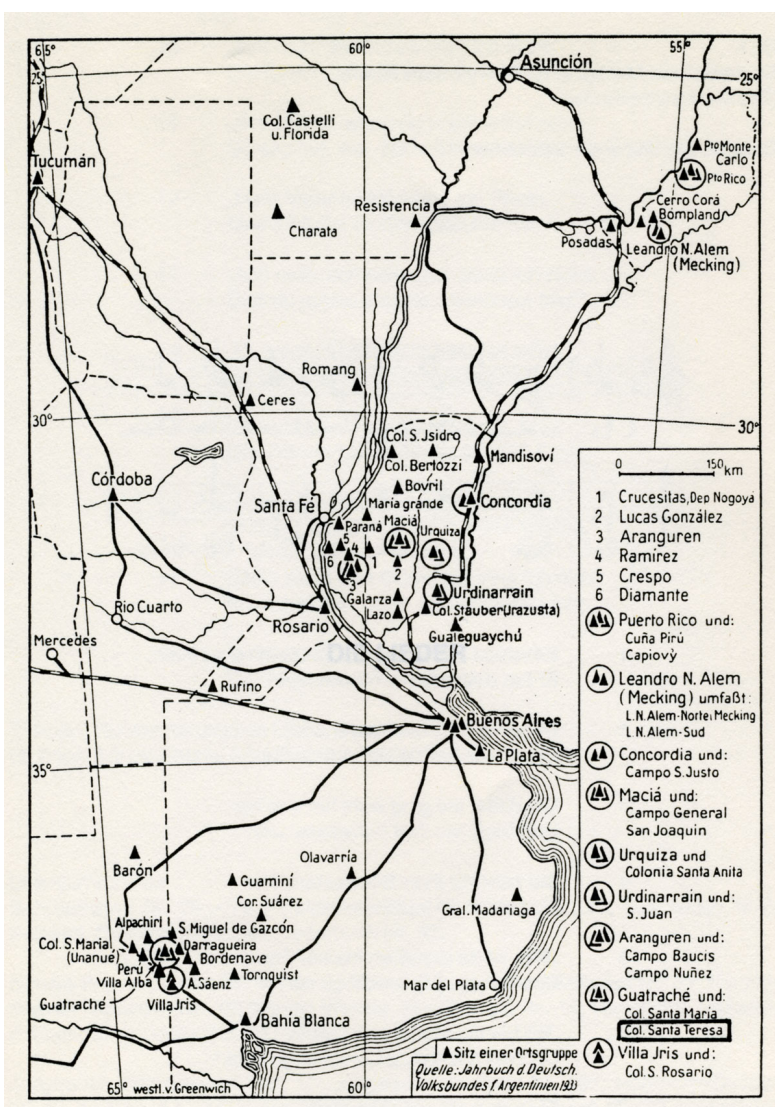


Abstract

Argentina and Chile have always been known to be predominantly Spanish speaking countries. However, following the conclusions of both World Wars, an interesting trend in immigration has led to both countries developing a surprisingly large German population. The majority of German immigrants consisted of three groups: ethnic Germans escaping the economic hardships of the First World War, German Jews pre- World War Two, and Nazi Sympathizers fleeing the country post World War Two. While some groups of Germans have successfully assimilated into the hispanic cultures of both Argentina and Chile respectively, other groups of Germans have developed outlying colonies, distancing themselves from the culture of their host nations. Due to the nature of these secluded colonies, has led to in some extreme cases, such as unchecked cult-like behavior. This poster explores how the governments of Argentina and Chile decided to interact with these German colonies and how the situation is today. This will provide evidence as to if anything can be done in the future to integrate these German-speaking societies into the cultures of their host nations.

Early German Immigration to the Southern Cone

The trends of German immigration to Argentina can best be split into five phases: Pre-1870, 1870-1914, 1918-1933, 1933-1940, and Post-WWII. The initial migration patterns pre-1870 were far and in between in terms of numbers. They first major trend German immigrations was quite unique in that they were not from Germany. They came from villages off the Volga River in Russia before making the journey to Argentina. According to the Volga German website (2021), between 1877 to 1878 Volga German families began to immigrate to the Argentine Provinces of Buenos Aires, Entre Ríos, and Santa Fe. These communities have managed to remain and grow their culture throughout Argentina.



German Settlements in Argentina. Source: Jahrbuch d. Deutsch. Volkslandes f. Argentinien (1933) as published in Handwörterbuch des Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschtums. Carl Petersen, ed.

Similar to Argentina early German immigration to Chile started in the later 19th century. According to H. Glenn Penny (2017) from Migrant Workers, Germans began their migration to Chile in the 1850s in the province of Santiago and provinces surrounding the area. Although their population was rather small, the early Germans rose socially amongst the Chilean elites. This was a product of German education. Penny explains that German schools were considered amongst the best in Chile, and many Chileans that could afford to send their children to schooling would enroll them in lately German populated schools. This was beneficial for the integration of the two cultures that is still prevalent in today's Chilean society.

1919-1945: The Great Migration South

Following the defeat of Germany in World War II, many Germans found themselves with little opportunity in the war-ravaged country. According to Holger Medding (1992) ethnic Germans began migrating to the Southern Cone of South America to places such as Chile and Argentina due to demographic pressures caused by the war and a chance at a fresh start in promising region of the world (pp. 397). With Germans already having establishments in Argentina and Chile from prior migration patterns, the new wave of German immigrants were able to integrate with relative ease. This migration relation between Germany and the Southern Cone would later allow for a larger migration following the end of World War Two, with many Nazi War Criminals seeking refuge in the country.



Rare Historical Photos

The Battle of Germans in Argentina

After the rise of Hitler in the 1930s, Jews living in the country that were fortunate enough, left their homes and emigrated to the southern cone of South America. Robert Kelz (2020) stated that over 31,000 Jews between 1933 and the end of the war in 1945 had fled to Argentina seeking refuge (ch 1). With existing German communities already residing in Argentina and most importantly Buenos Aires, conflict was inevitable. The three main German groups residing in Argentina were the newly arrived German Jews, German Nationalists whom supported the Nazi party, and the Anti-Fascist Germans. The way these groups fought for political influence to sway the Argentine public towards one of their sides was through the theater. Kelz explains that by 1938, there was two prominent theaters in Buenos Aires: The Nationalist German Theater and The Free German Stage (intro). The Nationalist German Theater was run by Nazi sympathizing Germans while the latter was run by the anti-fascist German, some of which being Jews. Both theaters were politically driven, but also were immensely popular with the Argentine public. This type of conflict between the groups of German may have seeded civil the tide of the war in Europe was beginning to change, as the German defeat in Europe appeared inevitable, the mass exodus of Nazi sympathizing Germans to Argentina would only heighten the tensions. Following the rise of Military General Juan Perón to power in Argentina, who idolized Hitler, he encourage European immigrants to make the trip to start new lives in Argentina due to the destruction of the European continent. According to Robert Kelz (2020) about 400,000 Europeans emigrated to Latin America and amongst that number, 40,000 of them were German war criminals who had found a new home in Argentina (ch. 5). With German Jews and antifascists making the migration prior to the Second World War, conflict with the new arrivals was inevitable. The migration pattern was not limited to just Buenos Aires. According to Medding, by the 1950s a German community consisting of mostly German nationalists made up about 10-15% of the Rio de la Plata region of Argentina (pp 413). With the rise go German nationalist continuing to disperse through the country, the threat of their dangerous ideologies continued to spread to the native populations. The conflict for influence through theater has played a major role in integrating Germans into Argentine society, in which regardless of the side the Argentine people took, welcomed the Germans with open arms into their culture.

The Story of a German-Jewish Haven in Chile

In her book *Escaping Hitler: A Jewish Haven in Chile*, Eva Goldschmidt Wyman (2013) brings us the accounts of German Jews living in Chile following the rise of the Nazi Party in the 1930s. Below are some accounts from German-Jews living in Chile during this time:

- **Ruth Goldschmidt-** Ruth came to Chile later on in her early adolescent life due to a family member already residing in the country. She mentions that although the living conditions were not always ideal, her life in Santiago and Valparaiso was peaceful with only one account of anti-anti-Semitism from a Chilean. She is grateful that the Chilean government allowed her and her family seek refuge in the country where her family still resides in today (ch 6).
- **Hanny Lewin-** Hanny like Ruth, immigrated to Chile in her later teens to escape the German persecution of Jews in the country. She mentioned that although there were fears with Germans already having strong influence in the country, that they would not be well received. However she found out that the Chileans themselves were very welcoming or Europeans and did not distinguish the differences between Europeans and European Jews like many western nations at the time. By the war's end Hanny became a Chilean citizen and as of when this book was written, currently resides in the country today.
- **Ilse Dahlberg-** Ilse found the Chilean people to be quite different from the Germans, something she had not quite expected, she said how nice and helpful Chileans were and how like Hanny, did not seem to care about their ethnic or religious background when looking to help. Ilse considers herself to be Chilean and despite being upset by the loss of life of many of her friends in Europe, was grateful for the refuge Chile had given her and many other German Jews during the war (ch 6).

Colonia Dignidad

Perhaps the most famous case of an isolated German colony in the Southern Cone would be Colonia Dignidad. The colony was isolated from the rest of Chilean society and one that was made up of former Nazi sympathizers. According to Catalina Gaete Salgado (2021) former Nazi Colonel Paul Schäfer established the colony in 1961 where in the following years was used for child labor and sexual abuse of hundreds of children, as well a place for the Chilean government to torture "enemies of the state" (pp 10.) Despite Schäfer's ties to the Nazi's and its army during the war effort, his intentions post war appeared to be in good nature. With many orphans of the war in Germany, Schäfer took on a major role in establishing a home for these orphans. According to Salgado, Schäfer started a religious orphan community in Germany before being accused of sexually abusing the children, forcing him to flee to Chile. Upon arrival Schäfer established Colonia Dignidad in 1961, for the same purpose of harboring orphans in the German-lead community (pp 10). The community was located a few hundred miles outside of Santiago in a very secluded region in the Andes. Despite is seclusion, the government was well aware of its existence. Following the coup against Chilean President Salvador Allende, Military Officer Augusto Pinochet came to power in 1973. During Pinochet's dictatorship, him and Schäfer became close due to them both wanting to hide their secrets from the outside world. According to Salgado, Pinochet agreed to keep Schäfer's used of the colony for child labor and sexual abuse hidden, if he could use the colony to exterminate and torture his political opponents (pp 11). The camps multi-purpose use to commit atrocities by not only Schäfer, but the Chilean government itself likely continued through the entire Pinochet Regime until 1990. By this point, Chilean and general world media became suspicious of Schäfer's intentions at the camp, which would soon lead to his arrest. After years of flying under the radar, Salgado explains that due to Chilean journalism and media coverage of the colony, Schäfer was arrested in 2005.

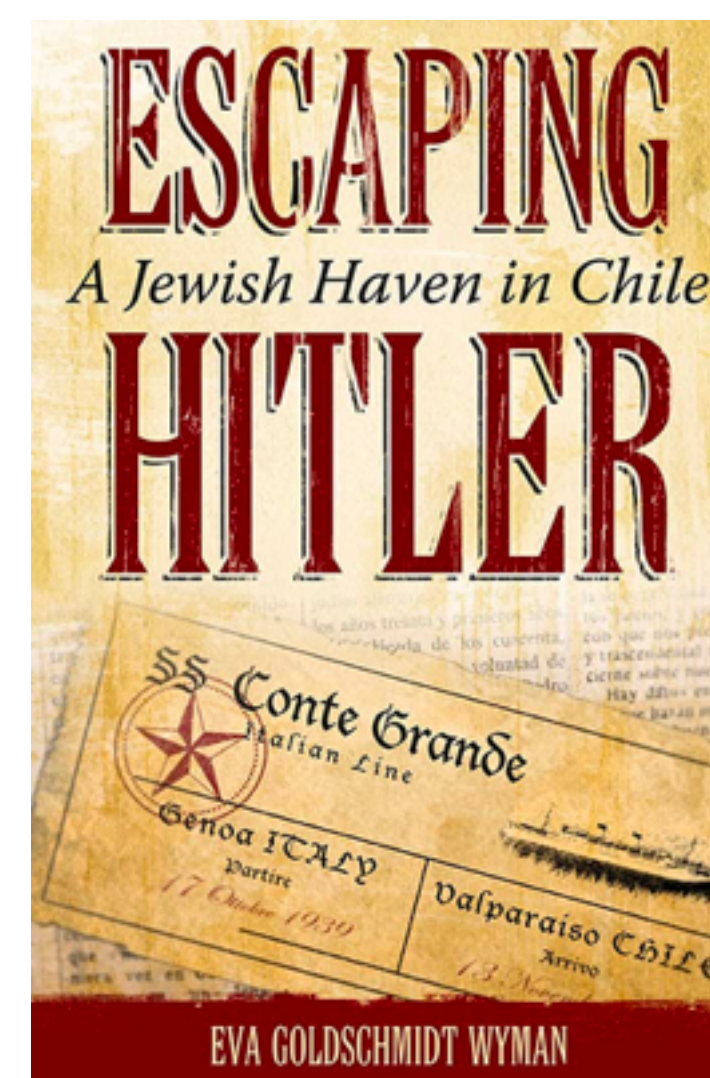


Getty Images

Prominent Argentinian and Chilean Germans Towns Today

In present day Argentina La Cumbrecita is a beautiful mountain town where. Most of its residents are predominantly German speakers. According to Albert Stumm (2017) from CNN, La Cumbrecita is a predominantly German ethnic town, where the street signs are in German and the village consists of similar architecture to that of German mountain towns, thousands of miles away. The town, has become a tourist destination hotspot to people who recognize the uniqueness of the situation at hand. Despite ethnic ties to Germany, the townspeople have adapted to Argentine culture and do not see their citizenship to Argentina conflicting with their German heritage. A man living in the German town explained that even though he speaks predominantly German, being an Argentine is very important to him and is grateful for Argentina welcoming his family with open arms many years ago.

In Chile the situation is quite similar. One of the best examples of German heritage prevalent in Chile is in the town of Puerto Varas. According to Mary Katherine Gwyn (2017), German culture had long existed in the region for some time due to Germany's 19th century colonialism aspirations in Southern Chile. However today, Puerto Varas represents both cultures well and exemplifies how appreciative they have been of the other in shaping the small town into the tourist attraction it is today



Goldschmidt, Wyman. (2013). *Escaping Hitler a Jewish haven in Chile*. University of Alabama Press.



Photo from: CNN



Photo from: andBeyond

Germans Relations in The Southern Cone Today

Despite some Germans living in seclusion from Argentine and Chilean societies and the horrors seen at Colonia Dignidad in the latter half of the 20th Century, most Germans have successfully integrated into both societies. According to the Volga German website there are now over two million Argentines of Volga German descent that currently live in Argentina in the same areas their ancestors resided in many years ago. The numbers go up even further when accounting for all Argentines of German descent. The UNO Digital Humanities Projects has tracked the German-Argentine population to have risen to over 3 million people most residing in the Córdoba, Entre Ríos, Buenos Aires, Misiones, and La Pampa regions of Argentina. Because of the large amount of Germans living in the country, Argentine-Germans have set up two prominent schools in the Buenos Aires province, where classes are taught in German. According to The International Schools Database (2023), The Goethe Schule and The Pestalozzi Schule are major German speaking schools that focus on learning the cop both German and Argentine cultures up to the age of 18. The schools are open to Argentines as well who may not even have German background, further proving the strong bond and admiration these two cultures have for each other.

Chilean-Germans have followed similar trends to their Argentine neighbors. The information of Chileans of German descent is much smaller than that of Argentina and the exact amount is unfortunately unknown. However like Argentina, Chile also has two prominent German speaking schools in its capital of Santiago. The International Schools Database, shows that the Deutsche Schule Sankt Thomas Morus and Deutsche Schule Santiago are both German speaking high schools that focus on the bond between Chilean and German cultures. Chile has also attempted to make light of the dark side of the results of German immigration to their country. According to an article from BBC (2019), following the name change in 1997 to Villa Bavaria and 3.5 million euros in compensation from the German government, the village became one of Chile's major tourist attraction and is still home to over 100 Germans. Although there is a smaller imprint of Germans in Chilean society, the admiration between cultures is visibly present.

While many may know as to why the largest migration of Germans came to the Southern Cone, their ability to remain there to present day and be welcomed by the peoples of Argentina and Chile is a perfect example of prosperous immigration. It is unfortunate that both nations were used as Nazi safe havens following World War Two but their impacts on present day Chile and Argentina are less visible than the great impacts most Germans have had in both countries. Not only is there a strong bond between the Germans and their hosts, but the governments as well have grown stronger in bondage because of this immigration. With immigration being a highly debated topic in today's global societies, especially here in the United States, studying the bond between Germans and Argentina and Chile that is evident in the region today, could possibly provide solutions in making the globe as a whole, a prosperous place for all.



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