Decentring the German Spirit: The Weimar Republic's Cultural Relations with Latin America
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Abstract
This article analyses the Weimar Republic’s cultural relations with Latin America. Based on diplomatic correspondence and the writings of Latin American intellectuals who visited Weimar Germany, the article combines an exploration of the goals and methods of Germany’s official foreign cultural policy towards the region with a brief examination of the varied ways in which the supposed recipients of these policies approached German culture. The key argument is that the limited capacities of official cultural policy created space for a large number of actors who pursued divergent interests when appropriating or trying to spread German ideas in Latin America.

Keywords: cultural relations; Germany; intellectuals; Latin America; Weimar Republic

After 1918 Germany’s foreign policy-makers developed a vivid interest in Latin America, identifying the region as a promising sphere of German influence, or, in Stefan Rinke’s fitting phrase, ‘the last free continent’. Latin America appeared to have several advantages for such a project. Similarly to other regions subjected to European colonialism, Latin American nations were seen as weak and susceptible to outside meddling, while, in contrast to the better part of Africa and large areas of Asia, they were not directly subjected to the control of Germany’s adversaries in the war, France and Britain. The major countries of the region — with the exception of Brazil, which had belatedly joined the Allied war effort in October 1917 — also had the seeming advantage of having been neutral during the war. In addition, the presence of sizeable German communities in Chile, Argentina and especially southern Brazil, as well as commercial and military ties that pre-dated the war, would help, it

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was assumed, to sway Latin Americans in Germany's favour in the widely expected event of renewed conflict in Europe. Growing US hegemony admittedly circumscribed Germany's potential influence, but since German policies towards Latin America focused on the Southern Cone, where US power was least tangible, this was seen as less of a problem than might be expected with hindsight. Moreover, Spain, which had also been neutral in the war and hence was seen as a potential ally by many Germans, was identified as a possible bridgehead to spread pro-German ideas in Spanish America. Since the former colonial power increasingly appealed to conservative sectors of the Spanish American intelligentsia in search of cultural reference points other than North American or French, many German policy-makers envisaged an 'Ibero-American' bulwark against French and 'Anglo-Saxon' influences as a promising vehicle for Germany's badly damaged aspirations as a world power.

In Germany, domestic interpretations of the defeat of 1918 and the restrictions placed on German foreign policy under the treaty of Versailles recommended that culture play a key role in the fulfilment of such aspirations. The proponents of the Dolchstoßlegende — the widespread notion that Germany had lost not on the battlefield, but on the home front, where it had been 'stabbed in the back' by 'anti-German' detractors — urged that propaganda be placed at the heart of all future foreign policy in order to avoid any possible repetition of the humiliation of 1918.2 The practical limitations imposed in Versailles also suggested concentrating on the cultural arena, which in contrast to military enterprises was undoubtedly legal. Thus after 1918, and in particular from 1920 onwards, when the German ministry of foreign relations (Auswärtiges Amt, 'AA') opened its cultural bureau (Kulturabteilung), both the German state and non-state actors developed an array of initiatives geared towards cajoling Latin American opinion-leaders into pro-German attitudes and activities.

The supposed recipients of these policies, in turn, had their own interests. Across interwar Latin America there was a growing demand for ideas that could justify emancipation from western universalism and strengthen ideals of cultural and ethnic authenticity. While French, British and North American models of thought had helped to break with the Iberian colonial past, which Latin American liberals of the mid-nineteenth century cast as a period of obscurantism, the early decades of the twentieth century seemed to warrant ideas to combat US or British imperialism and mimicry of French culture. A new generation of Latin American thinkers began to challenge positivist beliefs of European and North American superiority. Especially influential in this respect was an essay by the Uruguayan writer José Enrique Rodó, published in 1900, that redeemed Latin American spirituality in opposition to Anglo-Saxon

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2 See generally Joachim Petzold, Die Dolchstoßlegende: Eine Geschichtsfälschung im Dienste des deutschen Imperialismus und Militarismus (Berlin 1963); and Boris Barth, Dolchstoßlegenden und politische Desintegration: Das Trauma der deutschen Niederlage im ersten Weltkrieg (Düsseldorf 2003).
materialism. An array of other major intellectuals, such as the Mexican José Vasconcelos, who saw Latin America’s autochthonous identity embodied in the future emergence of a mixed ‘cosmic race’; the Peruvian indigenistas Luis Valcárcel and José Carlos Mariátegui; or the Brazilian ‘anthropophagie’ literary movement around Oswald de Andrade, all followed suit in this desire to emancipate Latin American culture from universalist imitations.

There were, naturally, enormous differences and tensions both between and within the various Latin American literary and ideological currents of thought that emerged in the first four decades of the twentieth century. In the bicultural context of Peru, for example, hispanistas such as the fascist historian José de la Riva-Agüero, who exalted his nation’s Hispanic roots in opposition to its indigenous population, were often pitted against indigenistas like the Marxist Mariátegui. The politically engaged indigenismo of the 1920s can also be contrasted with turn-of-the-century modernismo, of which, besides Rodó, the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío was the major proponent. Modernismo has been criticized as an example of aloof aestheticism that borrowed heavily from European exoticism and, in particular, French symbolism in its portrayal of Latin American realities and, as such, would have been supportive of the ‘social status quo’.

Yet while it is all too easy to gloss over such differences, it has rightly been pointed out that ‘the primitive and exoticist discourses underlying modernismo and indigenismo, seemingly so different in motivation, are actually marked by a similar sensibility’. From Rodó to Mariátegui, the main Latin American intellectuals of the early twentieth century were all concerned with fashioning an authenticist discourse that allowed for the consolidation of autochthonous national identities. Even a writer like the Argentine Jorge Luis Borges, later disparaged by nationalists as a Europhile denigrator of all things native, began his literary career in the journal Martín Fierro, which was devoted to experimenting with the aesthetics of the gaucho genre. All these intellectuals thus contributed to what Jorge Larrain has labelled ‘the end of oligarchic modernity’ and its concomitant outward-looking model of identity.

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3 José Enrique Rodó, Ariel, trans. Margaret Sayers Peden (Austin, TX, 1988 [1900]).
4 The classical writings of these authors were José Vasconcelos, The Cosmic Race, trans. Didier T. Jaén (Baltimore, MD, and London 1997 [1925]); Luis Eduardo Valcárcel, Tempestad en los Andes (Lima 1972 [1927]); José Carlos Mariátegui, Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality, trans. Marjory Urquidi (Austin, TX, 1971 [1928]); and Oswald de Andrade, Do Pau-Brasil à antropofagia e as utopias: manifestos, teses de concurso e ensaios (Rio de Janeiro 1972).
5 For a concise summary, see Nicola Miller, In the Shadow of the State: Intellectuals and the Quest for National Identity in Twentieth-Century Spanish America (London 1999), 152–3.
7 Tace Hedrick, Mestizo Modernism: Race, Nation, and Identity in Latin American Culture, 1900–1940 (New Brunswick, NJ, 2003), 77.
8 On Martín Fierro, see Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo, Ensayos argentinos: de Sarmiento a la vanguardia (Buenos Aires 1997 [1983]), 211–60.
9 Jorge Larrain, Identity and Modernity in Latin America (Oxford 2000), 92–113, which provides a concise yet persuasive overview of the differences and commonalities of the ideas of Latin America’s most important intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century.
On the other hand, emancipatory ideals did not emerge without borrowings and interaction with European thought. Intellectual appropriations from overseas were never seen as contradictory to the goal of achieving cultural independence. According to Oswald de Andrade's famous 'cannibal manifesto', the emergence of a truly Brazilian culture hinged precisely on its ability to devour stimuli from outside.\(^{10}\) Mariátegui, too, argued against myopic nationalism and showed himself well aware that 'Western civilization has become internationalized'.\(^{11}\) Even though France in particular remained the most important cultural point of reference, ideas flowing from German romantic nationalism proved increasingly attractive to Latin Americans bent on asserting their cultural idiosyncrasy. Ideas emanating from Germany's romantic tradition were tempting as a model of alternative modernity because of their distinctness from the hitherto dominant traditions of liberalism and civic nationhood. In particular, the success of Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*, published in Spanish in 1923 with a prologue by the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, across Spanish America helped vindicate New World cultures against what Spengler described as decadent western universalism. Spengler's reception thus marked the onset of what could perhaps be called, borrowing Richard Morse's words, 'the Germanizing of Latin American thought'.\(^{12}\)

The historiography on German-Latin American relations in the interwar period, let alone that on cultural transfers, is scarce. The recent surge in postcolonial studies among German historians has done little to redress this shortcoming because it has, following its American and British inspiration, focused on Europe, Asia and Africa.\(^{13}\) The little there is on Germany and Latin America can be divided into two strands. On the one hand, there are studies that treat these relations as an aspect of German foreign policy. They tend to approach the topic from a perspective that is relevant mostly for German history, namely the question of continuities versus breaks in Germany's imperialist and expansionist aspirations. This issue has dominated the historiography on Germany's foreign relations after 1871, at least since Andreas Hillgruber raised it in 1969.\(^{14}\) Sitting uncomfortably with the long-prevailing focus on Germany's imperialist

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11 José Carlos Mariátegui, *El alma matinal y otras estaciones del hombre de hoy* (Lima 1959 [1924]), 51.
goals in the region, historians of German foreign policy towards Latin America often glossed over the Weimar Republic,\textsuperscript{15} treating it as an unimportant interlude on the otherwise steady path that led from Wilhelmine military missions to the nazis' attempts to deploy a 'fifth column' in the Southern Cone. The scarcity of scholarship on relations between Latin America and the Weimar Republic thus contrasts sharply with the vast literature on nazi influence and nazi war criminals in Latin America, in particular in relation to Argentina, Brazil and Chile.\textsuperscript{16} The only major exception is Stefan Rinke's detailed account of German foreign policy towards Latin America from 1918 to 1933, which also contains a section on cultural relations.\textsuperscript{17} But while he takes the Weimar Republic seriously as a period in its own right, his study is still focused mainly on German foreign policy in view of the continuity/break question and tells us less about Latin American receptions of this policy.

On the other hand, there are widely scattered essays of intellectual history, mostly written by Latin American authors, which deal with the relationship of Latin American intellectuals or politicians with particular aspects of German culture and ideas. In contrast to the above, this is not a clearly defined field of study, organized along one dominant research question, but rather a loose area of isolated interests in the biographies of certain individuals or the 'influence' of certain intellectual strands in particular Latin American countries. Historians of Latin American philosophy have shown most interest in the


To mention only the major monographs of the last 10 years: Marionilde Dias Brepohl de Magalhães, \textit{Pangermanismo e nazismo: a trajetória alemã rumo ao Brasil} (Campinas 1998); Víctor Farias, \textit{Los nazis en Chile}, 2 vols (Barcelona 2000–2003); Max Paul Friedman, \textit{Nazis and Good Neighbors: The American Campaign against the Germans of Latin America in World War II} (Cambridge 2003); Frank Garbely, \textit{El viaje del arco iris: los nazis, la banca suiza y la Argentina de Perón} (Buenos Aires 2003); Uki Goñi, \textit{The Real Odessa: How Perón Brought the Nazi War Criminals to Argentina} (London 2003); Marcus Klein, \textit{Im langen Schatten des Nationalsozialismus: faschistische Bewegungen in Chile zwischen der Weltwirtschaftskrise und dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs} (Frankfurt am Main 2004); Uwe Lübken, \textit{Betrohliche Nähe: die USA und die nationalsozialistische Herausforderung in Lateinamerika} (Stuttgart 2004); Carlos de Nápoli, \textit{Nazis en el sur: la expansion alemana sobre el Cono Sur y la Antártida} (Buenos Aires 2005); Thomas D. Schoonover and Louis A. Pérez Jr., \textit{Hitler's Man in Havana: Heinz Lüning and Nazi Espionage in Latin America} (Lexington, KY, 2008).

Rinke, \textit{letzte freie Kontinent}, op. cit., 413–88.}
appropriation of German strands of thought. None of this literature, however, has considered Germany's systematic attempts to spread its culture across the region. As a result, research about German foreign (cultural) policy towards Latin America has been divided from research about cultural transfers more generally. However, as I seek to show in this article, the former cannot be fully understood without attention to the latter.

Based on diplomatic correspondence, periodicals relating to cultural exchange and the writings of Latin American intellectuals who showed an interest in aspects of German culture, this article reconstructs the Weimar Republic's foreign cultural policy towards Latin America as well as its effects. It thereby contributes to both of the main themes mentioned above: firstly, the question of the goals and methods of Weimar foreign policy; secondly, the manifold meanings that Germany and German models of thought could take on when they were appropriated by Latin Americans in this period. By addressing these two issues together, the article shows the mismatch between the strategic interests of Latin American intellectuals and the misguided underlying premise of German foreign policy: that the region's elites were malleable and that the use of German and French ideas was mutually exclusive. The article is divided into three sections. The first part addresses the goals of German foreign policy in the region and stresses that these were indeed to some extent a continuation of pre-war imperialist ambitions. The second section, however, shows how the decentralized means employed to implement them meant that the diplomats of the AA, at times outflanked by private nationalist propagandists at home and abroad, gradually tuned down imperialist desires and promoted a more light-touch and democratic understanding of German culture. The final section considers the rather divergent interests that Latin American intellectuals could develop in this context.

At first sight, Germany's official cultural relations with Latin America seemed to betray remarkable continuities with Wilhelmine expansionist desires. Contrary to foreign cultural policy in many countries today, and contrary to what one usually associates with Weimar culture and politics, it was the political right that dominated this area of German politics after 1918. Foreign relations in general were the favourite field of agitation of the nationalist and anti-republican right, especially through campaigns against the 'shame of Versailles'. The Social Democrats in turn were either uninterested or unable to colonize the diplomatic corps. Within foreign relations, culture was so dear to the right because it considered propaganda essential to prevent another 'stab in the back'. The leading staff of the Kulturabteilung at the time of its foundation unsurprisingly belonged to the right of Weimar's political spectrum. Private

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18 E.g. João Cruz Costa, Contribuição á história das ideas no Brasil (Rio de Janeiro 1956), 296–330; and Leopoldo Zea, 'Alemanha en la cultura hispanoamericana', in his Esquema para una historia de ideas en Iberoamérica (Mexico City 1956), 59–89.

initiatives in this arena often had an anti-French and sometimes openly revanchist character. A good example of this was the Deutsche Akademie, the precursor of the post-second world war Goethe Institute, founded in Munich in 1923 in response to the French occupation of the Ruhr area. Led by right-wing nationalists, the goal of the institute was to foster a sense of national unity by cultivating the links between ethnic Germans at home and abroad, especially in the Balkans.20 Another example was the German Foreign Institute (Deutsches Auslandsinstitut), founded in Stuttgart in 1917. Due to their nationalistic make-up, the later nazification of these institutes was rather swift and the Auslandsinstitut was charged in the Nuremberg trials with having served as a launching pad of the nazis’ ‘fifth column’.21

Mirroring the warlike language of the German right that lingered on after 1918, in the correspondence of the AA there is a frequent slippage between the terms ‘foreign cultural policy’ (auswärtige Kulturpolitik) and the blunter ‘cultural propaganda’ (Kulturpropaganda). Both terms, expressing the goal of promoting German culture abroad, appear rather odd in view of the distinction, so central to the German right of the interwar years, between a superficial Zivilisation and a more static yet deeper Kultur, which expressed the intrinsic nature of a people and, after all, could not simply be transferred to non-Germans. The very idea of an auswärtige Kulturpolitik thus appeared almost as a contradiction in terms. But in their initial conception, the goals of both the Kulturabteilung and private cultural initiatives were primarily targeted at Germans abroad, reflecting a long-term focus in German nationalism on ‘Germandom’ as an ethnic community.22 Only over time did the tasks of the Kulturabteilung diversify and become an integral part of foreign policy in general.

When this happened, cultural foreign policy was partially geared towards achieving revision of the treaty of Versailles and restoration of Germany’s status as a world power by reviving the worldwide networks that had developed under Wilhelmine imperialism. Naturally German-Latin American relations were older than the German Reich, harking back at least to the well-known pre-independence scientific explorations of Alexander von Humboldt. But although Humboldt later became an all-pervasive rhetorical reference in German-Latin American contacts, relations were truly intensified only from the 1870s. In this period German imperialism manifested itself most blatantly in Africa while actual German influence was far stronger in east-central Europe and the Balkans. But the Reich also showed an interest in Latin

22 A typical earlier example of this was the Pan-German League (Allddeutscher Verband). See Roger Chickering, We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886–1914 (Boston 1984), esp. 74–97.
The prestige of German academe in the nineteenth century exerted great attraction on Latin American scientists, above all on chemists and medical doctors but official policies focused on the areas of military ties and trade. As for the second area, Germany had sent military instructors to various Latin American countries in the late nineteenth century — for example, to Chile in 1885 and to Argentina in 1899 — to help Latin American armies to professionalize and to pave the way for large-scale arms sales to Latin America. The yields of such military ties were still evident long after 1918, most notoriously in Bolivia, where the army’s commander-in-chief in the Chaco War of 1932–5 was a retired Prussian general, Hans Kundt, who in 1928 had temporarily recruited Ernst Röhm, the leader of the nazi stormtroopers (SA), as a military adviser. German-Latin American military relations, as the British ambassador in Buenos Aires pointed out in mid-1943, eventually brought a ‘handsome dividend’ in that it cemented the reluctance of some countries, such as Argentina, to declare war against the Axis.

Finally, German trade with, and investment in, Latin America had increased considerably between the foundation of the Reich and the outbreak of the first world war. Starting from a low base, German trade with Latin America grew from under 1 per cent of the total in 1881 to 7.6 per cent by 1913. From the Latin American perspective, Germany also constituted an increasingly important trading partner, providing 16.3 per cent of all imports on the eve of the first world war, while 12.3 per cent of Latin American exports went to the Reich. Within this overall picture, commercial relations were most developed with those countries that also had important German ethnic communities, in particular Brazil, where some 350,000 ethnic Germans had emigrated by 1900. As early as 1897, 13 per cent of all Brazilian imports came from Germany, a figure that rose to 24 per cent in 1937 after a series of bilateral agreements between the Vargas and nazi governments. Argentina was the second most important destination of both migrants and exports, followed by Chile, with approximately 120,000 ethnic Germans in 1900, and Mexico, whose German community was much smaller, but which as a larger country did play some role in what has been called Germany’s ‘informal imperialism’ in Latin America.

Cultural relations with Latin America developed in the shadow of such military and commercial ties. The first German research institutes devoted to the study of Latin America were founded in the Rhineland (in Aachen in 1912), where industrialists were interested in Latin America as an export market, and in Hamburg (1917), where merchants played a key role. The leading figures of these institutes, as one of the founding members in Aachen, the geologist Paul Gast, later remarked, were scientists who had travelled to Latin America on behalf of German industry (often chemical), as well as military instructors and pedagogues who had worked for Latin American governments keen to develop education systems along European lines. The origins of what Gast called the ‘Ibero-American movement in Germany’, as well as German foreign policy towards Latin America, thus lay in a combination of military and economic interests, and to some degree grew out of Wilhelmine imperialist interests.

Historians who stress imperialist continuities in German foreign policy often point to the fact that the personnel of the diplomatic corps barely changed in 1918. As for Latin America, it is true that there was little change. Throughout the 1920s, many German envoys in the region came from the Prussian aristocracy, had close links with the military and had served in the foreign service before the war. Particularly up until the early 1920s, many of these men — and men they invariably were — were guided by revisionism (directed against the treaty of Versailles) and hopes of restoration. An example of this was Hilmar Freiherr von Bussche-Haddenhausen, who as ambassador to Buenos Aires before the war had married into one of the country’s foremost families. After the war he remained an influential voice in German-Argentine relations and from 1928 to 1931, as president of the Verein des Deutschtums im Ausland (Society of Germandom Abroad), he became an authority on foreign cultural policy more generally. As he expressed in an interview for the Buenos Aires Herald in 1918, he expected Germany to regain ‘her old place of supremacy’.

The question of whether there was continuity in German foreign policy or not of course relates to the origins of nazism. If one were to argue that nazi
expansionism grew out of Wilhelmine imperial militarism, the figure to point
to with regard to Latin America is General Wilhelm Faupel. Before the war
Faupel had served as a volunteer in the repression of the Herero uprising in
German Southwest Africa. After 1918 he co-founded a counter-revolutionary
Freikorps in Silesia, before becoming a military adviser in Argentina and Peru,
an activity which he continued in disregard of the prohibition of such missions
under the treaty of Versailles. In 1934, he was appointed director of the
Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut (IAI) in Berlin, which, since its foundation four
years earlier, had been the most important state-funded academic institute for
Latin American studies. During the Spanish Civil War he was Hitler's personal
envoy before Franco. In 1945, he and his wife Edith committed suicide.
Faupel, in short, embodies the argument that there was a link between nazi
ideology and the Reich's colonialist crimes, bridging the Weimar Republic.

The notion that culture was an important prop to achieve foreign-policy
objectives was not new in 1918. It was first put forward by the historian Karl
Lamprecht in a speech in 1912. Similar demands came from Germans in Latin
America. In 1914, for example, Wilhelm Keiper, a German nationalist who was
rector of Argentina's national institute for the formation of secondary-school
teachers, argued in an essay on 'German cultural tasks in Argentina' that in a
young nation like Argentina cultural life resembled an 'outer shell . . . which only
has cultural value if it is filled, felt and developed with living vigour'. Lamenting
that other countries had made inroads in this respect, he argued that in view of
the war it was necessary that German foreign policy caught up with such efforts
and provided a more effective framework to wield influence through cultural
means. For this purpose Keiper presided over the German Scientific Club in
Buenos Aires, whose goal it was, as envoy Bussche-Haddenhausen explained in
a supportive dispatch to the AA, to 'counter the efforts of the French and North
Americans to influence Argentina's trade relations by guiding the spiritual life of
the Argentines.' After the war, the argument that Germany's defeat was due to
France's superior propaganda lent additional urgency to the demand for a
concerted foreign cultural policy. In his efforts to this effect before Weimar's
constitutional assembly, the orientalist Carl H. Becker, who in 1921 became
Prussian minister of science, art and education, therefore reminded his audience
that 'the sympathy that it [France] enjoys across the world is to a large extent a
result of its cunning cultural policy'.

34 Rohland to AA, 22 March 1928, PAAA R79842. Generally on Faupel: Oliver Gleich,
'Wilhelm Faupel: Generalstabsoffizier, Militärberater, Präsident des Ibero-Amerikanischen
Instituts', in Volker Liehr (ed.), Ein Institut und sein General: Das Iberoamerikanische Institut
in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus (Frankfurt am Main 2003), 131–280.
35 This speech is reproduced in Kurt Düwell, Deutschlands auswärtige Kulturpolitik,
36 Wilhelm Keiper, Deutsche Kulturaufgaben in Argentinien (Berlin 1914), 4.
37 Bussche-Haddenhausen to AA, 5 July 1913, PAAA R64834.
While US and British propaganda were deemed insignificant, Germany's cultural policy in Latin America was invariably framed in terms of rivalry with the French. One reason for this was that since the mid-nineteenth century France had indeed become the most important external cultural reference point in the region. The very term Latin America, after all, was a French invention to set the region apart from its Iberian colonial past, as well as growing British and North American influence. After the first world war, despite the dissemination of North American popular culture, Latin America's intelligentsias continued to draw on French models, and a stay in Paris was almost obligatory in a writer's biography. An article in *La Vie Latine*, a periodical dedicated to strengthening such links, thus stressed in the mid-1920s: 'French culture at present remains the most favoured abroad, particularly in the countries of South America'. As German diplomats never failed to point out in Wilhelmstraße, the French provided generous funding for a very successful programme of academic exchange, grounded in particular on the Sorbonne's university institutes in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro, founded in the early 1920s.

But the anti-French bias of many Germans meant that realistic assessments of French influence were overshadowed by a near obsession, especially in the immediate aftermath of the war. For example, in 1920 the German consul in Valparaíso interpreted the sales of French books as a sign that 'the enemy is employing its most powerful weapon, that of propaganda, to completely destroy the adversary who is already down.' In the course of the pacification and stabilization of foreign policy under Stresemann (1923–9), the tone of such statements mellowed and the reasons cited for France's cultural weight in Latin America became less belligerent, if sometimes bizarre. Thus, after his trip to promote the Weimar Republic in Argentina, Brazil and Chile, the former chancellor Hans Luther attributed French hegemony to the fact that 'South American men in great numbers had their decisive sexual experience with French women', while the legation in Chile held 'fashion magazines with really good patterns' in Santiago's French bookshop responsible. But envious or

39 The British and the Americans were rarely mentioned in the German records. As the envoy to Chile noted in 1926 (Spee to AA, 31 May 1926, PAAA R64864), the British made few cultural efforts, while American influence was mostly felt through private initiatives such as the Rotary Club. The difference between France and Germany, on the one hand, and Britain and the USA, on the other, has obviously to do with different levels of state involvement in cultural life. Based on US influence in Central America and the Caribbean, German diplomats might well have concluded that state-led cultural foreign policy might not necessarily be the most effective way of achieving political and economic influence, but the overriding concern with France seems to have prevented any such considerations.

40 Excerpt from *La Vie Latine* (no date, no page number), sent with a dispatch from the German embassy in Paris to AA, 11 May 1926, PAAA R64467.

41 Pauli to AA, 3 June 1922, PAAA R64859, on the institute in Buenos Aires, and Plehn to AA, 14 October 1922, PAAA R78928 and idem to AA, 14 November 1922, PAAA R64862 on its Brazilian counterpart.

42 Dieckhoff to AA, 26 September 1920, PAAA R65375.

43 Memorandum, Luther to AA, January 1927, PAAA R79976; Spee to AA, 31 May 1926, PAAA R64864.
aggressive remarks about France's privileged cultural relations with Latin America still pervaded the majority of diplomatic correspondence from Latin America that reached the cultural bureau of the AA. German diplomats judged the addressees of their cultural efforts almost exclusively through the lens of their supposed position in German-French disputes. Thus Ricardo Rojas, a leading Argentine intellectual, was reduced to being 'a well-known friend of the French', while Gast classified the influential conservative Chilean historian Alberto Edwards merely as 'an enemy of [French] phraseology'.

Even though there were frequent demands to emulate French strategies, most of the advisers and initiators of German foreign cultural policy towards Latin America argued that Germany should offer itself as an alternative to worn-out French models by exploiting the changes in the climate of ideas that were taking place in interwar Latin America. The recurrent argument was that German diplomacy should tap into the widespread disenchantment with the nineteenth-century promise of uniform progress towards a universal western modernity, which was widely associated with France and North America. Worries over French superiority were thus coupled with assertions of its decline. The German envoy in Buenos Aires remarked as early as 1920 that 'the “Latin race” and the conclusion that is derived from it, that of a spiritual unity [with France], is a deft propagandistic phrase, whose lack of justification is increasingly being recognised here'. The ambassador in Rio observed three years later 'that among students enthusiasm for France has given way to pro-German attitudes.' Gast reasoned in his justification of the need for a centralized institute of 'Ibero-American' studies that Germany should make use of anti-imperialist sentiment. The revalorization of Hispanic roots among parts of Spanish American élites from the 1920s should also prove useful, according to Gast. Spain should be employed as a bridgehead, Gast argued, 'since the generally pro-German attitude of the Spanish seems to be transferred onto the South Americans with Ibero-American sentiments, among whom the ... partisans of France ... are encouragingly rare.' And in 1931 Faupel wrote of Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre's anti-imperialist APRA party in Peru, comparing it with the nazis:

we can only welcome this national Indo-American movement, which counters the threatening advance of the United States. Germany has a vivid interest that the Central and South American states maintain ... their political independence ... Luckily, there are signs among Ibero-America’s student youth, for example ... among the apristas, of a growing rejection of

44 Pauli to AA, 3 June 1922, PAAA R64859, on Rojas; Gast to the Prussian ministry of science, art and popular education, 28 March 1926, PAAA R64484.
45 Will to AA, 14 September 1920, PAAA R65364, about Argentina; and Plehn to AA, 10 March 1923, PAAA R64862.
46 The classical work on hispanismo in English remains Fredrick B. Pike, Hispanismo, 1898–1936: Spanish Conservatives and Liberals and their Relations with Spanish America (Notre Dame, IN, 1971).
47 Gast to Prussian ministry of science, art and popular education, 30 March 1925, PAAA R64484.
French models. The best elements of the Ibero-American youth are beginning to defend themselves against French cultural and North American political patronage.48 Latin America’s new forms of nationalism, in short, were seen as a promising vehicle for Germany’s foreign policy goals in the region, defined in opposition to France and North America.

Even though German foreign policy towards Latin America was thus at times undergirded by imperialist motivations, the overall story is more complicated than that. As Klaus Hildebrand has argued, even if one were to concede that the goals of Weimar’s foreign policy were predominantly revisionist at the outset, the more pragmatic nature of the means employed, first out of necessity, but more and more out of conviction, ultimately meant that the objectives also became less aggressive.49 Although the diplomatic corps might have consisted of the old imperial élite, it did not operate in a vacuum, but was frequently subjected to outside pressures, most obviously in the form of policy directives from the AA, which under Stresemann became more conciliatory. As for cultural policies in Latin America, many initiatives came from non-state actors, with the Kulturabteilung being little more than a central information bureau that could barely exert influence through the distribution of very limited financial means. Irrespective of the goals expressed by diplomats, Germany’s foreign cultural ‘policy’ in Latin America therefore took on a life of its own. As a result, the underlying views of this policy as to what constituted German culture and how it should best be promoted varied as widely as the actors involved in this enterprise.

When it was founded in 1920, the goal of the Kulturabteilung was to promote German schools abroad, the teaching of German as a foreign language and the exchange between academics and students.50 But German communities abroad took precedence. In 1928 a review of the bureau’s activities revealed that the bulk of the budget was consumed by German schools abroad, so that Stresemann decided to issue a new list of priorities. But at the top of this list still stood schools and ‘issues of Germandom’ (Deutschtumsangelegenheiten) — to which, taken together, 3.5m of the annual budget of 7.5m Reichsmarks were allocated — followed by the exchange of professors and students, trips of German professors abroad and, finally, German scientific institutes abroad.51 Eastern Europe and the Balkans were the major targets of the Kulturabteilung, but of the extra-European regions Latin America was perhaps the most important. Within Latin American activities, given that no fewer than 1200 of the total of 1500 German schools abroad were in Brazil,52 one can assume that schools

49 Hildebrand, Das vergangene Reich, op. cit., 475.
51 Laitenberger, Akademischer Austausch, op. cit., 37.
52 Michels, Deutschen Akademie, op. cit., 70.
consumed a very large majority of the Latin America budget. Even in Mexico—a country with a very small German community—in 1926 the AA subsidized German schools with 75,200 Reichsmarks, leaving a mere 2400 for all other areas that the Kulturabteilung sponsored in that country.\footnote{Will to AA, March 1926, PAAA R79646.} The lack of funds was exacerbated by the hyperinflation in 1923 and then by the depression of 1929, which almost left the bureau defunct, thus creating a void later to be filled by the Nazis. Besides the chronic shortage of resources for areas other than schools, the work of the bureau was marred by the federalist political structure of Germany, which left cultural matters to the individual states (Länder). This generated quarrels over political competences, especially between the AA and the Prussian ministry of science, art and popular education. Both underfunding and the confusing organizational set-up of foreign cultural policy were constantly pointed out in the diplomatic correspondence reaching Wilhelmstraße as structural disadvantages in comparison to the French.

If measured against its sometimes grandiloquent designs, the immediate outcomes of foreign cultural policy in Latin America were modest. Financial problems soon crippled the German cultural institutes that had been founded in Buenos Aires and Rio in the early 1920s to foster exchange between German and local scholars, and to stage cultural activities attended by both the German community and the local intelligentsia.\footnote{Reisswitz to Gneist, 6 August 1924, PAAA R65364, on the decline of the Institución Cultural Argentino-Germana. I have not come across reports about the waning of the Brazilian Sociedade Brasileira de Amigos da Cultura Germânica: all the correspondence on its activities in a PAAA folder covering the years 1922-5 (R65373) is from 1922, suggesting a fate similar to its Argentine counterpart, probably as a result of the hyperinflation in 1923.} Only 30 years later were they replaced by the Goethe Institutes, which fulfilled a similar function. Besides limited funds and organizational difficulties, historic legacies also undermined the effectiveness of foreign cultural policy in Latin America. Crucially, German was hardly taught in Latin American schools.\footnote{F.W. Schroeter, ‘Die deutsche Sprache in Südamerika’, Ibero-Amerika (C), 11(1) (1930), 1-2.} Hence, in 1923 Uruguay’s National Library lent almost 4000 French books compared with 9 German.\footnote{Iberica 3(1) (1925), 30-1.} Despite the founding of the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung in 1925 to foster student exchange, Latin American students in Germany remained a rarity. The approximately 10,000 foreign students in German universities in 1926/27 were overwhelmingly from Central, Eastern and Southeast Europe; only 89 were Latin American, mostly in medicine and sciences.\footnote{On the Humboldt foundation’s scholarships in the first year of its existence: PAAA R64796. The statistics are based on Vierteljahreshefte zur Statistik des Deutschen Reiches, vol. 35, issue no. 3 (1927), included in PAAA, R64793. The only Latin American country where the Humboldt foundation attracted interest was Colombia (Lumpe to AA, 26 May 1926, PAAA R64900), where Germans also played an important role in creating a national system of primary and secondary education (see Ingrid Müller de Ceballos, La lucha por la cultura: la formación del maestro colombiano en una perspectiva internacional (Bogotá 1992)).} Apart from physicians, very few Latin American academics were invited to Germany as a result...
of the work of the Kulturabteilung. Even though mission statements envisioned a two-way exchange between German and Latin American academics, in practice the AA was concerned mostly with the trips of Germans to Latin America. Despite its more generous funding, the IAI did not attract many Latin American scholars and students either, as a statistic of library use revealed in 1932.

But these organizational shortcomings also left room for less centralized manoeuvres, of which there were many. Judging from the Latin America correspondence of the Kulturabteilung, rather than decreeing a certain cultural policy from above, its work consisted largely in responding to requests for financial and organizational help from individuals, clubs, companies and state institutions in both Germany and Latin America. The AA then sought information about the authors of such requests, usually either from its diplomats in Latin America or from other state institutions in Germany, such as the Prussian ministry of science, deciding the allocation of its funds on a case-by-case basis. The history of the foundation of the IAI, ultimately financed by the Prussian ministry of science and the federal ministry of the interior, provides a good example of the AA's limited leverage. Essentially a merger of various previous individual initiatives, the foundation of the IAI eventually became possible because the Germanophile Argentine intellectual Ernesto Quesada donated his large personal library. A very high-profile institution in Germany by the time of its foundation in 1930, boasting Europe's most important library on Latin America, had thus emerged without much input from the Kulturabteilung. Similarly, the German cultural institutes in Argentina and Brazil sought funding from the AA, rather than being guided by it. As a result, the general thrust of foreign cultural policy towards Latin America depended on the ideas and goals of a large number of individuals or groups, rather than on a centralized agenda.

This decentralization and the interaction of many protagonists make it implausible to argue that Weimar Germany's foreign cultural policy towards Latin America was an orchestrated revisionist pursuit. The number of pro-republican Germans in Latin America involved in organizing cultural and intellectual programmes who had an acute awareness of local conditions and genuinely wanted to contribute to a better understanding among nations should not be underestimated. The philosopher Max Dessoir, for example, founded a German-Argentine institute in 1926 in Córdoba, and in a report

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58 The most widely advertised academic visit to Germany was that of the Brazilian doctors Carlos Chagas and Miguel Couto, who in November 1925 were received by president Hindenburg. The trip was kicked off by the initiative of a Brazilian doctor at Hamburg's institute for tropical diseases (see the correspondence in PAAA R64689).


60 See generally PAAA R65002 and R79973; and Oliver Gliech, 'Lateinamerikanische "Multiplikatoren im Visier": Kulturpolitische Konzeptionen für das Ibero-Amerikanische Institut zum Zeitpunkt seiner Gründung', in Liehr (ed.), Ein Institut, op. cit., 17–66.
urged the AA to take seriously the officially proclaimed goal of inviting Argentine and Brazilian students and academics to Germany. In his view this aim could best be achieved through retracting from the imperialist arrogance of old. A similar example was Albert Haas, who had studied in France and married a French woman before becoming press attaché of the German legation in Buenos Aires in 1923. He was the decisive driving force behind the German-Argentine cultural institute, as well as editor-in-chief of Phoenix, the organ of the German Scientific Club. Undeterred by the former German envoy’s assessment of Ricardo Rojas as a ‘friend of the French’, he published an extensive article on the importance of Rojas’ definition of argentinidad. He also tried to stem the tide of German propaganda against the so-called ‘black shame’ (the deployment of soldiers of African origin in the French occupation of the Rhineland), which he argued did not go down well with the liberal-cosmopolitan Argentine press. In such a context the idea of competing with the French could also be employed for purposes that had little to do with revisionism or imperialist aspirations. Dessoir, for example, stated that German academics should set themselves apart from their French counterparts by avoiding the latter’s alleged air of arrogance. The rivalry with the French could also be deployed as a strategic argument to receive official funding. The envoy to Buenos Aires, for example, mostly pointed to efforts to counter the French when asking the AA for more generous financial help to the German-Argentine cultural association, even though on repeated occasions he made clear that in practice there was cooperation rather than confrontation between this association and the French. By the mid-1920s, dispatches from German diplomats in Latin America were mostly couched in realistic and sober tones. However, attempts to create a foreign cultural policy based on respectful exchange met with reluctance from non-state actors, German nationalists at home and abroad. The increasing number of diplomats who by the mid-1920s had come round to endorsing a peaceful pragmatism now found themselves struggling to rein in bellicose private propaganda against the treaty of Versailles. There are many examples of diplomats being sceptical toward the private activists of cultural relations. An internal report of the AA suspected Gast’s initiatives for the foundation of the later IAI as yet another instance of intellectually mediocre professors who during the war ‘felt the urge to engage in propaganda’. Another problem were private German propagandists in Latin America, such as Georg Löwy, a self-appointed ‘travelling patriotic speaker’ (vaterländischer Vortragsredner auf Reisen) in Brazil who was sought by police for embezzlement.

61 Report by Dessoir to AA (undated, probably autumn 1926), PAAA R64684.
62 Albert Haas, ‘Ricardo Rojas’, Phoenix, 14(1-2) (1928), 236-47; and Haas to AA, 30 September 1923, PAAA R64859.
63 Report by Dessoir to AA (undated, probably autumn 1926), PAAA R64684.
64 Gneist to AA, 23 August 1926, PAAA R64684.
65 Internal report of the AA (no date, probably 1922), PAAA R65001.
66 See the correspondence in PAAA R64853.
After 1918 the German communities in Latin America were replenished with approximately 100,000 newcomers, who went particularly to Argentina, but also to Brazil and Chile. Many of them desired to escape the turmoil and economic insecurity in postwar Germany, or were attracted by the promise of adventure in exotic lands, but this migration ostensibly also brought a disproportionate number of embittered young anti-republican men, who, as Löwy’s case shows, sought out Latin America’s German communities for nationalist agitation.67 As the envoys in Santiago and Caracas reported in 1921, the German communities in Chile and Venezuela were strongly anti-republican, sticking to their loyalty to the Kaiser.68 In 1923, Haas wrote to Wilhelmstraße that only with difficulty had he overcome the resistance of Germans in Argentina to his plans to honour two German Nobel Prize winners: the playwright Gerhart Hauptmann, known for his criticism of prevailing social conditions, and Albert Einstein, whose rejection by the German community was probably due to his being Jewish.69 Four years later, a Beethoven concert organized by the legation in Mexico City, with the presence of the Allies’ envoys/ambassadors, turned into an embarrassment when anti-republican members of the German community tried to take down the black-red-gold flag (which had been introduced by the Weimar Republic, in contrast to the previous imperial flag).70 Luther’s trip to South America in 1926 to promote the republic seems to have been aimed not so much at Latin Americans, who anyway sympathized with Germany’s transition from empire to republic, but rather at quelling anti-republican feelings among the region’s German communities.71

The work of the Kulturabteilung and other advocates of cultural and intellectual exchange also ran into problems within Germany. The atmosphere in German universities, with their increasingly right-wing student bodies, was a particular problem. In 1926, the Brazilian economist Tobias Moscoso, whom the envoy to Rio recommended as belonging to ‘the pro-German circles of Brazilian academics’ though he did not speak German, was prevented from following up his invitation to Berlin’s technical university because it was feared that the students would stage a protest against a talk delivered in French.72 As the cultural bureau of the AA complained to the Prussian ministry of science,
despite having signed covenants that forbade charging foreign students who had been granted scholarships from the Humboldt Foundation, universities continued to levy tuition fees. In short, the work of the Kulturabteilung cannot be understood except in the context of growing nationalism among non-state actors, in both Germany and Latin America.

Yet finally, what became of the designs of Germany’s foreign cultural policy, whether revisionist or conciliatory, crucially depended on something else: its supposed recipients, namely Latin American intellectuals and politicians. As Keiper’s above-cited statement about the ‘outer shell’ of Argentine culture that needed to be filled demonstrates, the underlying premise of foreign cultural policy was that its addressees could be moulded. But there was little evidence to support such an assumption. As more sober observers such as Dessoir noted, the ‘strong inclination in Brazil and Argentina to entrust themselves to a leadership in artistic and scientific matters’ served ‘only the purpose of developing their own culture.’ Moreover, in no Latin American country could public opinion be neatly divided into a Francophile and a pro-German camp, as the prism of Franco-German enmity, which so pervasively affected German foreign policy and understandings of national identity, would have it. The audience at the public seminars of the German-Argentine cultural institution was in fact much the same as that at the Sorbonne’s university institute in Buenos Aires. Over-blunt attempts to employ these institutions as an overseas spearhead in the Franco-German divide could even prompt Argentine papers to protest that public opinion in their country was neither pro-French nor pro-German. When German nationalists — perhaps in the hope of funding from the AA — interpreted such statements as evidence of the success of their campaign against French predominance, they ignored the rather diverse motivations of Latin American élites who took an interest in German politics and ideas.

After 1945 some South American countries became a refuge for nazi war criminals, and there is therefore a widespread notion that Latin Americans with an interest in Germany held militaristic and authoritarian views. Of course, there are well-known examples of right-wing Latin American politicians who had received military training in Germany, such as the leader of the military coup of 1930 in Argentina, José Félix Uriburu, or who had experienced the political situation during the president’s cabinets first hand, such as Colombia’s later conservative president Laureano Gómez, who had been his country’s envoy to Germany in 1930–2. The main ideologue of the Chilean National Socialist Movement, the German-Chilean Carlos Keller Rueff, had also spent much time in Germany during the 1920s. Before he established himself as an extreme rightist Chilean nationalist in the 1930s, he had been an

73 AA to Prussian ministry of science, art and popular education, 26 January 1926, PAAA R64796.
74 Report by Dessoir to AA (undated, probably autumn 1926), PAAA R64684.
75 Report (author's name unreadable) to the AA, March 1926, PAAA R64684 (on the German-Argentine cultural institution); Haas to AA, 30 September 1923, PAAA R64859, on the comments in the Argentine press.
important organizer of intellectual exchange between the two countries, as chairman of the German-Chilean League and through his dissemination of Spengler’s works, so that Gast even suggested him as a possible director for the future IAI. But with the partial exception of Chile, where pan-German nationalism seems to have been more pervasive among the German community, nothing suggests that before 1933 Germany exerted an intellectual appeal to a particular political segment in Latin America.

Among the prominent Latin American intellectuals who spent more than four months in Weimar Germany, there were Marxists, such as the Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui, widely read beyond his native country, and the slightly less well-known Brazilian Mário Pedrosa; the influential Peruvian-born anti-imperialist Haya de la Torre; the Argentine philosopher Carlos Astrada, who later became a Peronist; two liberal-inclined Mexican jurists, Mario de la Cueva and Eduardo García Márquez, of whom the former was an important public figure at home, although he was less known outside Mexico; and finally two influential historians with centrist democratic political views: Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (Brazilian) and Jorge Basadre (Peruvian). As diverse as their national and political backgrounds were the networks through which they arrived in Germany. Some came to study with famous professors — for example, Werner Sombart and Carl Schmitt in the case of de la Cueva, and Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl in the case of Astrada — while Pedrosa, on his way to Moscow, remained in Berlin for 12 months when he learned of Trotsky’s expulsion from the communist party. Buarque de Holanda was sent as a journalist by the Germanophile Brazilian media baron Francisco Assis de Chateaubriand. As for Haya de la Torre, even though Faupel compared his APRA to the nazi party, his 18-month stay in Germany in 1929–30 was organized by the German Marxist economist Alfons Goldschmidt, whom Vasconcelos had introduced to Haya. The only commonality among these intellectuals, besides their rather young age at the time of their arrival — between 24 and 34 years — was that their sojourns in Germany had in no case been related to the work of the cultural bureau of the AA. With the exception of Haya, whose stay became problematic because of his political weight in Peru, the Kulturabteilung took no notice of their presence, even though several of them had already established an intellectual reputation at home.77

Naturally, their interests in German culture and intellectual and political debates were widely divergent. Observing Berlin’s social life for his employer, Buarque de Holanda noted what he saw as an alarming relaxation of sexual mores: the many young couples walking hand in hand and the absence of ‘the militaristic discipline that before the war had become an unfailing element of the Teutonic physiognomy.’ The Marxists took an interest in socially critical art. Mariátegui wrote about the painter George Grosz and the photographer Heinrich Zille, while Pedrosa, upon his return to Brazil, popularized the work of the sculptor Käthe Kollwitz. All these were aspects of Weimar culture rarely promoted by the AA, and the reasons for curiosity in one or another were, of course, shaped by individual concerns.

This left space for varied and very strategic appropriations of German ideas, as can be illustrated by looking at Spanish American uses of the thought of the anti-republican cultural pessimist Oswald Spengler. The first disseminator in Spanish America of Spengler’s opus magnum, The Decline of the West, was the Argentine sociologist Ernesto Quesada (1858–1934), who had attended secondary school in Dresden because his father was a diplomat. At the age of 61 he married a German journalist in Buenos Aires, Leonore Deiters, who first familiarized him with Spengler. From around 1920 there developed a constant exchange of letters between the Quesadas and Spengler, followed by several visits to Spengler’s home in Munich during the 1920s. Spengler, who portrayed himself as marginalized by Weimar Germany’s intellectual establishment and hence had few academic contacts, wanted Quesada to provide him with information about pre-Columbian cultures for his theory of the cyclical rise and decline of cultures. As Deiters’ letters suggest, her husband in turn enjoyed having befriended a famous European author, giving talks in Argentine universities about Spengler’s relevance for contemporary Latin American culture.

This relevance had to do once more with the growth of authenticist forms of nationalism in Latin America that, often in opposition to Europe and North America, stressed rootedness and race as decisive identity markers, replacing the liberal civic notions of nationhood that had predominated in the region in the second half of the nineteenth century. Connected to this was Spengler’s

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78 Francisco Assis de Barbosa, Raízes de Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (Rio de Janeiro 1989), 130–7 (citation from 133).


presaging of the future growth of non-European cultures, which in contrast to the West were still far from reaching the final cultural stage of decline. Deiters wrote to Spengler that he had made her realize ‘that the soil has ... the power to create races. However, all real American races, religions and cultures (those grown out of this soil, not those introduced!) are totally opposed to the current European Americanism.’ In her eyes, it followed that the ‘races’ closer to the ‘soil’ would eventually rise and overwhelm the superficially imposed European civilization of the Americas, just as the ‘Germanic races’ had done with the Roman empire.81 This possible reading of Spengler made countries with large indigenous populations especially receptive to his writings. In 1926, the Bolivian president attended a talk by Quesada on Spengler, and the aprista Esteban Pavlevitch noted that around the same time at Lima’s University of San Marcos The Decline of the West had become ‘the political tract of the day’.82 But in Argentina, too, Spengler’s work was also widely received, albeit less universally welcomed, as the philosopher Francisco Romero made clear in 1929, when he lamented that his country ‘had suffered a large-scale Spenglerization’.83

The spread of Spengler’s ideas was neither led nor endorsed by official German efforts. After returning from his trip to South America in 1926, the former chancellor Luther found the success of Spengler’s Decline of the West there ‘strange’, wondering ‘whether from a political point of view the dissemination of other books might not have been more desirable’. Even though, as Luther did not fail to note, Quesada’s influence in this dissemination was decisive,84 the intellectual needs of the recipients played a crucial role, too. The marked difference between what was made of Spengler’s book in Chile and in Peru is a case in point. In Chile, authoritarian and anti-democratic historians took up Spengler’s thought to explain what they interpreted as their country’s perpetual decline ever since the assassination of the conservative strongman Diego Portales in 1837. In particular, the historian Alberto Edwards, through his book La fronda aristocrática (1927), in which he depicted Chileans as a proud and noble (white) people who loved order and discipline, drew on Spenglerian notions, including Caesarism, which he recommended as the best form of government for Chile. Edwards’ book became the standard reference point of a conservative nationalist current of thought, tellingly called decadentismo.85

But, as Leopoldo Zea remarked, The Decline of the West could also serve as a ‘justification for new anxieties about cultural emancipation: while the book

81 Ibid., 28. See also Lila Bujaldón de Esteves, ‘Ernesto Quesada y Alemania: un modelo de filia cultural’, Ibero-Amerikanisches Archiv 16(2) (1990), 261–72.
82 Iberica 5(1–2) (April–June 1926), 100 on the talk in Bolivia. Pavlevitch is cited by Chavarría, Mariátegui, op. cit., 79.
84 Memorandum, Luther to AA, January 1927, PAAA R79976.
could be considered as negative and pessimistic with regard to the culture of the west, this was not the case for Spanish America in an era when...it sought justification for its nascent nationalism'. Such was the case in Peru, where indigenistas like Mariátegui seized on Spengler's predictions about the rise of non-European cultures, even though his writings had precious little to say about the Incas, in contrast to the indigenous peoples of Mexico. Compared with Chilean decadentismo, the Peruvian indigenistas were thus less interested in the notion of decline, but, like Leonore Deiters, in the possibilities of an indigenous revival. It mattered little that Spengler himself, as shown in his reply to Deiters' letter, was less convinced of the prospect of a youthful indigenous resurgence, since, as he put it, 'the race is old'. When, in his 1933 book The Hour of Decision, Spengler predicted more clearly the replacement of white 'Western civilization' in a 'coloured world revolution', including in Latin America, the terms in which he described it were decidedly gloomy, a far cry from the positive hopes of Peru's indigenistas. The most attractive part of Spengler's thought for indigenista intellectuals like Mariátegui and Haya de la Torre was the general departure of the positivist Eurocentric notion of linear progress that for so long had precluded recognition of indigenous cultures. Haya therefore quoted Spengler's complaint about the negligence of 'the great American cultures' in a treatise that sought to break up linear conceptions of time. Likewise, Mariátegui translated Spengler's critique of positivist determinism as a possibility to enact a socialist revolution without strict adherence to Marxist stages, based on the irrational forces of myth and religion, which he saw embodied in Peru's indigenous peoples.

If intellectual appropriations, as in this case, did not express coinciding political views, it is even harder to see why they should have been translatable into a general pro-German geopolitical stance, as much of the correspondence in and out of the AA implicitly suggested. Of course, there were Latin American intellectuals who, for varying reasons, felt a particular sympathy towards all things German. Quesada, for example, wrote to Spengler in 1921 that he saw it as 'the crowning of my love of your fatherland' to make The Decline of the West known to the Argentine public. But especially the younger generation of Latin American intellectuals interested in breaking loose from cultural dependency on Europe picked up on what appeared useful to them, instead of getting locked into the Old World's nationalist disputes.

86 Zea, 'Alemania', op. cit., 72.
87 Spengler, admitting his ignorance, repeatedly asked the Quesadas to provide him with information on Peru and, in particular, the Easter Islands (e.g. Spengler, Deiters and Quesada, op. cit., 37).
88 Ibid., 31.
89 Oswald Spengler, Jahre der Entscheidung (Munich 1961 [1933]), 191-203.
90 Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, 'Espacio-Tiempo Histórico', in Robert J. Alexander (ed. and trans.), Aprismo: The Ideas and Doctrines of Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre (Kent, OH, 1973), 38.
91 Generally, see Horst Nitschack, 'Mythos, Rasse und Revolution: die Rezeption Nietzsches und Spenglers bei Mariátegui', in José Morales Saravia (ed.), José Carlos Mariátegui (Frankfurt am Main 1997), 79-94.
92 Spengler, Deiters and Quesada, op. cit., 4.
Although Mariátegui criticized the treaty of Versailles as ‘a treaty of war’, it was neither Spengler’s nor Weimar Germany’s foreign cultural policy but his own judgment that led him to do so. In fact, his main argument was that the treaty harmed the proletariat, and he insisted, as the Argentine press did on the above-cited occasion, that he was neither Franco- nor Germanophile.93 Besides Spengler, George Sorel’s notion of the myth or Henri Barbusse’s idea of spiritual rebirth were equally powerful ‘influences’ in his thought.94 When assessing the prospects of Germany’s foreign cultural policy in Latin America, it must therefore be borne in mind, that the interest that an increasing number of Latin American intellectuals between the wars had in German culture could not as easily be translated into an anti-French stance as the more revisionist among Germany’s foreign policy-makers hoped.

Regardless of the initial goals of Germany’s foreign cultural policy towards Latin America in 1918, the implementation of this policy was constrained by a number of factors beyond the reach of the AA. With regard to Latin America, the lack of a tradition of cultural relations between the two made it more difficult for a centralized agenda to succeed, because so many different state and non-state agents began to till a previously uncultivated field. The decentralization of cultural policies in Germany in general further added to the interplay of multiple interests, as did the fact that the declared receivers of such policies brought in their own agendas. Regarding the debate over continuity and breaks in Germany’s imperialist aspirations, it is important, as Peter Krüger once noted, to bear in mind the limitations on the creative capacities of German foreign policy.95 Over time such limitations not only acted as a brake on the realization of ambitions of diplomats, which had often been revanchist or militaristic, but also modified these original goals. Despite their residual anti-French bias, from the early to mid-1920s German diplomats in Latin America refrained from backing propaganda that was too nationalistic, pointing to its counterproductive effects and arguing for a more moderate and realistic agenda.

The AA’s lack of centralized power now cut the other way. Vilified as ‘politicians of fulfilment’ (Erfüllungspolitiker) by nationalists at home and outflanked by ‘travelling patriots’ abroad, foreign policy-makers found it difficult to rein in the usually right-wing activists in the field of foreign policy (cultural or not) who tried to take matters into their own hands. In 1930, the combination of a return of German foreign policy towards militarism with the results of the Depression left the Kulturabteilung weakened, lacking even the modest funds it had disposed of previously. The two main institutions devoted to cultural exchange between Germany and Latin America that were founded in that

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93 José Carlos Mariátegui, Historia de la crisis mundial (Lima 1959), 106–18.
94 Harry E. Vanden, National Marxism in Latin America: José Carlos Mariátegui’s Thought and Politics (Boulder, CO, 1986), 8, 19.
year, the IAI and the Bolivar-Humboldt Foundation (essentially a branch of the IAI that focused on the Bolivarian countries), therefore suffered from serious financial shortages in the first years of their existence and subsequently underwent a rather smooth nazification. But this was not the culmination of a revanchist foreign cultural policy in the Weimar Republic, devised by the old empire's aristocratic career diplomats.

Against the stubborn persistence of the idea that the naziis enjoyed immediate sympathy among Latin America's German communities, it has been pointed out that nazi propaganda in the region usually 'alienated potential converts [to the nazi cause], and provoked a destructive backlash against the communities they were supposedly fortifying.' The nazi laws of mid-1933 aimed at promoting 'racial hygiene', for example, caused serious concern rather than enthusiasm among Brazil's German community. A decade later, in its exaggerated worries over nazi influence in Argentina, the US state department seems to have mirrored earlier German misunderstandings about the malleability of the region's climate of ideas, if only one were to devise effective propaganda policies. As the examples of Latin American intellectuals who visited Weimar Germany show, they were rather unsuitable as overseas proxies of Franco-German rivalries, not because they had been imbued by French propaganda for too long, as German nationalists suspected, but simply because they followed their own agenda. Atlantic crossings could modify ideas, so that, borrowing the words of the Peruvian historian Alberto Flores Galindo, Spengler's Decline of the West, a 'reactionary text in Europe, had unforeseeably revolutionary effects in Latin America, strengthening and supporting those who critiqued Europe to claim the own roots of our culture.'

It is not for those reasons altogether wrong to speak of the 'Germanizing of Latin American thought'. There was indeed a growing interest in German models of thought in Latin America, and this had to do with an increasing anxiety to assert the authentic roots of the region's identity. In interwar Latin America, nineteenth-century liberal understandings of nations based on universal civic principles made way for essentialist claims of ethnic lineages, whether in the form of Catholic Hispanism or indigenismo. The APRA movement, founded by the Peruvian Haya de la Torre in Mexico City in 1924, embodied these changes quite well by laying claim to be representing the heritage of 'Indo-America' against the common enemy of US imperialism.
even though Faupel and German diplomats were certainly mistaken when they compared APRA to the nazis, the analogy was not altogether gratuitous. With its defensive ethnic nationalism, Germany did seem to offer an alternative to western universal modernity and, in Richard Morse’s words, as the world’s ‘first “underdeveloped” country’ might indeed have provided a possibility of identification for Latin Americans intent ‘to break loose from intellectual mimicry and to explore what cultural assertion at the periphery might now involve’.\(^\text{101}\) Even the supposedly Francophile Ricardo Rojas, in his elaboration of argentinidad, sounded like a disciple of Herder’s understanding of the Volk, despite the fact that he might never have read Herder.\(^\text{102}\) Latin American thought, then, was ‘Germanized’, if by that we understand a growing appropriation of German ideas for Latin America’s own purposes and not simply a unidirectional transposition of a certain set of ideas officially approved for export by the German state.

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\(^{101}\) Morse, ‘Multiverse’, op. cit., 2 and 92.