

The vanguard of black opinion among intellectuals and political activists alike, is oriented more toward the achievement of group identity and group autonomy than toward the use of public schools as assimilationist agencies.

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It is the very essence of this quotation which prompts one to look at Brazil where the cultural integration of its racial and ethnic groups through the interlocking of school and society has been the dominant policy of that nation in recent times. This paper looks specifically at three related historical incidents from the vantage point of conflicting cultural and national loyalties: the Germans of Southern Brazil as a minority group both before and after the advent of National Socialism to Brazil, the German private schools and the anomalous situation resulting from competing dual school systems in the interest of national unity, and the Brazilian government's policy of using the public schools to encourage the growth of national feelings among its foreign population.

Sociologists have long called attention to the fact that the problems confronting the immigrant from Europe, or even the rural migrant to the city, are not fundamentally different from those of the Negro, the Jew, the Indian, or the Mexican. Hence, by looking at the historical development of the Germans as a subgroup in the heart of Brazil and to reflect upon the manner in which their "separatism" affected the eventual building of the Brazilian nation, it is hoped that attention will be drawn to the phenomenon of what happens when a minority group collides with a polyglot culture.

While racial problems are too complex to admit of easy, simple, and universal solutions, we owe it to ourselves to try to understand race relations rather than to espouse causes or to propose solutions. Through understanding, the treatment of ethnic minority problems approached historically can assist in resolutions of contemporary situations, particularly those problems of alienated and unassimilated groups in countries today which the modern world has somehow uprooted. Although it is true that history is being made at a rapid pace in the area of race relations, racial and ethnic minorities throughout the world are everpressing their demands for equality. One only has to look today to Belgium, Northern Ireland, or to Israel to see the consequences of competing nationalistic emotions within a society.

According to the prognosis of historian Arnold Toynbee, tribalism during the 1970s will be a more pervasive danger to the political stability of countries experiencing racial and ethnic tensions than nationalism. In the wake of economic disasters, India might break apart, splintered by its divergent peoples. Indeed, so powerful is the attraction of regional autonomy that even the advanced countries may be shaken. Britain may have to grant quasi-independence to the Welsh and the Scots, and Canada could still founder on antagonisms between its French- and English-speaking halves. Better yet, one can look to this country, once referred to as a "nation of immigrants" and the "land of the free," where various minority groups have not blended into "the American economic and cultural mainstream." For much of the next decade, as the blacks are joined by other ethnic groups--Chicanos, Indians,

Chinese Americans--in seeking equality and identity, the United States is just likely to be an increasingly fractious, and perhaps an increasingly violent and polarized society.

Assimilation is not a painless process. Members of minority groups are seldom prepared to discard their culture in toto. They are strongly attached to it. It is not easy to absorb new traditions, ideals, values, beliefs, attitudes, and loyalties. Assimilation, therefore, does not appear to them as the solution of their problems of adjustment. They may agree that assimilation is desirable, up to a point; but beyond that point they will resist it.

On the other hand, one may well insist that the happiest response for members of minorities to make is that of merging themselves with the dominant group. According to the assimilationist viewpoint, racial and cultural differences are undesirable, that homogeneity is preferable to heterogeneity, that conflict is inevitable as long as unlike peoples try to live together. The only solution for the problem of racial and ethnic groups, therefore, lies in the mixing, blending, and combining of the diverse elements. Both our own program of "Americanization" and Brazil's philosophy of "Brazilianization" are reflections of this attitude. Yet, while in many respects the components that went into the making of the racial situation in Brazil were similar to those present in the United States, the resulting patterns have been quite different.

Brazil, like the United States, has been the meeting place of white, red, and black peoples. However, the adjustments of these groups to one another have not been the same. In the United

States, a country which still prides itself on "total assimilation" and "cultural pluralism," color prejudice has been very strong, discrimination and segregation have prevailed, and a system of color-caste has emerged which has all but made the Negro or Mexican-American an immigrant in his own country. In Brazil, on the other hand, the assimilationist viewpoint dealing with the amalgamation of its diverse ethnic units has largely succeeded as the blacks continue to be absorbed by the mixed-bloods, who, in turn, continue to be absorbed by the predominantly European population.

Brazil's history of race relations, however, has not always been harmonious. The racial problem, as Brazilians see it, is not so much one of "preserving racial purity" as that of overcoming the resistance which a group occasionally offers to absorption. Prior to World War II, before the Brazilian government embarked on the nationalization of its European population, it was not unusual to find residual groups offering organized resistance to assimilation. In fact it was due to the presence of German, Italian, and Polish immigrants in various stages of assimilation during the Vargas years that made Southern Brazil a region of critical international concern as to cause a source of political danger to the stability of the nation.

Of all these main immigrant currents the German element constituted a greater source of danger as a partially unassimilated nationality group. This incomplete assimilation of the Germans into the New World cultural pattern was characterized by the exclusive or partial use of the German language in everyday speech, and by a state of cultural, political, and sentimental affinity for the Fatherland, which not infrequently conflicted with and

displaced similar sentiments for the country of residence.

German immigration contributed greatly to the development of Southern Brazil to an extent which can hardly be overestimated. Although their immigration represented less than five percent of total immigration, they and their descendants (totalling more than a million persons as of 1942) assumed a place in national life well out of proportion to their numbers. Beginning in 1824, they installed themselves in the then unpopulated regions of the southern states and immediately began to form a distinct cultural pattern which even to this day still gives a unique flavor to the predominantly "German" towns of Blumenau and São Leopoldo in the States of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul.

Under Brazil's system of controlled European immigration, the Germans were not only brought in more rapidly than they could be absorbed but were settled in large compact ethnic colonies in the remote and uninhabitable interior areas of Southern Brazil where contact with Brazilians and other nationality groups occurred only at a symbiotic and secondary level. This concentration of Germans into "colonies" only accentuated the tendency to build up communities separate in many respects from those inhabited by the native Luso population.

Due to the Brazilian government's official neglect to meet even the most modest demands of the colonists, the Germans remained aloof from native intellectual life and in time built their own little "nations within a nation" that had no community of interest with the central government in faraway Rio de Janeiro. Cut off from the Fatherland, the Germans established schools in order to

preserve the best of their racial and folkish characteristics. With evident pecuniary assistance from Germany, these private language schools under German instructors were to become the most important cultural landmark in preserving Deutschtum. In fact, by the turn of the century these schools had become so well entrenched in the southern states that the Brazilian government, beset with its own chronic budgetary problems, was known to actually encourage the German schools to continue their activities in the absence of a real national school system.

Although the Germans considered themselves and their excellent schools as superior to their hosts in Kultur, relations between the Germans and the Brazilians were cordial as long as there was no aggressive German nationalism and its reaction, Brazilian stimulation of nationhood. However, it soon became apparent that ethnic colonization had only favored the further development of foreign nationalism within the country's national borders. With Brazil's declaration of war against Germany in 1917, the non-assimilation of the Germans into Brazilian life began to constitute a grave problem. As a consequence of the Great War, all the German schools were temporarily closed and the Brazilian government, faced for the first time with the inevitable task of trying to amalgamate its foreign "islands of culture," slowly began to make modest attempts in establishing some sort of a public school system in the German regions.

In the aftermath of World War I, the events which were unfolding in the Old World, especially the successes of European totalitarianism, tended to re-fuel the resurgence of German

nationalism in Brazil. The postwar years also stirred up political and social strife to dimensions never known before in Brazilian history as various processes of radicalization and reaction gnawed away at the country's political structure. It was in such an atmosphere which nurtured the main tenets of Nazism and other fifth-column movements when Getúlio Vargas came to power with the Revolution of 1930.

After the rise of Hitler in 1933, the Nazis in Brazil lost no time in taking over the direction of close to 2,500 German schools. Since the German colonies were still connected with every branch of German economic, cultural and political life, it is no wonder that the schools became one of the most important mediums through which the Nazi Party Organization was able to indoctrinate the local German-speaking population in the National Socialist Weltanschauung. The German schools were immediately organized into city- and state-wide School Leagues under the National Socialist Teachers' Organization, itself closely tied to the Foreign Organization of the NSDAP in Nazi Germany. From 1933 on, only those teachers trained in Nazi ideology and approved by the NSDAP were allowed to teach in the schools. Teaching materials imported for use in the schools also reflected the changed social thought of the "new" Germany by introducing the teaching that the Third Reich had a mission "to Germanize the world by supplanting loyalty for Brazil with loyalty to Nazi Germany."

It was not until the late 1930s, however, when the inroads of totalitarian infiltration from abroad began to seriously endanger the "Defense of the State" that the Brazilian government suddenly became aware of the danger which their indifference had

helped create over the decades. With the establishment of the Estado Nôvo in 1937, President Vargas was able to use his new far-reaching powers by embarking on the economic and cultural nationalization of its foreign stock.

Vargas' form of cultural nationalization was probably the most militant measure undertaken by any South American country to solve its minority problem. The regulations were intended to deal a blow to the maintenance of a homogeneous culture among foreign entities in the midst of Brazil and to dissolve the ethnical identity of foreign minorities on the well-substantiated assumption that, with the disappearance of the foreign language, social and cultural absorption would only be a matter of time. Thus, the German private school, which had been used by the colonists for over a century as a device for maintaining their foreign ties and loyalties, became one of the main targets for nationalization. The aims of the Vargas educational program were summed up in 1940 by Minister of War (and later President) General Eurico Dutra. Said he: "The principal objective of education is to create a national consciousness"--he went on to emphasize that the schools had the duty to encourage "a mentality capable of disposing public opinion favorably toward nationalism."

Although Vargas' instrument for carrying patriotic indoctrination into the education process was created through a series of "emotional" decrees aimed at combatting foreign political influences in all the foreign schools, the measures adopted were aimed primarily at the private schools of the fascist "Holy Alliance." Thus, the question of teaching courses in foreign

languages and of permitting foreign governments to subsidize private schools became closely linked to the question of Nazi and Fascist propaganda. Of the three Axis communities, the nationalization of the German schools caused the strongest feeling of contempt on the part of the colonists. Within a few months, they had seen the cultural work of some 115 years paralyzed while the life and death of their nationality was being decided under Vargas' de-nationalization drive. When the Brazilianization of the German schools began to meet with open resistance in the solid German districts, the government reacted by instituting a severe, even brutal, punitive campaign of forced assimilation. As a result, the Germans in turn responded by setting up underground clandestine schools.

The government, realizing that continued police action and harsh persecution would only drive the secret schools further undercover, began to demonstrate the error of its nationalization campaign by rejecting punitive action for a policy of bringing about a closer relationship between the schools and family, government, and world conditions. They set out to modify and centralize the Brazilian educational system by developing the greatest number of free public schools in the foreign language zones. Close to 900 public schools were opened in the early 1940s to replace some 800 private schools with the aim of teaching the Portuguese language and the history of Brazil to those children of foreign extraction.

The first results of this form of "social competition" were impressive. Whenever a clandestine school was discovered and an order written to close it, that same order also directed the construction of a public school to take its place at or near the same site as possible. Finally, with the establishment of the

National Fund for Elementary Education in 1942 and the passage of the Primary Education Organic Law of 1945, the construction and operation of official Brazilian schools was pushed forward as rapidly as possible. Although the fundamental social causes of clandestine instruction had not been permanently removed as the Vargas years came to a close in late 1945, Brazil's attempt to instill a desperately needed national minimum of education for its colonial regions had largely succeeded under trying circumstances.

The year 1945 marked a turning point for Brazil and the educational efforts of Vargas on behalf of nationalization. Vargas was eased out of office, World War II ended, and although the old problem of nationalization of foreign groups still existed in one form or another, this was considerably lessened in degree by the psychological defeat of the Axis powers. For the most part, Brazil's policy for "hemispheric defense" had left the German population in the south subdued and sullen.

Nationalization as a bona fide educational venture had been relatively successful. The legislation of 1937 and on had Brazilianized everything. The German schools remained closed by law, never again to reappear. By 1950 most of these schools had been successfully converted into Portuguese language institutions bearing Luso-Brazilian names. Said the Jornal de Joinville (Santa Catarina) of November 25, 1955:

Thanks to nationalization, times have changed. Already the young German-Brazilian speaks no more, or little, the language of his forebears. Today, the people of Blumenau speak Portuguese correctly, and Blumenau is one of the five most progressive cities in all Brazil.

Looking backwards, it appears that nationalization was bound to occur to a country whose foreign ideologies were in conflict with the "national spirit." The government had realized that the best place to break the malignant cycle of isolation and aggressive localism was in the public schools where the fundamentals of a nation's ethics and ideology are best taught in the language of the masses. However, the "nationalization of education" was only one of many necessary steps taken to effect a more rapid assimilation. One cannot overlook the miracle of Brazil's industrialization between 1930 and 1945 and its contribution toward national realization. The fact that the Vargas era marked a definite shift of emphasis from cultural and political nationalism to economic nationalism is indeed significant. As Brazil began to transform herself into a modern nation and world power, the German regions became unimportant, bypassed rural communities without political or economic importance as the immigrants became more attracted to incipient urban centers. Urban life in general, with its mixture of nationalities and quicker adaptation to Luso ways often made it just that much easier for the public schools to inculcate national goals. With the eventual establishment of "mixed colonies" in the south, the Germans began to slowly develop a kind of New World culture, composed of many elements transferred from Europe and complemented by certain traits and trait-complexes borrowed from Brazilians.

Today, German children refer to themselves as Brazilians, not German-Brazilians. Thanks to the enforced use of Portuguese in all the schools, young people are now taught in a language that is

the accepted medium of communication of the national society. Although many Germans are bilingual, the German tongue has come to symbolize for many their undervalued or even despised rural culture as a minority group, the trend being today that Portuguese is considered urban and therefore "superior." Even the practice of keeping the German tongue alive in the home has met with little success as the federalism of many Germans loses ground with each generation. While there are still many isolated rural communities today all over the south whose integration into national life is far from complete, its people are finding it more difficult to preserve Old World traits as more personal contacts among individuals of different origins permeate the realm of primary relations. Although it is difficult for a people to change national characteristics because of weight of tradition, custom, family, literature, folklore, schools, and other factors, it is equally difficult to retain characteristics unadulterated when new environmental and social conditions are changed radically. However much they might have wished to remain Germans, however much encouragement they might have received from the homeland, the new country to which they went tended to negate the desired result. This factor alone raised important obstacles in Hitler's establishment of an "Antarctic Germany" in Southern Brazil.

While the preceding discussion fails to espouse a program of action for current minority problems it does bring to our attention the nature and implications of the school as it pertains to ethnic group communal life. Perhaps a greater value of such a study is that it clearly points to resolutions of the great debate going on today as to whether alien groups in a society should

continue to identify or link themselves with the heritages of their original countries, or should cease to exist as distinct socio-cultural units by moving toward cultural and racial fusion with the native host society.

It is the very nature of this dilemma which Americans are confronted with today as race relations reach a critical turning point in history. The rather longtime liberal concept that it is best to assimilate minorities mainly through the public schools is now being questioned. In fact, some studies show that school integration can actually polarize groups and strengthen entrenched stereotypes. While most Americans are convinced that integration through the public schools can lead to more harmonious relations among races, might it just be possible that too much has been made of the school's role to achieve the kind of multiracial society which our own adult community has failed to achieve for itself?

While the school may not be the panacea for all racial problems, it is a powerful symbol for progress in the efforts to solve a country's domestic ills. Societies that continue to maintain their tradition of educational apartheid through dual school systems do little to modify attitudes, hardly the way to overcome the effects of racial isolation. However, the school should be a place not only of learning but also of living--where a child's friendships center, where he learns to measure himself against others, to share, to compete, to cooperate. Education if viewed in these terms can go a long way in grappling with the toughest moral and political dilemma now facing most multiracial societies throughout the world today: How to ensure justice and tranquility among its races.