomacy. Thus, at the turn of the century, the German foreign ministry checked if whether some kind of stronger indirect control of Southern Brazil could be feasible (Vagts, 1935, p.1452-1524).

In Brazil, on the other hand, the public furor in Germany was followed closely. It was in these years that the die-hard catchword of the German danger, the *perigo alemão*, was born. In the eyes of the Pan-Germans and like minded expansionists, the Germans abroad – the so-called *Auslandsdeutsche* – were a resource to be exploited. Their understanding of Germanness was basically a racial one based on the idea of *ius sanguinis*, that is: anyone who had German blood in their veins was worth saving from assimilation because they could be useful for

imperial ambitions. Thus, the German emigrants were re-discovered as potential tools of empire by the German side. A plethora of clubs and associations in the Reich like the Pan-German League, the Colonial Society, the German School Club and others fired this discourse not the least to their own good. Interested enterprise, steamship lines and churches followed their call (Seyferth, 1989).

The main arguments for the significance of the Germans in Brazil were their potential as buyers of German products and services, and their potential as intercultural representatives of the German empire. They were a living example, so to say, of the superiority of the German race and culture.[1] The participants in the discussions mentioned churches and schools as the main instruments to support Germanness in Brazil. Indeed, Brazil was the country with the by far highest number of German schools worldwide. Of the estimated nine hundred German schools on the globe in 1914, some six hundred were located in that South American state. Of course, most of them were what diplomats condescendingly called "jungle schools", boasting not even one professional teacher. In addition, the great number of German clubs contributed to the survival of a German identity in that country (Hell, 1966, p.189-200, 235-236).

Yet the monolithic view of Germanness in Brazil differed considerably from reality. Rather than a union of proud Teutons in the tropics, those people who were considered "German" by nationalistic enthusiasts in Germany were a rather mixed bunch with fighting spirit. Rivalries between Protestants and Catholics, between conservatives and liberals, and – not least – between different regional groups were the norm rather than the exception. Hence, the work of the interested parties within Germany had to be directed towards the reconciliation of different interests (Schulze, Klug, 1998). To this end, diplomatic means like battleship visits were used. Most important was the financial support given to the German schools.

Indeed, culture was increasingly considered as a weapon in the race for world power. Prior to the First World War, Germany was following the example of France in strengthening cultural diplomacy to present its superiority in Brazil. Missions of well-known scientists and artists to that country for the first time gained recognition and received public funding. The academics reacted enthusiastically. The German-South American Institute in Bonn was founded in 1912 as the first of a long row that finally culminated in the foundation of the Ibero-American Institute in 1930 (Gast, 1913; Bruch, 1982).

Yet, the alleged cultural strength of the German empire had to be marketed in Brazil. Hence, a first concerted initiative of press propaganda was started in the years before the war. Again, the German-Brazilians and the newspapers they had founded since 1852 (some 51 by 1914) served as important stepping stones. The grand design to establish a German cable service, independent of the English Reuter's and the French Havas, however, failed due to the lack of funds. Instead, the foreign ministry funded conservative Brazilian newspapers like the notorious *Urwaldsbote* (Luebke, 1987, p.54-57; Brunn, 1971, p.176-178).

To sum up: until the First World War, German-Brazilian relations remained part of a hierarchical world order in which spaces were represented in terms of power politics. Yet, underneath the surface of power, lay dimensions of contact and of interactions, for example, amongst commercial houses, in expert cultures, and in the everyday life of migrants, which have gave solidity to the relationship between the two distant countries.

## Rupture? The First World War

From a Brazilian point of view, the outbreak of the war in Europe 1914 marked a deep cut in historical development. From the very beginning, contemporary observers sensed that this war would be different, that it would have a dimension that went far beyond the usual. This would be a world conflict which nobody could evade. Many agreed that in these August days of 1914 an era in history had ended and a new and uncertain one had begun. Although Brazil remained neutral until 1917, connections to Germany were cut almost immediately by the naval blockade of the Allies. Thus, the naval war not only destroyed German-Brazilian trade, but also endangered German and German-Brazilian investments. Destroying cables and hunting traders and commercial houses via blacklists, the English made sure to uproot German influences in that country and to make sure of the booty. Not England, but rather the United States were the main profiteers of this rupture. In addition to the loss of commerce, German ships were interned in the neutral Brazilian ports. Nevertheless, many German businesses managed to survive. Some, like the Wille Company, simply substituted trade with the United States for commerce with Germany. Others reinvested profits into industrial ventures in South Brazil. This came at an opportune moment because foreign competition was erased due to wartime conditions (Wyneken, 1958, p.148).[2]

In a political vein, spatial orders slowly transformed during the wartime period. The Brazilian government actively participated in a peace initiative together with Argentina and Chile concerning the conflict between the United States and Mexico. Although this did not lead to tangible results, Germans were pleased to note that Latin-American countries seemed to create a tangible front against US influences, thus potentially binding Washington in the Western Hemisphere. This end was, indeed, one of the major goals of German policy during the war years (Gilderhus, 1986, p.37-80).

The second major aim was to keep Brazil neutral. In order to achieve this, the German government created its propaganda central there. From Brazil, German diplomats tried to influence a number of newspapers, which in their majority favored the cause of the Western Allies and not the Germans. Again, the cooperation of German-Brazilians proved important in this endeavour. They managed to gain the support of the well-known Brazilian journalist and congressman João Dunshee de Abranches. In addition, they profited from the fact that Lauro Müller, a Brazilian of German descent, became foreign minister. Indeed, Müller clandestinely supported the German efforts (Luebke, 1987, p.135, 164, 175-176).

However, success was less likely when German submarines began to sink Brazilian ships. The first incident occurred in April 1916 with the steamship Rio Branco, which had been chartered by the British. Yet, when the submarine warfare was reduced, so were tensions, at least for a while. This was important because the German interests tried to use Brazil as a base for wireless station to rebuilt direct communication with that country and with Latin America at large.

When, in 1917, the United States entered the war, the situation changed dramatically. Unrestricted German submarine warfare soon led to the sinking of another Brazilian ship in April 1917. The Brazilian government under Venceslau Brás severed relations immediately. Foreign Minister Müller had to withdraw. Shortly thereafter mob violence against German

institutions and enterprises shook many Brazilian cities especially in the South. When further Brazilian ships were attacked, the government in Rio de Janeiro finally reacted by declaring war against Germany in October 1917. German language publications were forbidden, enterprises shut and anti-German feelings remained rampant. The use of the German language in education was prohibited, too, and hence many schools had to be closed because the teachers could not speak Portuguese (Luebke, 1987, p.122-175).

Brazil's direct contribution to the war consisted mainly in the export of important raw materials and of ships. Brazilian troops did not enter the battlefields. Was this the total rupture that many historians have written about in their studies? No, because German-Brazilians continued to act in the spaces between the now solid national states which fought a war against each other. In these spaces, they dynamically moved between national adherences trying to survive. And they were impressively successful thanks to the very fact that they were able to build on solid relationships with influential Brazilians. Despite the harassments and official enmity, these relationships continued to exist and to withstand the challenge of the first European war that Latin-American nations were eventually drawn into.

Indeed, due given the bleak outlook in 1918 the very existence of the German-Brazilians gave rise to high hopes of post-war continuities in German planning. Before the complete breakdown of the German empire in autumn of that year, the foreign ministry continued to plan a return to the Brazilian markets. One of the main goals it set itself was to create a new and more productive press service in order to influence public opinion. In addition, means of how to push back the US commercial interests were discussed. What Germany wanted in Brazil – and in Latin America at large for that matter – was the open door and its fair share. Especially the raw materials and food from Brazil seemed to be essential, given the state of emergency in Germany in the last year of the war. An expansion into the Brazilian markets seemed to be essential to safeguard the results of the still expected wartime triumph.[3]

## Transnational actors between spaces, 1918-1933

As we all know: this type of planning soon proved to be futile. The peace treaty of Versailles not only restricted German access to Brazil but it created a plethora of institutions to check the newly founded German republic and to keep it out of world politics and especially of what many Germans now considered to be the "last free continent"[4] (Rinke, 1996a). Belonging to the coalition of enemies, Brazil was a difficult place to re-establish relations. Although the government had not confiscated German property on a big scale, it had annulled the concessions of the large Santa Catarina Railway Company and the German South American Telegraph Company. In addition, it had sequestered the German ships.[5] When the Treaty of Versailles was signed, however, Germans had to reckon that their largest investments in Brazil were gone for good. The railway fell to the state of Santa Catarina and the cable concession had to be handed over to the Allies. Moreover, the Brazilian government now claimed the debts of German pre-war creditors. Brazilian bonds in Germany were sold in order to pay reparations (Cornelius, 1929, p.70-72).

Nevertheless, these measures did not threaten the survival of German economic interests on the whole – thus there existed some optimism in the transition period of 1918-1919

(Trott-Helge, 1919). The Brazilian Bank for Germany, which had stood under government control after 1917, was allowed to continue its work although its business did not go well. In 1923, it was transformed into a Brazilian enterprise and, in 1929, it was taken over by the German Overseas Bank. On the whole, however, the banks with their transnational funds and participations offered German industry a valuable framework for its return to the Brazilian markets (Lück, 1939, p.56-60).

Very early in 1919, the heavy industry tried to secure iron ore concessions in the "land of the future", but to no avail because the Brazilian government itself began to invest in this sector and US, French and English competition remained powerful. Much more successful was the return of the most modern German enterprises, like Siemens and AEG, which invested, for example, great sums in Santa Catarina. In addition, German-Brazilian commercial houses participated actively in the first boom of industrialization, which had developed since 1915 due to the wartime demand. In general, the post-war return of German economic interest groups to Brazil was incomplete as compared to the pre-war period. There were substantial changes in its consistency because the big industrial concerns of the chemical, electronic and heavy metal sectors now dominated the scene while many of the traditional commercial house merged into the Brazilian environment. Indeed, the nationalist pressure led to the transformation of many enterprises into Brazilian firms thus making the category of the nation even more dubious (Rinke, 1996a, p.64-102).

Within Latin America, Brazil was the second most important economic partner for Germany. This held true for trade, too. When the economic situation in Germany had stabilized in 1924, coffee continued to be the most important product on the German market. In 1929, according to the Brazilian statistics, Germany was the third most important trading partner of the country. The return of German shipping lines were a basic condition for this quite successful resurgence. Indeed, Brazil was one of the first overseas countries to receive ships from Germany after the war. The positive development ended abruptly in that year due to the Great Depression. Between 1929 and 1932, the value of German-Brazilian trade shrank almost 70% (Cornelius, 1929, p.45-66).

Even more than before the war, economic relations were influenced by political factors. The new German government had to deal with the fact that Brazil was part of the victorious coalition which dictated the Versailles Treaty. Yet, during the negotiations, it became clear that the Brazilian representatives were not considered as equals by their Allies. Much to their frustration, Brazilian claims were not satisfied. After signing the treaty, Germany was able to re-establish relations with Brazil in 1920. However, the situation remained tense because the Brazilian government insisted on reparations payments, and threatened to confiscate German property – a measure it was entitled to, being a member of the victorious Allies. In 1921, when the former Brazilian representative in Versailles, Epitácio Pessoa, had become president, the issue was finally negotiated (Rinke 1996a, p.172-173).

However, due to the emergency situation in Germany in the early 1920s and its inability to pay, the open question continued to overshadow the official relationship to such a degree that Germany did not send a mission to the Brazilian centenary. The tensions were obvious – from a Brazilian perspective – in the crucial question of coffee exports. Due to the German emergency, a tax raise on coffee was discussed in Germany in the early 1920s. This caused

massive attacks in the Brazilian press. The German government offered to suspend the tax raise during the negotiations for a commercial treaty between the two countries – which was not existent. Nevertheless, due to the international problems (occupation of the Ruhr etc.), negotiations led to nothing, and both countries continued to live with the pre-war provisory agreement (Die Erhöhung..., 1921, p.275).

Part of the problem was Brazil's policy in the newly founded League of Nations. Since its founding, Brazil held a non-permanent seat in the important security council of the League. Here it followed a strongly pro-French and, thus anti-German course. Only when in 1923 Afranio de Melo Franco became new Brazilian representative in Geneva did the antagonism alleviate (Hilton, 1980, p.351). However, when Germany finally was to join the League, in 1926, and received a permanent seat in the Security Council, tensions broke out again. Since the founding of the League, Brazil had claimed a permanent seat itself. It legitimated its claim with leadership in Latin America. While Brazil's claim was constantly denied, the former wartime enemy Germany now was to get the seat. As Eugênio Vargas (2000) has shown, for a number of reasons Brazil reacted by leaving the League in the same year. The course of Brazilian foreign policy, so its makers maintained, was now to turn away from Europe and to search for cooperation with the United States instead (Fischer, 2012, p.223-271; Vargas, 2000).

In the following seven years, Brazilian-German diplomatic relations stabilized, without the same quality of friendship that was discernible in German relations to Argentina, Chile, or Mexico. The reparation issue continued to weigh severely on bilateral diplomacy. The military revolt of young lieutenants in São Paulo, in July 1924, caused further problems, because unemployed German immigrants participated in it forming a "German battalion". The role of the Germans was heavily criticized in Brazil – the catchword of the German danger resurfaced. When in 1925 the rebels formed the well-known *Coluna Prestes* (Prestes Column), and moved in the Brazilian backcountry until 1927, again numerous Germans formed part of the movement. Once more, the activities of Germans or German-Brazilians threw a shadow on relations between the two countries (Rinke, 1996a, p.189-190).

When the Great Depression hit both countries, German-Brazilian relations entered a new phase. Although the coup of Getúlio Vargas in 1930 did not cause complications for Germany, the rebellion against that ruler in São Paulo in 1932 caused problems when the rebels pleaded for official recognition in Berlin. In the meantime, however, the still open question of a commercial treaty was resolved in 1931. When money became scarce and all countries worldwide resorted to protectionism, Germany and Brazil were amongst the first to turn to a barter agreement. In 1932, the Banco do Brasil traded Brazilian coffee in exchange of German coal. This new form of commerce was to dominate bilateral trade relations in the decade of the 1930s (Rinke, 1996a, p.282-285).

Compared to Brazilian relations to the United States, or German relations to its European neighbors, the bilateral relationship between the two countries was relatively unimportant. Although in the minds of most observers the old dichotomic spatial orders of centers and peripheries still held true, in reality, new forces were creating spaces in between, which were felt on the national level too. The main actors were, of course, the so-called *Auslandsdeutsche*. Their number literally exploded after the end of the First World War. Indeed, more than 55 thousand Germans emigrated to Brazil in the decade of the 1920s. After 1918, emigration to

South America was welcome in Germany. To stimulate emigration seemed to be necessary, given the hunger and dire emergency in the Reich. Sending emigrants to Brazil seemed to be a good alternative to the United States, where Germans were lost as "cultural fertilizers" (Freeden, 1925, p.81-82; Bickelmann, 1980, p.143, 149).

Although Brazil had also been a wartime enemy, preconditions for German settlements were still good. In addition, the Brazilian government actively supported German immigrants, since 1919 (Die deutsch-brasilianischen..., 1920, p.108). The new coming Germans continued to settle mainly in South Brazil. But not all of them did find work. Many had no experience in farming at all, and got lost in cities, especially São Paulo, where they soon had to plead for help by German-Brazilian charity organizations. Many failed completely and were happy if they were able to return. We still know only little about their fates. After Vargas' rise to power, the inflow of immigrants was more or less completely stopped due to the economic crisis.

Those who did come and stayed were not always causing happiness in German official circles. These migrants soon created their own spheres and spaces, leaving their German fatherland behind, and returning to it mentally, often only in times of need. When Germans in Rio Grande do Sul celebrated the centenary of their ancestors' first arrival in 1824, the German foreign ministry was anxious not to create suspicion amongst Brazilian authorities. Indeed the governments of Bernardes and Venceslau Brás, in the 1920s, strengthened cultural nationalism, thus, continuing the trend of the wartime period. Especially the German schools in Santa Catarina, where restrictions were carried out unremittingly, suffered and many had to be closed (Paiva, 1984, p.73).

In Germany, many experts lamented this situation because they feared that, after losing the language, Germans would eventually "brazilianize" and, thus be lost for the Reich (Koch, 1923, p.198; Ammon, 5. Mai 1924). In other federal states, however, restrictions were less severe, and German schools made an effort to fulfil the new requirements, like using Portuguese in history and geography lessons and hiring Brazilian teachers. In addition, schools received help from Berlin in order to survive. Not only financial means, but teachers, material, and know-how were offered to support the schools in Brazil. Hence, in 1926, a nation-wide association of German-Brazilian teachers was founded with help from the Reich. The efforts showed fruits, and, by the end of the 1920s, observers were optimistic. However, with Vargas, the strong nationalist course in educational politics was revived. This time, the fight was longer, and Brazilian nationalism was to triumph in the end (Paiva, 1984, p.91-93).

Part of the problem was the heterogeneity of Germans in Brazil, who settled in huge areas and adhered to different confessions. After the war, the intense political infighting in Germany came to Brazil, with the migrants leaving Europe. The few Republicans organized themselves in German-Republican Associations, but the majority of politically interested Germans and German-Brazilians were staunchly conservative and monarchist, growing numbers even belonged to right-wing radical groups like the Stahlhelm, and later the emerging National Socialist Party. When the domestic political situation radicalized within Germany, so it did amongst German-Brazilians. With most of the German-Brazilian newspapers as a backing, nationalists controlled public opinion. This was most obvious in the long fight about the new German national flag, which substituted the imperial colors black white and red with the black, red, and gold of the Revolution of 1848 (Rinke, 1996b).

When in the early 1930s, in the course of the Great Depression, poverty created domestic tensions which heightened in both Germany and Brazil, many people drifted towards the radical parties. In Germany, the most successful group by 1930 was the nazi party. This party with its racist ideology had, from the beginning, a strong interest in Germans living abroad. Brazil was no exception. Indeed, in April 1928, the medical doctor and eye specialist, Hans Asanger, founded the first local group of the nazi party worldwide in Timbó, close to Blumenau (Santa Catarina). A major boom occurred in 1931, after the nazis had achieved a major election victory in Germany. In 1931, many local groups mushroomed independently in Brazil, mostly without even knowing the others existed. By that time, the party counted groups in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Porto Alegre, Blumenau and many other centers of German-Brazilian life. Before Hitler's rise to power, Brazil had a larger nazi party membership than any other Latin-American country. The middle classes were the dominant breeding for nazi party leaders in Brazil. The membership, however, recruited itself amongst marginalized, mainly unsuccessful, Germans who had come to Brazil with high hopes but without much preparation or abilities. However, there was no master plan of broadening the nazi party base in Brazil – as voices from the US later claimed during the Second World War. Since 1932, there was a lot of infighting, especially in the Rio de Janeiro group. In general, the nazi groups remained comparatively small – in all the German central counted some 350 members in Brazil by early 1933 –, although they produced a lot of noise and propaganda already before 1933, when their party rose to power in Germany (Moraes, 2005; Müller, 1997, p.284-316; Gertz, 1987; Dietrich, 2007).

Despite the problems that radical circles caused, the German-Brazilians were a most important tool of German foreign policy in this period. This was most obvious looking at those facets which were modern and new in this period, like cultural and press politics. A cultural policy as a substitute for power politics was early introduced into relations to Brazil, too. Most important was academic exchange, which, for the first time, was actively pursued and financed. These were the years when the predecessor of the German Academic Exchange Service and, in 1930, of the Ibero-American Institute were founded (Rinke, 1996a, p.413-488).

The same was true about the press policy. Indeed, this was completely new – a heritage of wartime propaganda. With a concerted effort by German-Brazilian lobby groups and the Berlin foreign ministry, Germany managed to influence newspapers such as *O Jornal* and *O Estado de São Paulo*. Indeed, for the first time, a German news service, the Agência Brasileira, functioned and brought news to South America which had not been filtered by Reuter's or Havas before. The interested parties strongly participated in the development of the new radio technology that emerged in this decade, and was to bloom fully in the 1930s. Finally, cinema has to be mentioned also, although US influences remained hegemonic in this sector. The media were to remain an important element in the relationship between the two countries in that it connected spaces in an increasingly rapid manner and, thus, bridged the gap which had fired notions of different worlds. In order for new spaces in between to emerge, it took information, and this information was supplied by media consciously informed by the interested parties (Rinke, 1996a, p.515-541).

An additional most modern element that contributed to the shrinking of space and time in this period was aviation. More than any other technology aviation inspired dreams

of progress. Its first heyday was during the First World War. Wartime experiences made it attractive for civil use, too. Especially in huge countries like Brazil, where main areas remained still unexplored, aviation seemed to be a tool for national integration. In that regard, a re-ordering of national space seemed to be possible and, what is more, it became possible to think of a rapid direct link to the centers of world commerce by transatlantic flights. This promising outlook combined with the motives of many former German air force pilots, who, after 1918, found themselves unemployed. The German aviation firm Junkers set great hopes in Brazil as a land of the future, and sponsored a large Latin-American tour for its new model the F-13, the first all-metal airplane ever, in the early 1920s. Although this tour became a disaster, the interest of governments in the region awoke. The German government considered aviation to be an important element in its efforts to regain some of the prestige lost during the war (Gronau, 28. Dec. 1922, 6. Apr. 1923).

Of course, Brazil itself counted amongst the pioneers of air flight, with Santos Dumont as the "flying Brazilian" in Paris. Yet, the Brazilian government relied on technology and expertise from Europe. Due to the nationalist *Zeitgeist*, however, it was not willing to open its national spaces to the foreign experts without restrictions. In the context of these restrictions, and of international rivalries with the French, who pursued the same aims, German aviation interests formed a strong group of transnational actors. Aviation allowed for a new dimension of transcontinental space to become thinkable, when the Zeppelin landed in Pernambuco in 1930 (Rinke, 1996a, p.688-698, 727-732).

## "New states" and a total war, 1933-1945

New technologies, like the new media and aviation, introduced new dimensions into the relationship between Germany and Brazil that had the potential to reshape spatial orders. Yet by the 1930s, dictatorships in both countries had different ideas. While Getúlio Vargas in Brazil build upon the nationalist sentiments that had formed in the 1920s, so did Hitler in Germany. Nevertheless, life for German-Brazilian nazis and radical nationalists in Brazil did not become easier. On the contrary, measures against foreign schooling – not only against Germans – were broadened in Vargas' first term. In addition, nazi propaganda was sharply criticized in Brazil. The anti-Jewish measures of the nazis, too, received a lot of criticism, and some mob violence against German institutions occurred. Even the traditionally pro-German newspaper *Jornal do Brasil*, which held German culture in high esteem, commented by 1934 that it was better to live in the less "civilized", but happier and more humane Brazil, than in nazi Germany (Müller, 1997, p.286).

However, there was some hope for the nazis. The rise of the Ação Integralista Brasileira (Brazilian Integralist Action), a proto-fascist organization founded by Plínio Salgado in 1932, which copied many elements from European models (Sigma, storm troopers, uniforms), seemed to play into the hands of German nazis in Brazil. The integralists shared the nazi's hatred for parliamentarism, liberalism, and communism. Even anti-Semitism gave the two movements a common ground. However, the integralists did not share the broader aspects of nazi racism and anticlericalism at all. They wanted the total integration of all racial elements – save Jews – into the body of the nation (Araújo, 1988).

Much to the consternation of politicians in Rio de Janeiro, the integralists grew especially in South Brazil amongst the descendents of Germans. The regime tried to restrict the movement by measures, such as banning its members from public service, and prohibiting integralist demonstrations. For its opponents, a strong connection between integralists and nazis seemed to be obvious, although historical research has proved that there was quite a distance, and even antagonism, between the two. When Vargas created his own version of a corporatist state with full dictatorial powers, the *Estado Novo*, in 1937, he prohibited the existence of parties. Thus, in March and May 1938, the integralists tried a coup against him, which failed. A cooperation between the integralists and the nazis did not take place. Nevertheless, in April 1938, the Vargas regime effectively prohibited the existence and activities of foreign parties within Brazil. Despite the diplomatic threats of the German embassy, nazi influences had to act undercover and did not develop major activities anymore (Gertz, 1988).

On the other hand, commercial relations between Brazil and Germany blossomed in the 1930s. What had begun as a singular deal of give and take in 1932 was transformed under nazi rule into a major policy factor by the Minister of Economy Hjalmar Schacht. Schacht's "New Plan" built upon the idea of barter trade without currency. This was in the very interest of Germany, which had lost major portions of its foreign currency reserves, but needed Brazilian raw materials in order to fire its industrial demands. Indeed, German-Brazilian trade reached new heights until 1938. By that year, Germany started to pay for Brazilian cotton, linen, wool, petroleum, and so on, with weaponry (Schröder, 1970, p.217-231).

In the Western countries, this development, combined with the allegedly strong standing of the nazis amongst German-Brazilians, gave rise to the idea of a "Fifth Column" of German-Brazilians which fought the Brazilian state from within. This proved to be an effective element of anti-German propaganda during the war. However, by 1939, nazi influences in Brazil had already been weakened to such a degree, that the Vargas government did not pay much attention to these rumors. In general, Vargas' policy meandered between sympathy for German nazism because of its strong stand against communism, and the need for a close alliance with the United States. While Brazil cooperated with the Reich in training police and military personnel, and in commerce, the defense against German espionage and possible air raids from North-African bases became more important as the war progressed. Thus, the United States became the most important partner in defending the so-called Western Hemisphere (Müller, 1997).

When Brazil finally declared war against Germany in August 1942, after the sinking of Brazilian ships, the repression against possible nazi sympathizers resurfaced (Seitenfus, 2003). Many Germans fell under suspicion. Some were interned, some even tortured. German property was sequestered and nationalized. Especially the German airline interests, Sindicato Condor and Deutsche Luft Hansa were transformed into Brazilian companies, their German personal being dismissed. This was according to US interests, which, at the same time, supplied weapons to Vargas under the Lend-Lease program. With its important raw materials like iron ore, manganese, bauxite, and so on, Brazil contributed indirectly to the war. In addition, it was strategically important as an aviation base for flights to Africa. In 1944, Brazil was the only Latin-American country to send troops to Europe, which fought in Italy and stood under US orders (Alves, 2002).

## Final considerations

There were different dimensions of spatial orders which co-existed and influenced each other in shaping relations between Germany and Brazil. The idea of living in different worlds, and being worlds apart, was still existent. The concept of distance changed slowly, but surely with the rise of modern communication technologies. Between 1870 and 1945, relations had become very complex, and a constant flow of information and of people allowed for a multitude of spaces in between to develop. In addition, the feeling of belonging to hierarchically structured spatial orders of centers and peripheries still loomed large in the relationship between Brazilians and Germans. Not only the Germans considered their own space as being superior, and on a higher level than the Brazilian. Indeed, the idea of Brazil being part of a "last free continent" (Rinke 1996a, p.1), where the Reich could possibly live out its colonial dreams, still survived – as late as in 1950s West German newspapers called Brazil a "space without people for the people without space" (Rinke, 2010, p.68). Many Brazilians of the time might have agreed with major aspects of this point of view, but, since the First World War, they were not willing to accept this allegedly natural order of the globe any longer. The strong forces of nationalism and the problems of post-First World War Germany contributed in opening up new spatial dimensions of contact.

### NOTES

[1] A good summary of contemporary thinking can be found in DAI (1932).

[2] For the blockade in general, see Hardach (1973, p.19-33).

[3] Postwar planning began early in the war; see Bürklin (1915, p.84).

[4] In this and other citations of texts from non-English languages, a free translation has been provided.

[5] The Brazilian measures are described in United States (1918).

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