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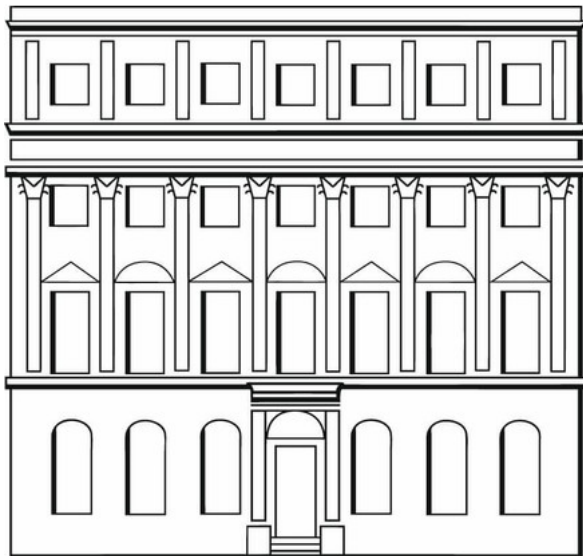
Labour Policy, Germanness, and Nazi Influence in Brazil

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Labour Policy, Germanness, and Nazi Influence in Brazil

URSULA PRUTSCH

In 1930 the ambitious politician Getúlio Dornelles Vargas made himself President of Brazil through a political revolt. Seven years later, in November 1937, he turned the fragile democracy into a right-wing presidential dictatorship. Remaining in power until October 1945, Vargas laid the groundwork for Brazil's future political and economic position in the Americas. In the collective memory, he is still known as the 'Father of the Poor' and the 'Father of the Workers'. These sobriquets highlight his regime's particular social policy focus on segments of society that were still marginalized.

But his opponents had a competing image of Vargas, claiming that he and many in his cabinet were fascists who admired Italian Fascism and the Third Reich, as well as Germany's highly militarized organization and effective propaganda.¹ Vargas's adversaries believed he would have turned the country into a fascist satellite state if the outbreak of the Second World War and pressure from the United States had not successfully pulled him to the 'right side'.²

The 1970s saw considerable research on the Vargas regime, labour, and corporatism, focusing on the impact of European models. In the 1990s historians began to emphasize Brazil's own creativity in developing distinctive programmes answering its own needs. More recent studies have viewed this domestic approach as too narrow, and are again more open to considering foreign

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¹ This view was also based on the meaning of 'fascism' in Brazil, where it is mostly used as a vague synonym for right-wing politics.

² For the history of German and American influence during the Vargas regime see Ursula Prutsch, *Creating Good Neighbors? Die Kultur- und Wirtschaftspolitik der USA in Lateinamerika, 1940–1946* (Stuttgart, 2008).

examples that were transferred and adapted to Brazilian needs.³ The present essay is based on this approach. It seeks to show that the Brazilian way of building a strong and independent nation cannot be explained only by reference to itself, but must also take into account attempts clearly to distinguish itself from foreign threats. When Vargas took over power, he considered both communism and liberalism a threat in the foreign and domestic spheres, a view that soon extended to Nazism. Although the Nazi regime never presented a serious risk to Brazil—as this essay will demonstrate—it was skilfully instrumentalized in order to build national strength and national unity. Thus, in an analysis of German–Brazilian relations the adoption of various elements from German social and labour policies has to be seen in the context of Vargas’s aim of building a unified national community with a distinctive cultural identity of ‘Brazilianness’ (*brasilidade*), set against the background of tectonic changes felt around the world.⁴ Furthermore, there was also a contradiction between the construction of a ‘Nazi threat’ and the actual influence of the Third Reich on Brazil, an influence that was more economic than ideological.

A second argument of this essay is that Italy’s social and labour legislation—and not the laws of the Third Reich—had a strong impact on Brazil.⁵ The following discussion aims to make this assessment more nuanced by embedding labour policy within a larger social policy framework. It seeks to formulate more and deeper arguments about why the labour policies of the Third Reich were apparently so unattractive for a country like Brazil, despite

³ See the overview in Fernando Teixeira da Silva, ‘The Brazilian and Italian Labor Courts: Comparative Notes’, *International Review of Social History*, 55 (2010), 381–412.

⁴ There are some parallels between Brazil’s construction of a distinctive national way and that of the United States under the New Deal. The democratic New Deal strengthened the notion that all Americans belonged to a single national community, shaped by a pluralist, ethnically diverse definition of identity; similarly, the Vargas regime also adopted an ethnically pluralist vision of national identity. Both conceptions were developed in the context of global totalitarian and authoritarian threats, specifically from Germany and Japan during the Second World War. One crucial difference was that under the paternalistic Vargas dictatorship, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous groups did not have their own political voice. For the New Deal see Kiran Klaus Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History* (Princeton, 2016), 256–8. See also Wendy L. Wall, *Inventing the American Way: The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, 2008).

⁵ See Teixeira da Silva, ‘The Brazilian and Italian Labor Courts’; Ângela de Castro Gomes and Fernando Teixeira da Silva, *A Justiça do Trabalho e sua história* (Campinas, 2014); João Fábio Bertonha, *Sobre a direita: estudos sobre o fascismo, o nazismo e o integralismo* (Maringá, 2008).

its large minority of German Brazilians, whose migration history went back to the early nineteenth century and was closely tied to transatlantic business connections between the two countries.

Beyond these diasporic links, the Vargas regime itself maintained strong and solid economic ties with the Third Reich. Second only to Argentina, Brazil was an important Latin American base for German companies such as Siemens-Schuckert, IG Farben, and Dresdner Bank. This raises the question of whether these German businesses adopted and spread ideas drawn from Nazi labour policy, such as the German Labour Front (*Deutsche Arbeitsfront* or DAF) and the Strength through Joy (*Kraft durch Freude* or KdF) programme. The case of Siemens-Schuckert will be used to discuss German transnational influences and the tensions that arose when the Vargas regime switched to a nativist policy that ultimately became an anti-German one. Examining the case of Siemens will also help us to overcome the methodological problem of scarce source materials concerning the German model's impact on Brazilian labour matters.

The reasons for this lack of documentation lie primarily in the nature of the Brazilian dictatorship. It controlled debate through an effective propaganda and censorship apparatus under the Department of Press and Propaganda (*Departamento de Imprensa e Propaganda* or DIP), which was inspired by its analogues in the Third Reich and Fascist Italy. Even the *Revista do Trabalho* (*Journal of Labour*), which was published only for internal governmental use, and whose few remaining volumes in Rio (along with some copies in Washington DC)⁶ were analysed for this study, was officially 'authorized by the DIP'. Among the journal's Brazilian and international authors, the focus was more on summarizing labour policies in Europe and the Americas than on substantive analysis. With the redemocratization of Brazil in 1945, many institutional papers and archives vanished, including those of the DIP. The surviving papers of the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and of the Labour Court (*Justiça do Trabalho*) contain no traces of a Brazilian debate concerning German labour policies or an adaptation of their elements. The systematic destruction of documents was meant symbolically to mark a new democratic beginning and wash away traces of Brazilian co-operation with fascist systems. It might not be an accident that the volumes of the *Revista do Trabalho* surviving in Brazil date from 1943

⁶ The Library of Congress holds volumes 1939 and 1942.

onwards. In January 1942 Brazil broke off relations with the Third Reich, and declared war on Germany and Italy later that year.

This lack of substantial surviving sources probably contributed to the widespread belief that Nazi labour policies did not play a role in Brazil. However, it is possible to identify some traces of influence, as will be shown in the following.

Brazil's Labour Policies (1930–1939)

From the 1930s on the civil–military government of Getúlio Vargas strove to transform the disunited agrarian Federative Republic of Brazil into a centralized industrialized nation favourable to urban interests. The Old Republic (1889–1930) had collapsed following the 1929 financial crash. Vargas, a *gaúcho* landowner, and his political friends were schooled in positivist military academies, the think tanks for future nationalist social reformers.⁷

The government made a new cult of the worker into a crucial element in the formation of a strong corporatist nation, in a country that had long disregarded the value of manual labour, having relied on slavery until 1888. In 1907, out of a population of 20 million people, approximately 150,000 were industrial workers. By 1920, the population had grown to over 30 million people, some 275,500 of whom were employed in around 13,300 establishments. Many were foreigners or recent arrivals to the city, and thus had few resources to fall back on. Despite this urban growth, two-thirds of Brazil's population still lived in the countryside.⁸

Under Vargas, labour became a dignified duty and a social right, but its construction left no space for class conflicts. Instead, there was to be harmony between workers (*trabalhadores*) and the 'producing classes' (*classes produtoras*). In terms of the working class, three basic institutional frameworks underpinned policy developments in Brazil: the trade unions (*sindicatos*), the labour courts, and the social

⁷ No Latin American country was as strongly influenced by Auguste Comte's philosophy of positivism as Brazil. His motto was 'love as a principle and order as the basis; progress as the goal', and the last two have been inscribed as 'ordem e progresso' on the Brazilian flag since 1889. Comte saw sociology as the most effective way to analyse social weaknesses and find solutions. Positivism was taught in Brazil's military academies, where its anticlerical adepts defended authoritarian technocracy while distrusting democracy and liberalism. Brazil even has positivist churches. See Mozart Pereira Soares, *O positivismo no Brasil: 200 anos de Augusto Comte* (Porto Alegre, 1998).

⁸ James M. Malloy, *The Politics of Social Security in Brazil* (London, 1979), 31.

security system. To co-ordinate all this, Vargas created two powerful new ministries as early as 1930: the Ministry of Labour, Industry and Commerce, and the Ministry of Education and Public Health. The Ministry of Labour had its own legal jurisdiction, and was not subordinate to the executive and common justice systems (in this, it was similar to Fascist Italy).⁹

The new government undertook a variety of measures to overcome the economic and political damage caused by the worldwide Great Depression. Foreign debts were frozen, banks and industries nationalized, and high tariffs imposed on industrial products. In 1931 the 'Law of Two-Thirds' forced all employers to maintain a workforce that was at least two-thirds Brazilian.¹⁰ Three years later the constant inflow of European immigrants was radically reduced by new immigration quotas in order to facilitate the integration of poor Brazilians (many of them Afro-Brazilians and mestizos) who were migrating to the mushrooming cities. This policy of 'Brazilians first' was accompanied by an increasingly xenophobic nativism.

Through a trade union law promulgated in March 1931 the state encouraged participation in the government-controlled *sindicatos*, and recognized only those unions that supported the system. Only union members had the right to bring cases to the Mixed Conciliation Commission (Comissão Mista de Conciliação), which later became the Labour Court. Under the Ministers of Labour Lindolfo Collor (1930–2) and Joaquim Salgado Filho (1932–4), a national system of worker registration (*carteira do trabalho*) was created and a new federal pension system for different professional groups was installed.¹¹

The policies of the Vargas regime were very eclectic and were later described as having been assembled according to a 'cannibalistic' principle, as the modernists Mário and Oswald de Andrade put it ironically in their 1928 *Manifesto Antropófago* (*Cannibalist Manifesto*). In order to overcome Brazil's persistent national inferiority complex towards Europe, they argued, it should study as many ideas from abroad as possible, no matter which country they came from. The

⁹ See Kenneth Paul Erickson, *The Brazilian Corporative State and Working-Class Politics* (Berkeley, 1977).

¹⁰ Joel Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men: São Paulo and the Rise of Brazil's Working Class, 1900–1955* (Durham, NC, 1993).

¹¹ Ângela de Castro Gomes (ed.), *Ministério de Trabalho: uma história vivida e contada* (Rio de Janeiro, 2007), 29–40.

goal was to pick out the useful elements and throw the useless away, so that something new and distinctive could be created.¹²

Thus, Brazil's Constitutional Assembly of 1934, which would also secure Vargas's presidency, debated various foreign models for social and labour legislation. The constitution's future architects were also influenced by that of the Weimar Republic. They referred to its Articles 157 to 165, which declared that labour was a social duty; that it had to be protected and supported by the state; that workers and employers had the right to unionize and be equally represented; that a system of social security had to be institutionalized to guarantee the health and capacity of workers, protect pregnancy, secure old-age pensions, and help the disabled; and that a model of collective conventions between workers and employers was to be encouraged.¹³

The Weimar Constitution was discussed by the members of the Constitutional Assembly on the basis of a French summary. Beyond this, most architects of the future Constitution were influenced by, or were themselves part of, the Catholic right. They considered the collective wage agreements of the Weimar Republic too strict, the idea of equal pay too communist, and the enormous gap between city and countryside too neglected,¹⁴ but, as Ricardo Borrmann argues, the Weimar Constitution also meant the conciliation of Church and state. Thus, for the Catholic right it was more inspiration than model.¹⁵

Cardinal Sebastião Leme was the leading figure of political Catholicism. As early as 1922 he had been a consultant at the newly created Catholic think tank Centro Dom Vital (Dom Vital Centre).

¹² While the two modernists argued for a pluralistic Brazil, the Vargas regime favoured a homogeneous nation state.

¹³ Daniel de Carvalho, 'A Alemanha na vanguarda dos leis trabalhistas', *Revista do Trabalho*, Feb. 1939, 59.

¹⁴ Ibid. See also Margaret T. Williams, 'Church and State in Vargas's Brazil: The Politics of Cooperation', *Journal of Church and State*, 18/3 (Autumn 1976), 443–62.

¹⁵ Members of Brazil's Constitutional Assembly ignored the fact that the Weimar Constitution allowed civil marriage and fostered public schools. They mostly used a French summary of the Weimar Constitution by Russian émigré Boris Mirkine-Guetzévitch in his book *Les Nouvelles Tendances du droit constitutionnel* (Paris, 1931). He later worked with influential philosopher Jacques Maritain. Hugo Preuß, one of the main authors of the Weimar Constitution, was not known in Brazil. See Ricardo G. Borrmann, 'A recepção de Hans Kelsen na Constituinte de 1933–34: peças de um quebra-cabeça incompleto; "Positivismo" versus "Positivismos"?', in Lená Medeiros de Menezes, Hugo Cancino Troncoso, and Rogélio de la Mora (eds.), *Intelectuais na América Latina: pensamento, contextos e instituições* (Rio de Janeiro, 2014), 385–405.

Facing rapid industrialization in urban areas and the foundation of left-wing unions while advocating Fordism and economic liberalism, the Catholic right successfully fought to re-Catholicize Brazil.¹⁶ It promoted Catholic social doctrine based on the papal encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) as a way to achieve social harmony and peace through the elimination of class conflict.¹⁷ The multiplicity of trade unions was one lobbying achievement of Cardinal Leme, who not only spoke regularly to Vargas, but was also friends with Agamenon Magalhães, the new Minister of Labour (1934-7). Thus, the Catholic right rejected the forced unification of trade unions as in the Third Reich and, drawing examples from *Deutsches Arbeitsrecht* (*German Labour Law*, a series edited by Werner Mansfeld), demonstrated that Nazi labour law was not as new as it pretended since it had parallels with Catholic social doctrine. As Daniel de Carvalho wrote in the *Revista do Trabalho*: 'It is curious to note a coincidence between the German reforms and certain fundamental dogmas of the traditional doctrine of the Catholic Church.'¹⁸

Brazil's Constitution of 1934 was a milestone in labour and social policies. It guaranteed protection for labour rights, an eight-hour working day, a six-day working week, paid holidays, the principle of equal pay for equal work regardless of age, gender, or nationality, the prohibition of child labour, and accident insurance. It stipulated the establishment of a Labour Court, which eventually began operations in 1941.

Despite such progressive labour laws, left-wing workers and intellectuals criticized Vargas as fascist because of the rising power of political Catholicism and the humiliating defeat of the state of São Paulo,¹⁹ and condemned his political style, in which he ruled by decree under state-of-emergency provisions. Left-wing attempts to organize were forcibly suppressed by the government. The liberal

¹⁶ The first republican constitution of 1891 separated church and state, and banned catechism from public schools.

¹⁷ One symbol of renewed Catholicism was the construction of the enormous *Cristo Redentor* statue atop Corcovado in Rio, initiated by Cardinal Leme in 1922, the centennial of Brazilian independence.

¹⁸ Portuguese: 'Curioso é, todavia notar a coincidência da reforma alemã com algumas dogmas fundamentais de doutrina tradicional da igreja católica.' See Carvalho, 'A Alemanha na vanguarda', 60. On the relationship between political Catholicism and fascism see also the essay by Amélie Nuq in this volume.

¹⁹ The state of São Paulo launched a revolt in 1932 against the centralist policies of President Vargas, but was defeated by his forces.

party coalition Aliança Nacional Libertadora (National Liberation Alliance) was dissolved in 1935, a communist coup was quickly crushed, and many suspects were jailed and tortured.

Vargas was able to consolidate his power as the protectionist policies of import substitution began to bear fruit. The economy recovered, with booms in new state-fostered or state-owned industries, which were involved in textiles, electronics, consumer goods, steel, and chemical products. The setting of a minimum wage (paid from 1940 onwards), whose amount was fixed by the President, not Congress, and graduated according to the individual economies of Brazil's twenty-one states, was another strategy to pacify workers, who faced constantly rising prices in the cities.

In November 1937 Vargas orchestrated a second coup in order to prevent the elections of 1938 from taking place. The fragile democracy was transformed into a presidential dictatorship called the *Estado Novo* (New State), as in Portugal.²⁰ The judicial and legislative branches of Congress were weakened, censorship was increased, and each state's governor was reduced to a politically dependent Federal Intervenor (Interventor Federal). The regime now called itself an 'authoritarian democracy', one that superintended and moderated power between different groups. Francisco José de Oliveira Vianna, the most influential adviser to Vargas on labour and corporative affairs, justified the new turn through a number of argumentative twists. In his eyes, 'authoritarian democracy' fused the principle of the US President with that of the Italian Duce and German Führer, and was the only way of making a modern nation; here, Vargas was the *chefe da nação* ('head of the nation'), its highest guide. Oliveira Vianna did not conceal his admiration for the regulatory agencies established by Roosevelt's New Deal, but believed the US tradition of common law to be a problematic element of the rural patriarchy, which led, for example, to the initial failure of the national minimum wage in the USA.²¹

The new Constitution of 1937 drew heavily on its predecessor, but with a corporatist unionism that strengthened ties between workers and state in order to reach a maximum of integration. The positivist Vargas government favoured corporatism, as it provided structure,

²⁰ See Jens Hentschke, *Estado Novo* (Saarbrücken, 1996); Dulce Pandolfi (ed.), *Repensando o Estado Novo* (Rio de Janeiro, 1999).

²¹ Oliveira Vianna, 'As garantias da magistratura nos regimes autoritários', in id., *Ensaíos inéditos* (Campinas, 1991), 149–99, at 162. See also Paulo Sérgio da Silva, *A Constituição brasileira de 10 de novembro de 1937* (São Paulo, 2006).

organization, and collective consciousness, but through controlled inclusion and education, along with mobilization of the masses.²² In an undated essay (apparently from the early 1940s) Oliveira Vianna admitted that while the French, Portuguese (Salazarist), Spanish (Francoist), and Italian Fascist models had all been debated, he had favoured the Italian one. 'The fascist regime was at the height of its prestige and success', he explained, and 'Italian treatises on social law and corporatist law were all well known; these works arrived here in copious abundance . . . There were even bookstores specializing in this field . . . This was the dominant spiritual climate' that inspired Vargas to consider corporatizing unions.²³ In effect, Oliveira Vianna and his faction tried to 'harmonize' union pluralism with a stronger principle of leadership. Oliveira Vianna used the German word *Führerprinzip* (leader principle) in this context.

Two years later, Oliveira Vianna wrote in the *Revista do Trabalho* that the final union structure, laid down in the Constitution of 1937, was a compromise between the pro-Italian faction and the Catholic pressure groups, which insisted on union pluralism.²⁴ The result was realized in the Organic Law of Unionization by Profession (Lei Orgânica de Sindicalização Profissional), a mixture of the Italian model and the Catholic Salazar regime's Portuguese one.²⁵ Only one syndicate in each designated professional category could

²² In this context, Mihail Manoilescu's 1934 book *Le Siècle du corporatisme* (*The Century of Corporatism*) became a bible for Brazilian industrialists and politicians, as the Romanian focused his corporatism on agricultural states with highly dynamic urban areas. See Joseph L. Love, *Crafting the Third World: Theorizing Underdevelopment in Rumania and Brazil* (Stanford, Calif., 1996).

²³ Portuguese: 'O regime fascista estava no esplendor do seu prestígio e do seu êxito . . . Os tratadistas italianos de Direito Social e de Direito Corporativo nos eram todos conhecidos; entravam aqui as suas obras em copiosa abundância . . . Havia mesmo casas especializadas na matéria. . . Este era o clima espiritual dominante.' See Oliveira Vianna, 'Razões da originalidade do sistema sindical brasileiro', in id., *Ensaios ineditos*, 277–81, at 278–9.

²⁴ Oliveira Vianna, 'Sindicalização e teoria do estado', *Revista do Trabalho*, June 1939, 309. See also Egon Gottschalk, 'Derrogação da força maior na Dispensa de Empregados', *Revista do Trabalho*, Dec. 1939, 538. The Carta del Lavoro did not address *force majeure* in the context of labour accidents. Brazilian labour theorists therefore turned to the relevant German labour legislation of 1928 and 1932, also consulting labour law specialists Walter Kaskel (d. 1928) and Lutz Richter (d. 1945). Richter was a professor at the Institute for Labour Law (Institut für Arbeitsrecht) and stayed in office after the Nazi takeover, although he never considered himself a National Socialist. See Irene Raelmann, *Arbeitswissenschaft im Nationalsozialismus: Eine wissenschaftssoziologische Analyse* (Wiesbaden, 2005), 88.

²⁵ See Adolpho Bergamini, 'Direito ao trabalho', *Revista do Trabalho*, Jan. 1939, 17–18.

gain recognition. Thus, in many companies workers in different occupational categories were forced to join different syndicates, instead of having a single union for the entire company. Each syndicate operated at local, state, and national level. Between 1931 and 1937 the number of officially recognized syndicates grew to 234.

Oliveira Vianna's undated essay mentioned above shows that Italian Fascism had been carefully studied by Brazilian labour law specialists. The degree of apologetic justification indicates that when he wrote it, the Vargas regime had already turned towards pan-American friendship. The nature of his essay also tallies with the idea that inconvenient materials such as the *Revista do Trabalho* may have been systematically destroyed. In any case, it is clear that Oliveira Vianna and other labour theorists did not see Nazi labour laws or structures as a useful role model. They argued that the Vargas regime relied on the liberty of the individual, who represented the smallest element of the social order, and thus distanced itself from the materialist totalitarianism of Nazism, and also from the aspect of Italian Fascism that treated labour organizations as merely administrative tentacles of the state. The fascination with southern Europe's authoritarian corporatism was certainly tied to the cultural, religious, and linguistic similarities between Brazil and these Latin countries. Nevertheless, Brazil's solutions had to be 'national', and 'neither Italian, nor German, nor Portuguese', as Fernando Callage remarked in an article.²⁶

The next section will examine more closely this idea of 'made in Brazil' solutions, while investigating whether elements of the Nazi racial welfare state were discussed among the many Brazilians of German descent in Brazil, and whether there were competing movements in the nationalist sphere.

Germanness vs. Brazilianness: Nazi Institutions and Brazilian Fascism

By 1930 Brazil was home to about 800,000 German Brazilians, whose ancestors had been immigrating since the early nineteenth century. The Brazilian Emperor Pedro I and his Austrian wife Leopoldina of Habsburg had encouraged German immigration in order to 'civilize' Brazil and push back the indigenous population, and later to secure Brazil's southern borders against the newly

²⁶ Fernando Callage, 'A questão social e a cultura brasileira', *Revista do Trabalho*, Dec. 1939, 536.

independent Uruguay.²⁷ The majority of German immigrants and their descendants were politically uninvolved, and organized as a group mostly in German schools and churches.²⁸ By 1914 Germanophilia was apparent not only within the German community, but also among some members of Brazil's intelligentsia, who were fascinated by Germany's philosophers, legal positivists, and social Darwinists.²⁹ But during the First World War the ideology of 'Germanness' (*Deutschtum*, a concept with ethno-nationalist overtones) was challenged by Brazil's declaration of war against Germany, along with attacks on German businesses by angry mobs. These experiences were still in the collective memory when local Nazi Party groups began to work in Brazil.

After the First World War the ideas of eugenics became very popular, and found a radical adherent in the German Brazilian Renato Kehl. He founded the Central Brazilian Committee on Eugenics (Comissão Central Brasileira de Eugenia) and promoted 'negative eugenics', which meant the sterilization of 'degenerate' individuals and the prohibition of interracial marriages. Members of the Catholic right consequently attacked Kehl's position. When Nazi Germany's forced sterilization laws took effect in January 1934, the immediate response was a rejection of 'negative eugenics' by Catholic think tanks such as the Catholic Institute of Higher Studies (Instituto Católico de Estudos Superiores), defenders of Mendelian hybridization theory, and the young sociologist Gilberto Freyre, who had attended classes given by the anti-racist anthropologist Franz Boas in the United States.³⁰ The rejection of Nazi Germany's 'racial hygiene' (*Rassenhygiene*) was accompanied by a growing nativism, which influenced national debates on immigration policies. The eugenics debate showed that the 'Brazilian way' consisted of not

²⁷ Leo Waibel, *Die europäische Kolonisation Südbrasilien* (Bonn, 1955). See also Frederik Schulze, *Auswanderung als nationalistisches Projekt 'Deutschtum' und Kolonialdiskurse im südlichen Brasilien (1824–1941)* (Cologne, 2016).

²⁸ See Frederik Schulze, 'Auswanderung und gescheiterte Kolonialdiskurse: "Deutschtum" in Südbrasilien (1824–1941)' (Ph.D. thesis, Free University of Berlin, 2014).

²⁹ For example, Rudolf von Ihering and Ernst Haeckel were discussed in this context.

³⁰ Nancy Leys Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, NY, 1996), 159–61. One of Kehl's critics, Octavio Domingues, defended racial hybridization, explaining that 'If the mestizo race was at times inferior, it was no more so than supposedly pure races of Europe.' See also Robert Wegner and Vanderlei Sebastião de Souza, 'Eugenia "negativa", psiquiatria e catolicismo: embates em torno da esterilização eugênica no Brasil', *História, Ciências, Saúde — Manguinhos*, 20/1 (2013), 263–88. Kehl was also head of the Brazilian branch of the pharmaceutical company Bayer.

only a ‘cannibalistic’ appropriation of various ideas, but also an alienation from Nazism and even ‘Germanness’ itself. When the Third Reich slowly began reaching out to Brazil, its politicians and media saw not only ‘yellow’ immigrants (that is, those from Japan) as a potential danger to the nation, but Germans too.

It was in this context that Gilberto Freyre (together with Oliveira Vianna, the leading ideologist of the Vargas regime) formulated his theories. In accordance with his classic treatise *Casa-Grande e Senzala* (1933, later published in English as *Masters and Slaves*), he presented Brazil as a homogeneous ‘racial democracy’ (*democracia racial*). This concept, which strongly shaped Brazil’s discourse on national identity, was based on the idea that Europeans, (indigenous) Indians, and black people lived peacefully together. This persistent myth of racial harmony camouflaged domestic racism by presenting Brazil as an ethnically diverse and increasingly mixed nation of equal individuals. It highlighted Brazilian unity as a counter-ideology to the segregation of Nazism’s ‘master race’ (*Herrenrasse*). Oliveira Vianna went so far as to call miscegenation the new ‘ethnic purity’ (*pureza étnica*). The discourse of ‘racial democracy’ accompanied the regime’s efforts towards the social and ethnic integration of its Afro-Brazilian population, which ultimately proved to be successful only in cultural terms, while failing to wipe out racism.³¹ ‘Racial democracy’ was the basis of *brasilidade*, the distinct Brazilian cultural identity. It left little room for ideological resonances with the Third Reich, although Brazil did export raw materials, coffee, and cotton to Germany, while importing technologies, machines, and consumer goods in return. Brazilian politicians were well aware that their homeland did not have the same international stature as modern, dynamic nations such as Italy and Japan. They knew that Brazil was considered a backward tropical country.³²

Despite this, the Third Reich and Fascist Italy welcomed the establishment of the Estado Novo in November 1937. While the ‘New State’ was welcomed by right-wing members of the Brazilian

³¹ Samba, capoeira, and the Afro-Brazilian religion of Candomblé were all promoted for the first time as part of the national culture under the Vargas regime. But progress itself was still considered ‘white’.

³² The German journal *Sozialpolitische Weltrundschau* (*Social Policy World Review* or *SPWR*) seldom referred to Latin America or Brazil. In one of the few relevant articles, it was remarked that the Second World War had led to the industrialization of agrarian Brazil, potentially reducing labour opportunities in Europe’s industrialized countries. See ‘Aufschwung der brasilianischen Baumwollindustrie’, *SPWR*, 5/7 (Oct. 1944), 336.

government, it was criticized by Oswaldo Aranha, the Brazilian ambassador to the USA and Vargas's closest friend.³³ With his outspoken pro-American views and the encouragement of the USA, where prominent media outlets and political advisers had branded the Estado Novo as fascist, Aranha persuaded Vargas to prove his pan-American sentiments by putting the political activities of Brazil's large German minority under surveillance. Gilberto Freyre and Oliveira Vianna bolstered Aranha's position.

In his essay 'Pangermanismo' ('Pan-Germanism'), written in the early 1940s, labour theorist Oliveira Vianna highlighted the incompatibility between Nazi and Brazilian ideologies. Here, Hitler's Germany is defined by an exclusionary concept in which race equals identity equals state, one based on Aryan blood, expansionism, and enslavement, driven by a non-Christian cultural mission; by contrast, Brazil is a civilized nation, a state founded on a political community of ethnic groups which are not discriminated against, within a clearly delimited territory. This comparison solidified a distinction between the menacing 'other' and an idealized national 'self'. Oliveira Vianna alluded to the discourses of pan-Latinism, generally framed as an antidote to US imperialism but here set against pan-Germanism, which he declared to be heartless and insensitive, while Brazil represented piety, sensitivity, and friendship.³⁴

Such nativist agitation leads one to wonder how imminent the German threat had actually been. Was the Third Reich promoting its social programmes in Brazil's German circles and institutions? The first Brazilian branch of Germany's Nazi Party had been founded in 1928. By 1937, Brazil had eighty-seven 'local groups' (*Ortsgruppen*). Their influence was limited, as the Nazi Party's Foreign Organization (*Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP*) did not allow its members to intervene directly in the domestic affairs of other

³³ In a letter from Rome dated 5 Sept. 1934, Aranha wrote to Vargas: 'Europe is dominated by a bunch of big crazy men who lock up in their gigantic fists the most capable peoples on earth, and thus, what is worse, the destiny of the world!' Cited in Aspásia Camargo, João Hermes Pereira de Araújo, and Mário Henrique Simonsen, *Oswaldo Aranha: a estrela da Revolução* (São Paulo, 1996), 108.

³⁴ See Oliveira Vianna, 'Pangermanismo', in *Ensaíos inéditos*, 97–146. He and Freyre together wrote a 'manifesto against racial prejudice' see Thomas E. Skidmore, *Preto no branco* (São Paulo, 1989), 225. The turn towards the United States did not mean that Brazil was seeking to imitate its powerful neighbour in the north. From 1942 onwards, *brasilidade* and 'racial democracy' also served as a counterweight to US dominance and influence in Brazil. There were regime supporters who insisted that while Brazil practised 'democracy', the US practised apartheid. See Prutsch, *Creating Good Neighbors*, 307.

countries, and membership was restricted to German citizens. Thus, by June 1937 the Nazi Party had managed to recruit only around 2,900 members (other sources say about 5,000), located all over Brazil, but mostly concentrated in the southern states. The local Germans also broke the rules by accepting Brazilian citizens into the ranks of the local Hitler Youth, National Socialist Women's League (Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft), National Socialist Teachers' League (Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund), and the DAF. Several managers and employees from German businesses also joined these institutions, which received propaganda material delivered by weekly Lufthansa flights from Berlin; however, the Nazi Party and the DAF also produced their own material in Brazil.³⁵

It was not uncommon for celebrations such as Hitler's birthday to be declared non-political ethnic gatherings, thus allowing regular participation by local Brazilian politicians.³⁶ However, Nazi Party members were often too radical in their actions and their attempts to disseminate their ideology, immediately provoking critical comments from inside and outside the German Brazilian community, which was very diverse in social, religious, and political terms. The only common denominator that Nazi Party officials and German diplomats could rely on was that of shared cultural heritage, although antisemitism and the belief in ethnic superiority were also still strong in the community. Observing the growing nativism in Brazil, the local German Embassy supported the foundation of the July 25th Federation (Federação 25 de Julho) to help overcome the exclusiveness of Nazi institutions. Established in May 1936, the Federation was a Brazilian association that offered a space for Brazilians who had German blood but not German citizenship, people in favour of Brazil cultivating 'Germanness'. In reality, the Federation (named after the founding date of Brazil's first German-speaking colony on 25 July 1824 at São Leopoldo) supported Hitler's policies. The German Brazilian Youth Group (Deutschbrasilianischer Jugendring) served a similar function.

Heated debates and verbal attacks between pro-Nazi and anti-Nazi groups (which took place in the streets, at voluntary as-

³⁵ René Gertz, *O fascismo no sul do Brasil* (Porto Alegre, 1987). Gertz claims 5,000 Nazi Party members (p. 108). See also Priscila Ferreira Perazzo, *O perigo alemão e a repressão policial no Estado Novo* (São Paulo, 1999), 64–6.

³⁶ See PAAA, Abt. III, Akten betreffend das Deutschtum in Brasilien, Oct. 1932–Mar. 1935, Politik 25, R. 79001, *Bulletin of the NSDAP Hitler Movement* (Local Group Rio de Janeiro), vol. 4 (July–Aug. 1932).

sociations, inside businesses, and in the press) remained largely unnoticed in the wider public consciousness for some time, but soon began affecting the political climate in southern Brazil, with rising pressures to impose *brasilidade*. What specifically alarmed state and federal authorities was the infiltration of 1,600 German schools (mostly located in the hinterland) with aspects of Nazi ideology. A sensational article entitled 'Nazis Abroad: A Picture from Brazil', published in *The Times*, attracted tremendous attention in Brazil. It was immediately translated and reprinted, causing a wave of conspiracy theories about secret orders sent from Germany.³⁷ Although there was no actual 'German threat', soldiers in the state of Rio Grande do Sul undertook house searches, collected Nazi paraphernalia, and displayed the trophies of treason against *brasilidade* in a newly created Museum of Nazism. Alarmed by these findings, Rio Grande do Sul and Paraná prohibited the activities of the Nazi Party, the DAF, and the German Brazilian Youth Group. The latter was subsequently integrated into the Scouting movement. The German newspaper *Für's Dritte Reich* (*For the Third Reich*) was subjected to censorship, and had to change its name after publishing the article 'Arbeiter zweier Nationen begegnen sich' ('Labourers of Two Nations Meet'). The Brazilian police began opening all mail sent to the Nazi Party and the DAF.³⁸

Another reason why Nazi institutions were less attractive than had been hoped was the strong competition presented by the local fascist party, called Brazilian Integralist Action (Ação Integralista Brasileira or AIB). Established in 1932 as the first genuinely fascist party in South America, the AIB did not differ much from Catholic corporatism, but favoured a fascist revolutionary modernism with a defined party structure, uniforms, and a diffuse antisemitism directed against 'international Judaism'. Its labour programme was

³⁷ See PAAA, Politische Beziehungen Brasiliens zu Deutschland, Pol. IX, 17, Bd. 1, May 1936–1938, R. 104939, German Embassy to Foreign Office, 9 Sept. 1937. See also Käte Harms-Baltzer, *Die Nationalisierung der deutschen Einwanderer und ihrer Nachkommen in Brasilien als Problem der deutsch-brasilianischen Beziehungen 1930–1938* (Berlin, 1970), 35. Harms-Baltzer's study contains accurate observations alongside many exaggerations, such as: 'The vast majority of Brazilian-born decendants of German colonists have always been taught and have felt that it is to Germany and not to Brazil that they owe allegiance' (*ibid.*, trans.).

³⁸ PAAA, Politische Beziehungen Brasiliens zu Deutschland, Pol. IX, 17, Bd. 1, R. 104939, Hugo Stange, Florianopolis, 22 Mar. 1938. Stange's report gave only the title of the newspaper article and commented that the local police found the text 'objectionable' ('anständig').

inspired by Mussolini's 1927 Charter of Labour (*Carta del Lavoro*). The Integralists criticized German Nazism as a materialist ideology that saw the state as the embodiment of an ethnically pure *Volk* (folk, but variously meaning people, nation, or ethno-nation in German). They were backed by the Catholic right and Cardinal Leme.³⁹ The movement, which boasted some 500,000 members at its peak (according to Nazi sources), included second-generation immigrants of Italian and German descent, as well as some German citizens. They believed that Brazil needed its own national solutions, not imported ones. When AIB party leader Plínio Salgado threatened to become a serious political rival, Vargas prompted Brazilian officials to organize another dirty press campaign, one that framed Integralism as camouflaged Nazism with secret financing from the German Embassy—an accusation that it truthfully but unsuccessfully denied.⁴⁰

In late 1937 Vargas prohibited the AIB, along with all other domestic political parties. After an unsuccessful Integralist coup attempt on 10 May 1938 the regime prohibited all foreign political parties as well. Before embarking on a further examination of the regime's repressive policies, however, it will be helpful to gain some context by considering the example of Siemens and its efforts to promote Nazi Germany as a workers' paradise.

Between Brazilianness and Germanness: The Case of Siemens and the DAF

In 1900 Siemens opened its first technical bureau in Rio de Janeiro, which in 1905 took the name Companhia Brasileira de Electricidade Siemens-Schuckertwerke (Siemens Brazilian Electricity Company, Schuckert Plant). Over the next twenty years Siemens established plants in several Brazilian cities. Despite the financial losses and mass unemployment of the Great Depression, Siemens managed rapidly to increase its Brazilian business from 1934 on because of

³⁹ Márcia Regina da Silva Ramos Carneiro, 'La doctrina del Sigma: un ejercicio antidialéctico de la naturalización del autoritarismo brasileño', in Franco Savarino Roggero and João Fábio Bertonha (eds.), *El fascismo en Brasil y América Latina* (Mexico City, 2013), 119–40.

⁴⁰ PAAA, Abt. III, Akten Nationalsozialismus, Faschismus und ähnliche Bestrebungen, Politik 29, Brasilien, R. 79005, German consulate in Florianópolis, report 1545/35, 20 Nov. 1935; PAAA, Büro des Staatssekretärs, Brasilien, Nr. 71, Bd. 1, 21, Apr. 1928–38, R. 29,548. See also Marcus Klein, *Our Brazil Will Awake! The Ação Integralista Brasileira and the Failed Quest for a Fascist Order in the 1930s* (Amsterdam, 2004). Mussolini supported the AIB through indirect subsidies.

lucrative bilateral agreements between Germany and Brazil. The company equipped power stations, telephone offices, and hospitals, and produced industrial electronic items such as control panels, measuring instruments, and conveyor systems.⁴¹

During these very few years of uncensored pro-Nazi sentiments, Siemens considered itself at the forefront of Third Reich patriotism. It co-organized May Day celebrations with traditional German maypoles, and provided its workers with locally published DAF booklets, which were co-sponsored through company advertisements. DAF members in Rio de Janeiro regularly met at the Deutsches Heim (German Home), attended presentations on pension funds, and watched propaganda films. They could also spend their leisure time at the DAF's country house in Tribobó (just outside Rio), which belonged to a wealthy German.

The DAF was active in smaller cities as well. Its booklets report that in Joinville (Santa Catarina state) members attended evening courses to learn Portuguese and engineering, and joined coach excursions organized through the KdF programme. Teachers affiliated with the DAF travelled through the hinterland and showed German propaganda films in villages that had electricity.⁴²

In May 1937 the Siemens headquarters in Rio reported proudly to the company's public relations division in Berlin on the success of that month's May Day celebration, and the company's strong presence at the festival grounds of the German Sports Club in São Paulo. While Siemens of São Paulo sent sixty people to the celebration, the participation shown by Siemens of Rio was even more impressive. Of the 4,000 people in attendance (including the crew of the airship *Graf Zeppelin*), 475 were Siemens workers and their families. These were joined by the *Betriebsgemeinschaften* (works communities) of other German companies in São Paulo, including Anilinas, Merk, Bayer, AEG, Deutz, Auto-Union, Stahl-Union, Schering, and Mercedes.⁴³

Photographs of the event show a large platform decorated with a Nazi Party crest atop a banner declaring 'Give Honour to Work' ('Ehret die Arbeit'), flanked by a swastika flag and a Brazilian one

⁴¹ Siemens Archiv Akte (SAA), box 8095-2 (Siemens in Brazil up to 1952), Richard Schwarz, 'Die Geschichte des Hauses Siemens in Brasilien' (unpub. manuscript, Porto Alegre, undated).

⁴² SAA, sig. 9432, *Deutsche Arbeit: Mitteilungen der DA Rio de Janeiro*, May 1936.

⁴³ SAA, sig. 9432, report, 19 May 1937; 'Der Tag der deutschen Arbeit', *Deutsche Zeitung*, 5 May 1937.

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FIG. 1. May Day Celebration of the German
Business Community in Rio de Janeiro, 1937

Source: Siemens Archiv-Akte (SAA 9432). Reprinted by permission.

(see Fig. 1). The local DAF representative gave a stirring speech that was published by the *Deutsche Zeitung* (*German Newspaper*) a couple of days later. ‘In this Germany, you know,’ he claimed, ‘you will never again lose your job, and if somebody falls on hard times through no fault of his own, there will be comrades from the mighty German Labour Front on both his left and his right to tell him: comrade, we will help you!’⁴⁴ As he continued, he highlighted German exceptionalism:

No other people in the world try as hard as the Germans to attract visitors through all kinds of aid and assistance, in order to show them their workshops, factories, and people. And the many among you who have been there recently will have been astonished to see how the German people has learnt to laugh and be merry again. There are efforts everywhere to bring happiness to the people. Instead of working in dusty old workshops, they are working now

⁴⁴ German: ‘In diesem Deutschland, das wissen Sie . . . da werden Sie ihre Arbeit nicht wieder verlieren, und wenn doch mal einer unverschuldet in Not geraten sollte, dann steht links und rechts von ihm ein Volksgenosse aus der gewaltigen Deutschen Arbeitsfront und spricht: Kamerad, wir helfen Dir!’ See *ibid.*

wherever possible in bright, friendly factories and offices . . . only a miserable slanderer could claim that these people are even thinking of discussing the possibility of war.⁴⁵

Despite such outspoken support for Nazism, Siemens and other companies obeyed Brazil's laws. As a result, Germany's 'Aryan clauses' were not valid there.

In April 1938 the Vargas regime issued a decree giving German schools and associations thirty days to dissolve, which made propaganda extremely difficult and even dangerous for a while. Leading members were imprisoned, and membership cards of the Nazi Party and the DAF were confiscated. Apparently the political police (members of Departamento de Ordem Política e Social or DOPS) knew that several German Brazilians sympathetic to the Nazi Party had become DAF members. Documents of the political police also indicate that managers of German firms had pressured workers to obtain DAF membership.⁴⁶ Germany's Foreign Office advised its embassy in Brazil to avoid any further conspicuous activities, and to dismiss all German Brazilians and dual nationals from the local Nazi Party branches, the DAF, and other such affiliations.⁴⁷

The July 25th Federation survived as a Brazilian organization. In several cities the DAF and the National Socialist Women's League were hidden under the umbrella of the Association of Hard-Working German Citizens (Bund der schaffenden Reichsdeutschen). Despite the advice of the German Embassy, this association had far-sightedly changed its statutes and become the German Benevolent and Educational Union (União Beneficente e Educativa Alemã). Under this camouflage, members of the DAF and National Socialist Women's League were able to join its activities. The association survived as such until 1942.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ German: 'Kein Volk der Erde ist so bemüht, wie das deutsche, durch Erleichterungen und Vergünstigungen aller Art, Besucher zu sich zu ziehen, um ihnen seine Werkstätten und seine Betriebe und seine Menschen zu zeigen. Und die vielen unter Ihnen, die in der letzten Zeit drüben gewesen sind, sie werden gestaunt haben zu sehen, wie das deutsche Volk wieder gelernt hat, zu lachen und fröhlich zu sein. Überall ist man bemüht, Zufriedenheit unter die Menschen zu bringen. Statt in alten, verstaubten Werkstätten arbeiten sie heute, wo es nur irgend geht, in hellen, freundlichen Fabriken und Kontoren . . . nur ein elender Verleumder kann behaupten, dass diese Menschen auch nur daran dächten, von der Möglichkeit eines Krieges zu sprechen.' See *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Rafael Athaides, *O Partido Nazista no Paraná, 1933-1942* (Maringá, 2011). Nazi Party members attacked members of Catholic tradesmen's associations: see p. 152.

⁴⁷ PAAA, Bd 1., Pol. IX, 17, R. 104939, telegram from Bohle, Berlin, 18 May 1938.

⁴⁸ PAAA, Politische Beziehungen zu Deutschland, Pol. IX, 20, 3 Dec. 1938-12

The raids of the political police even ‘manufactured’ a few culprits, regardless of guilt or innocence. For example, Federico Kopp, Secretary of the July 25th Federation, died after torture by the political police, who believed he was hiding secret plans for an Integralist coup. Certainly, it took the Brazilian authorities more than a year to discover with certainty who exactly were members of Nazi institutions. Even then, local authorities often turned a blind eye if a reputable firm was involved. In the case of Otto Braun, a leading employee of the German Transatlantic Bank (Banco Alemão Transatlântico) in São Paulo, police records show he was able to keep his DAF and Nazi Party memberships until the spring of 1942.⁴⁹

What outraged Brazil’s federal authorities was the traitorous behaviour of local Germans who were living a foreign political dream, in defiance of the Brazilian government’s exclusive right to define politics on its own soil. Thus, it was no contradiction with domestic nativism when legal theorist Daniel de Carvalho was sent to Germany to study Nazi labour policies in late 1938. In February 1939 he reported on Nazi labour structures such as the Trustees of Labour (Treuhand der Arbeit), Ehrengerichte (Courts of Honour, for upholding each profession’s standards), and the DAF, calling it ‘a great organization, destined to educate all the producing classes towards new directions’,⁵⁰ although still featuring rather medieval structures (that is, a leader and a *Gefolgschaft*, or ‘followership’). He expressed surprise that the system was not really corporatist, as each factory constituted an autonomous entity. Carvalho did not venture to offer a value judgement on Nazi labour policy, but considered it ‘a bold and intelligent attempt to create . . . the conditions for social peace’.⁵¹ A month later, Herbert Steinwarz (from the Nazi agency Schönheit der Arbeit, or Beauty of Work) was invited to write in the *Revista do Trabalho* about improvements to comfort in German factories, the KdF programme, and the National

Apr. 1939, R. 104942, report, German Embassy, 26 Oct. 1938; PAAA, Büro des Staatssekretärs, Brasilien, Nr. 71, Bd. 1, 21, Apr. 1928-38, R. 29.548, telegram from Ritter, Rio de Janeiro, 21 Apr. 1938.

⁴⁹ See Ferreira Perazzo, *O perigo alemão*, 79–81. Braun contacted the German consul to denounce those who refused to join the DAF.

⁵⁰ Portuguese: ‘formidável organização, destinada a educar as classes produtoras nas novas diretrizes’. See Carvalho, ‘A Alemanha na vanguarda’, 63–4.

⁵¹ Portuguese: ‘uma tentativa arrojada e inteligente no sentido de estabelecer . . . as condições de paz social’. See *ibid.*

Socialist People's Welfare Association (Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt).⁵²

When German Ambassador Karl Ritter refused to accept Brazil's thoroughly nativist policies, he was dismissed and forced to leave the country in the autumn of 1939. His successor Kurt Prüfer skilfully managed to improve relations, helped by the fact that Germany's image had not deteriorated within Brazil's military and right-wing circles.⁵³ Brazil continued to order weapons and steel from Krupp, and its army was particularly fascinated by the fully automatic air defence searchlights made by Siemens, which brought the company into conflict with its competitor AEG and led to certain political tensions.⁵⁴ The archive materials at Siemens show how transatlantic business was severely affected by the outbreak of the Second World War and the ensuing British naval blockade. Some ships managed to break the blockade and deliver materials, and Siemens of Brazil was ultimately able to survive the sudden scarcity of raw materials and the growth of US competition. It adapted its range of products to suit local needs, and ordered materials through firms in the US, Japan, and China.⁵⁵

Brazil desperately needed modern technologies for its ambitious industrialization programme, so it switched to the US side and successfully played the United States and Germany off against each other until late 1941. Vargas and his Foreign Minister Oswaldo Aranha complained privately to local German diplomats about the extreme pressures exerted on them by the United States, with both expressing their hopes for Germany's victory and Britain's defeat. Ambassador Prüfer believed this pretence of sincerity and presented Brazil as a victim in his reports back to Berlin.⁵⁶

⁵² Herbert Steinwarz, 'Da estadística e do conforto nos fábricas da Alemanha', *Revista do Trabalho*, Mar. 1939, 111.

⁵³ PAAA, Büro des Staatssekretärs, Brasilien, Bd. 21, Apr. 1928-38, Feb. 1942, Nr. 74, telegram to Berlin, 16 Aug. 1941. Among the most outspoken pro-fascist politicians were Lourival Fontes, Director of the Propaganda Department (DIP), and Filinto Müller, Chief of Police in Rio de Janeiro, who was eager to co-operate with the Gestapo in hunting communist spies. The Gestapo unit was advised by Robert Lehr, a Gestapo agent sent to Brazil. In March 1937 the political police (DOPS) sent an official to Gestapo headquarters in Germany. DOPS agents were also assigned to keep the German minority under surveillance.

⁵⁴ PAAA, Ha.-Pol. Clodius, Akten Brasilien, 1 June 1936-30 Nov. 1937, Bd. 2, R. 105853, note of 22 Apr. 1939. See also SAA, sig. 13944, minutes of meeting, 23 Aug. 1939.

⁵⁵ Schwarz, 'Die Geschichte'. See also SAA, 68 Li 200, folder 1222.

⁵⁶ PAAA, Ha.-Pol. Clodius, Akten Brasilien, 1 Mar. 1941-30 June 1941, Bd. 5, R. 105856, Kurt Prüfer telegram, Rio de Janeiro, 9 Mar. 1941. See also PAAA, Ha.-Pol.

By July 1941 Siemens was already on the US blacklist of prohibited Axis businesses. Blacklisting was tied to correctly answering questions such as ‘What do you think about Nazism?’ and ‘Do you wish for a German defeat?’⁵⁷ After the Inter-American Conference in Rio in January 1942 Brazil broke off relations with Germany, Italy, and Japan, and pursued all Germans it suspected of being Nazi agents or spies. In the following months many Axis nationals were incarcerated, including directors and employees of Siemens. Even the company’s national general manager spent several months in jail.⁵⁸ German, Italian, and Japanese businesses were nationalized, and relevant bank assets were frozen. A Federal Commissioner (Comissário Federal) was installed at each affected company, including Siemens, Schering, Bayer, Zeiss, Humboldt-Deutz, Bromberg (local agent for Krupp), and AEG.⁵⁹ Facing the slow destruction of German businesses in Brazil, Germany’s Foreign Office considered retaliatory measures, but set them aside as ineffective: while Brazil had German assets worth around 113 million Reichsmarks, along with 120,000 German citizens and 800,000 German Brazilians, Germany and its satellite states hosted just 700 Brazilian citizens (many of them ethnic Germans), and Brazilian assets in Germany were estimated at just 700,000 Reichsmarks.⁶⁰

When German submarines torpedoed and sank several Brazilian steamships carrying civilians, Brazil declared war on Germany and Italy on 22 August 1942. Internment camps (*campos de concentração*) were soon built specifically for German and Japanese enemy aliens, and more were planned; meanwhile, the United States was given the right to construct military bases along Brazil’s coast. Having been the United States’ most effective military partner in Latin America, Brazil later became the leading South American nation in the postwar period, although Vargas himself was overthrown by

Wiehl, Akten betr. Brasilien, Oct. 1939–June 1942, Bd. 2, R. 106111, Kurt Prüfer telegram of 29 Nov. 1941 and telegram of 3 Sept. 1941.

⁵⁷ Schwarz, ‘Die Geschichte’, 10.

⁵⁸ PAAA, Büro des Staatssekretärs, Akten Brasilien, 1 Mar. 1942–12 Aug. 1943, R. 29.548, telegram of 28 Mar. 1942; see also telegram from Prüfer, 12 Apr. 1942, concerning telegram from Freytag. Approximately 4,000 Germans were imprisoned at that time. See Schwarz, ‘Die Geschichte’.

⁵⁹ PAAA, Ha.-Pol. Wiehl, Akten Brasilien, Oct. 1939–June 1942, Bd. 2, R. 106111, telegram from Rintelen, Berlin, 16 Apr. 1942. See also Johannes Bähr, *Zwischen zwei Kontinenten: Hundert Jahre Dresdner Bank Lateinamerika vormals Deutsch-Südamerikanische Bank* (Dresden, 2007), 62–78.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

the military in October 1945. Siemens of Brazil managed to draw out its liquidation process until 1944, allowing it to regain most of its business operations by 1950.⁶¹

Brazil's Labour Policies during the War

While President Vargas was playing politics between the Third Reich and the United States, Evaristo de Moraes Filho and Arnaldo Sussekind were finalizing the structure of Brazil's Labour Court, which had been initiated by Oliveira Vianna in 1934 and finally began operations on 1 May 1941, under Valdemar Falcão (Minister of Labour from late 1937 to mid 1941). Not actually subordinate to the Ministry of Labour, it became one of the most solid and enduring institutions of the corporatist project, and remained unchanged until the 1960s.

According to historian Fernando Teixeira da Silva, the general format of Brazil's Labour Court, which functioned on federal, regional, and local levels, was much more influenced by Germany's Weimar Constitution than by Italy's Labour Court (*Magistratura del Lavoro*).⁶² The Weimar Republic's labour jurisprudence legally distinguished between individual and collective disputes, judging them in different parts of the court system, as in Brazil. In contrast, Italy's Labour Court dealt only with collective bargaining. The Brazilian goal was to prevent strikes and lockouts as much as possible. Therefore, it was thought that the best tool was the 'collective judgement' in the form of binding arbitration. Nevertheless, recent studies have shown that the majority of disputes were decided in favour of the employers; in contrast, employees were subjected to police checks of their political backgrounds. It has been shown that if workers sued because of mandatory Sunday work during the war, they could be imprisoned for a couple of days.⁶³ On 1 May 1943 the Consolidation of Labour Laws (*Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho*) was implemented as a 'gift' to Brazilian workers. Under the aegis of Alexandre Marcondes Filho (Minister of Labour 1941-5),

⁶¹ Schwarz, 'Die Geschichte'.

⁶² Weimar labour courts (like Brazilian ones) incorporated lay judges nominated by trade unions and employers' associations, while Italian labour courts had no such equal representation of management and workers, and were much closer to the interests of employers. See details in Teixeira da Silva, 'The Brazilian and Italian Labor Courts', 385-6.

⁶³ See de Castro Gomes and Teixeira da Silva (eds.), *A Justiça do Trabalho*.

the organizational principles of labour law were consolidated into a single code containing 922 articles, affecting almost two million people (but not the rural sector).⁶⁴

Although interest in Italian labour law continued until 1944, the political turn towards the Allied side was becoming obvious, and the Nazi regime was no longer considered a menace. Brazil had to maintain its paradigm of *brasildade*, and show that it was strong enough to resist Americanization. The *Revista do Trabalho* soon began discussing the Beveridge Report published in the United Kingdom, as well as the social security measures implemented in the United States, but these models were quickly deemed inapplicable to Brazil's needs.⁶⁵ It was then that Rudolf Aladar Metall joined the authors of the *Revista do Trabalho*. A former student of renowned Austrian legal scholar Hans Kelsen, Metall was an expert in labour law (and also Jewish) who had worked at the International Labour Organization in Geneva since 1931, and had come to Brazil in 1940 as an adviser in social legislation. His articles were more substantial and authoritative. Thus it was Metall who was informed enough to write in the *Revista do Trabalho* of August 1944 about how his Brazilian colleagues had consulted Nazi Germany's *Reichsarbeitsblatt* (*Reich Labour Journal*) of 1941 and 1942 in planning extensions to health and accident insurance as well as the unification of revenue collection among the different social security branches.⁶⁶ That same year, Brazil participated in the International Labour Conference in Philadelphia. Ironically, one of its two delegates was Lourival Fontes, the former director of the dictatorship's Press and

⁶⁴ Oliver Dinius, 'Defending Ordem against Progress: The Brazilian Political Police and Industrial Labor', in Jens R. Hentschke (ed.), *Vargas and Brazil: New Perspectives* (New York, 2006), 173–205.

⁶⁵ *Revista do Trabalho*, Jan. 1944. See also Oscar Saraiva, 'O seguro social no Brasil', *Revista do Trabalho*, Feb. 1944, 3. Several authors from the *Revista do Trabalho* also published in the short-lived journal *Trabalho e Seguro Social* (*Labour and Social Security*), founded in 1943, which included references to the Weimar Republic's collective agreement legislation. See A. B. Buys de Barros, 'O Contrato-Norma é uma Instituição de Direito Corporativo', *Trabalho e Seguro Social*, 1/1 (Jan. 1943), 72–80. Barros refers to Otto Kahn-Freund, *Umfang der normativen Wirkung des Tarifvertrages und Wiedereinstellungsklausel* (Berlin, 1928); Paul Oertmann, *Deutsches Arbeitsvertragsrecht* (Berlin, 1923); Erwin Jacobi, *Die Grundlehren des Arbeitsrechts* (Leipzig, 1927); Alfred Hueck, *Das Recht des Tarifvertrages* (Berlin, 1920).

⁶⁶ Rudolf A. Metall, 'A transformação do Seguro Social', *Revista do Trabalho*, Aug. 1944, 7. Metall refers to *Reichsarbeitsblatt*, nos. 15 (25 May 1941), 1 (13 May 1942), and 14 (1942), and suggests better inclusion of farmers in the social security system as well as better co-ordination between institutions fighting disease. Thanks to Sandrine Kott for valuable information on Metall.

Propaganda Department, and until 1942 an admirer of European fascism.

Conclusion

Getúlio Vargas was neither the 'Father of the Poor' nor the country's leading fascist. Nonetheless, his regime laid the groundwork for Brazil's political and economic position in the second half of the twentieth century. The construction of a national way with a distinct identity, *brasilidade*, was part of a political and economic effort to overcome the effects of the Great Depression and free the country from dependence on more dominant nations. The regime's self-declared principle of taking foreign ideas and transforming them into something new was reflected in the metaphor of 'cannibalism'. But Brazil's national path was also strongly shaped by an emphasis on its distinctiveness from a foreign 'other', which was considered a threat to national unity. Germany was presented as such a threat, despite the fact that Brazil maintained solid economic relations with the Nazi state and also had a strong and mostly well-integrated minority of German descent.

While German businesses such as Siemens successfully operated in Brazil into the late 1930s, and while the pro-Nazi activities of a very small, politicized group of Germans went uncommented for a while, the growing aggressiveness of the Third Reich eventually provoked a defensive response from certain political circles. In terms of labour law and unionism, the Catholic right was successful in watering down efforts by leading labour law theorist Oliveira Vianna to destroy union pluralism completely, as had been done in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Thus, the Third Reich exerted little influence on Brazil's labour laws or social policy. Brazil's 1934 Constitution, Labour Court, and labour legislation were much more inspired by Germany's Weimar Constitution and Italy's Charter of Labour than by the Nazi regime's innovations.

Brazil's growing nativism, based on an ideology of 'racial democracy' in direct opposition to the Nazi doctrine of racial purity, ultimately made it very difficult for the Third Reich's propaganda efforts to succeed. The case of Siemens shows how the German Labour Front and other Nazi institutions had only very limited influence, especially after 1938, when the Brazilian government prohibited foreign political parties. While agents of 'Germanness'

and the German Embassy in Brazil found ways to hide institutional structures such as the DAF for a while, Brazil's declaration of war in August 1942 and the systematic closure of German firms finally brought all further attempts at exerting influence to a decisive end.