

CHAPTER 8

ON THE MOVE

For our first class, read only pp. 252-72 and 296-309 starting and ending where the sections begin and end.

The German Diaspora

THE WORLD WAS ON THE MOVE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. People and goods traveled around an increasingly interconnected globe on a scale never seen before, or perhaps since, for the movement of people was probably greater as a proportion of population than in our own globalized times. All this was shaped by some of the same forces as now: a global labor market, faster and cheaper means of transportation and communication, and free-trade ideology. Along with tens of millions of South Asian and Chinese migrants, around 60 million Europeans emigrated in the nineteenth century, a true “exit revolution.” Among them were 5.5 million Germans. There was a first, fairly small spike in numbers in 1817, after a series of harvest failures. A gentle upward movement from the 1830s was then followed by a huge wave of emigrants between 1846 and 1857, around 1.3 million people in all. A second wave came in 1864–1873 and an even larger third one in 1880–1893, when 2 million left. In the peak nineteenth-century years the number of emigrants approached a quarter of a million annually.²

Some had religious motives, like the Swabian Pietists who went to Russia, or the Old Lutherans from Prussia who settled in Australia, Canada, and the United States. There were also emigrants from the small German Mennonite communities. On the Catholic side, the charismatic Ambros Oswald led more than a hundred members of his Black Forest congregation to Wisconsin, where they established a religious community.³ There were secular counterparts of these often utopian undertakings. In spring 1834, nearly five hundred Germans traveled in two ships across the Atlantic, members of the Giessen Emigration Society hoping to establish a com-

munity dedicated to democracy and freedom. They were led by two men with links to the radical fraternity movement. Their dreams were not realized, but they played an important role in the abolitionist movement as well as enriching Missouri with their winemaking skills.⁴ One celebrated instance is the radical freethinker Otilie Assing, who worked closely with Frederick Douglass and became his lover.⁵

It is not always easy to draw a clear line between those who left for political and religious reasons, and the much larger number whose motives were mainly economic. Political and religious émigrés faced material challenges, after all, while “economic migrants” took their religious identities and folkways with them. The picture is further complicated by the fact that a small minority of economically motivated migrants were business or professional people, merchants, engineers, and scholars, either squeezed out of a tightening market at home or hoping to parlay their specialist skills into greater success abroad. But most emigrants were driven by more basic material concerns. The syncopated rhythms of mass emigration closely followed the economic cycle. Most of those who left in the first two waves were peasants and craftsmen from overpopulated areas in the southwest and west. In these areas, inheritance customs meant that properties had been repeatedly subdivided until they became “dwarf holdings.” Sons stood to inherit land too meager to farm, the dowry for daughters had shrunk to almost nothing.⁶ Emigration seemed like the only way out. Most left a few years after a major crisis, as families took the opportunity to pay off debt and sell land as the market improved. Later emigrants came increasingly from the east and northeast, where there were fewer small family farms. They were more likely to be agricultural laborers and servants, or factory hands affected by the economic downturn that began in 1873 when a post-unification economic bubble burst.

Where did emigrants go? During the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, many still went to affluent parts of northwestern Europe. This continued a long tradition of seasonal migration that sometimes turned into permanent emigration. The Netherlands remained a common destination. A few emigrants practiced highly prized occupations, like the German pastry chefs in Amsterdam; most still did the dirty jobs they had done in an earlier century. It was the same story in France. The Germans in Paris included professionals and others with special expertise (among them the expert in satire and lyric verse Heinrich Heine), but most came from the rural poor of Hessen and the Palatinate and worked in construction,

factories, street cleaning, and domestic service. Around 1850 there were as many as 100,000 Germans in Paris, making it the sixth-largest "German" city in the world.⁷ The numbers remained high even through the war of 1870-71 and seriously declined only in the 1880s.

The German community in Britain was smaller, just under 60,000 at the end of the nineteenth century, although this still made it the largest (non-Irish) immigrant group in Britain until the arrival of East European Jews around that time. Half lived in London, with smaller groups in Glasgow and northern provincial cities. Some were business people and professionals. In London, they formed little colonies in districts such as Camberwell and Sydenham in the southeast. But most Germans in Britain came from the lower or lower-middle class. They could be found in crafts like tailoring and shoemaking, in the dye industry, and especially as "sugar bakers" and "sugar boilers" in the refining industry. There was also a clustering of Germans in the service sector, not only domestic servants, but butchers, bakers, waiters, and hairdressers.⁸ In 1900 there were also around 2000 German commercial clerks in England. English clerks responded to the influx with hostility. *The Clerks' Journal* referred resentfully in 1888 to the "incredible number of Germans employed in London," who—it claimed—grabbed the best positions in an "over-glutted market." The London *Telegraph* agreed that English clerks were "being pushed off their stools" by the interlopers; a clerk in Liverpool complained about "the obsequious German clerk, Max von Sauerkraut."⁹

There was plenty of turnover in Britain's German community. Some went back, others arrived to take their places. That was especially true of groups such as waiters and commercial clerks, for whom the time spent in England (and in the case of waiters, often in France, too) was a form of overseas apprenticeship that preceded permanent employment in a German hotel or merchant house. Some manual workers also moved back and forth. For Germans in Britain, France, or the Netherlands, the prospect of eventually returning was real. The shorter the distance, the easier it was to contemplate. In other words, this was still a form of seasonal migration for many, even if it lasted for years. Going farther afield, especially leaving Europe altogether, was a different matter. Returning was less likely, although more common than we used to think.¹⁰

Mass emigration overseas was the novel aspect of German nineteenth-century migration. It began before the new steam-based technologies became widespread. Early emigrants made their way to the ports of embar-

kation by covered wagon or in small boats. Once in Bremen or Hamburg, they were as likely in the 1840s or '50s to leave on a sailing ship as a steamship. Even in 1866, when the second great wave of emigration was already underway, two-thirds of the passengers who left Bremen did so aboard sailing ships. These were considered safer; they were also cheaper.¹¹ But things changed dramatically over the next few years. By 1871, less than one emigrant in six left under sail. Most now took advantage of the growing capacity, greater speed, and falling cost of steamships, just as they traveled by train to the north German ports. Shipping companies, emigration agents, and boosters did their bit to advance this business; so did popular pamphlets that sang the praises of distant lands where the milk and honey flowed; and so, more indirectly, did the organizations that aided emigrants, such as the Catholic St. Raphael Association. Another aspect of the "great acceleration" in the nineteenth century was the speed with which letters and financial remissions made their way back to Germany.¹² These encouraged the recipients to follow. The prepaid ticket to friends and relations underpinned chain migration.

Mass emigration can easily seem like an abstract affair. One way to counter that is to zoom in on one place. Australia was described by a German writer in 1851 as "the end of the earth."¹³ Those were the words of Rudolf Reimer, in a little booklet written on behalf of the German Immigration Association of Adelaide. Its aim was to dispel misinformation about land and climate while offering practical advice to prospective immigrants. By the time he wrote, there were already more than 8000 Germans in South Australia, enough to sustain a surprising number of German-language newspapers, such as the *Adelaide Deutsche Zeitung* and the *Süd-Australische Zeitung*. The earliest arrivals were Old Lutherans escaping persecution in Prussia. They sailed from Hamburg. The first group on board the *Zebra* passed Kangaroo Island and docked in Holdfast Bay near Adelaide just after Christmas 1838, their original numbers thinned out by those who died of typhus and were buried at sea. Three more ships followed, landing a party of close to 500 all told. They had been financially supported by the Scottish proprietor of the South Australia Company, a sympathetic Baptist.¹⁴ The Lutherans often named new settlements after their former Silesian villages, like Klemzig in the Torrens Valley outside Adelaide. They were soon joined by economic migrants from the same regions.¹⁵

Firstcomers and aftercomers alike fanned out into the Adelaide Hills and then into the Barossa Valley northeast of the city, where the soil

supported the growing of wheat, barley, fruit, vegetables, and vines. German immigrants opened the first wineries there (as they did elsewhere in Australia). The chain migration that began in the 1840s continued until late in the century. But high birthrates and increasing land prices led German families to move on. Some went to Victoria, others to the Riverina district of New South Wales. These communities fitted the image cultivated by German-Australians that they represented "sturdy German farming stock." It was always misleading, to the extent that it ignored laborers and the poor. The idealized image also excluded the German immigrants who stayed in towns and cities. There were 2500 Germans in Adelaide by the early 1850s.¹⁶ Most were craftsmen or laborers. One of the places they met was the Süd-Australischer Allgemeiner Deutscher Verein, or South Australian General German Club, which had a working-class clientele with a reputation for radicalism.¹⁷ Perhaps these were the "infidel and dissolute Germans that were now scattered through our population" described contemptuously by an English clergyman.¹⁸ There were also German craftsmen who built themselves houses and rented out rooms as a source of income. In other words, the lines between "rough" and "respectable" working classes in Germany, as defined by clergy and bourgeois observers like Reimer, were reproduced in Australia.

The rich Australian mineral deposits also attracted that eminently mobile group, German miners. As many as 1300 German miners went to the newly opened Burra copper mines in South Australia in the decade after 1845, where they worked alongside miners from Cornwall, Wales, South America, and China. Many came from the Harz Mountains in northern Germany, encouraged to emigrate by the Hanoverian state, which advanced their fares against future earnings because this was a way to export social problems when domestic lead mining declined.¹⁹ The gold rushes of the 1850s then attracted large numbers to Victoria. By 1861, 10,000 of the 30,000 Germans who had gone to Australia were in Victoria, 6000 of them in the goldfields of Ballarat and Castlemaine.²⁰ Most, unsuccessful there or in the goldfields of New South Wales, joined the steady stream of Germans who continued to arrive to settle in those states and, after 1860, in Queensland, where Germans played a big part in the development of sugarcane cultivation.²¹

German migrants included the comfortably off. Rudolf Reimer's group was made up of merchants and professionals, figures like the Bremen-born merchant Henry (or Heinrich) Noltenius, whom an English-language

newspaper described as "an Anglo-German in whom all may find / The virtues of both countries well combined."²² This was the other German Adelaide, the men (and they were all men) from the propertied and educated bourgeoisie who gathered at the German Club on Pirie Street or at the Hamburg Hotel, the former Suffolk Inn until it was taken over and renamed by a German proprietor. Merchants and physicians, drapers and pharmacists, journalists and senior clergy of various denominations, these Germans formed singing groups, supported the theater, and engaged in philanthropic work. They could hardly have been more different from the lower-class German immigrants. Yet the lives of the two groups were interlinked. The gentlemen of the German Club employed other Germans (mostly women) as servants in their homes. Their philanthropic ventures, like a proposed German Hospital in Adelaide, were aimed at fellow Germans. They also encouraged German immigration through publications like Reimer's and sometimes furthered it directly, like the miners brought over by Noltenius.

Among the supporters listed at the front of Rudolf Reimer's booklet was the name Otto Schomburgk. He had a very different background. A former medical student who had fallen foul of the Saxon authorities as a radical fraternity member, he owed his release from the Magdeburg citadel in 1837 to the intervention of Alexander von Humboldt. Humboldt knew the family, having recommended two of Otto's brothers, Robert and Richard, as members of an expedition to British Guiana. Otto and Richard Schomburgk were active in the 1848 revolution. The following year, disillusioned and apprehensive, they formed the South Australia Colonization Society with like-minded friends. With the financial assistance of a geologist friend of Humboldt, they chartered a sailing ship. The *Prinzessin Luise* reached Adelaide in early August 1849, after a four-month journey, with a remarkable collection of talent among its 162 passengers. They became known as the '49ers and included both artisans and professionals who placed their imprint on the culture of South Australia during the following decades.²³

Mass emigration therefore turns out to be the sum of many micro-migrations. We find Germans of every kind in Australia, although the numbers were skewed toward the lower and lower-middle classes. Around 70,000 German-speaking emigrants went to Australia in the fifty years after 1840. By 1891, Germans and their descendants made up one in every twenty Australians, with the highest proportions in South Australia and

Queensland.²⁴ That made them the largest immigrant group after the Anglo-Scots and Irish. The same was true in New Zealand, which took in 20,000 German immigrants between 1840 and 1914.²⁵ Germans also emigrated to the English Cape Colony in South Africa and to Canada, where there were 150,000 Germans when the country became independent in 1867.²⁶

To what degree did Germans who went to non-German-speaking countries retain, or wish to retain, the language and culture they brought with them? That is a question about identity, and the first thing to say is that the people we call German-Australian or German-Canadian were in fact neither wholly one thing nor the other. They did not simply transplant German culture to the host country, as strident nationalists at home liked to believe; but nor did they simply assimilate within a "nation of immigrants," as state builders in Australia and Canada preferred to say. Instead, the incomers lived their lives, often independently of nationalist politics, in a variety of ways that lay along a spectrum from separation to integration. Much depended on the particulars of gender, class, and region of origin.

Take the case of the proposed "German Hospital" in Adelaide in the 1850s (never actually built). The committee that proposed it initially referred to a German Hospital, but in later documents it was variously called the German and British Hospital, the Deutsch und Britisch Hospital, the Deutsch British Hospital, the German and English Hospital, and the English and German Hospital.²⁷ There was an obvious desire among these bourgeois German worthies not to appear clannish, and especially not to seem "disloyal," but the confusion of terms also points to the larger reality that men of this class lived transnational lives, which is why it was sometimes hard to tell the Anglo-Germans apart from the German-Anglos—to differentiate between the English merchant who came to Australia after years in Hamburg and the German who came after years in London. Adelaide and Melbourne were homes to both types—temporary homes, anyway, for those were mobile people.

The Lutherans in the Barossa Valley were located at the other end of the social spectrum. They check all the boxes that define communities likely to retain language and culture. They were rural, relatively isolated, and homogeneous; there was a high degree of marriage within the community, and German was used in church, Sunday school, and Lutheran day schools. People celebrated a "*Heimat* abroad" through their dress, music, and cuisine, and they created classic immigrant "frontier stories," like the "great

trek" in wagons along the Murray River from the Barossa Valley to the Albury district in New South Wales. The powerful collective memory they constructed was closely tied to Lutheran identity and the region in Germany from which they came. But even in these communities there were influences that worked against an unchanging, singular identity. The public schools taught in English (with German sometimes used for religious instruction, as a concession), and in any case the German they spoke was subject to lexical transference. New words came in, and syntax changed; a "compromise dialect" emerged. What language was "*if der Vater hat keine Farm*," or "*seinen Foot downputten*"?²⁸ The real paradox is that, even when the language did remain the same, it inevitably diverged from the changing German being spoken in Germany, for it was filled with unconscious archaisms.

Even closed-off Lutheran communities had to navigate between two cultures in matters ranging from the material (jobs, trade) to the emotional (marriage partners). This happened even more in urban settings. Single young men who did not come over as part of a group were much likelier to marry a non-German. (They were also the most likely to be in touch with trade union or Social Democratic friends at home, a reminder that bourgeois Germans were not alone in leading transnational lives.)²⁹ Young urban German immigrants were especially subject to the crosscurrents of popular culture, in sports, reading matter and music, notwithstanding the German brass bands and shooting and gymnastic clubs. Even before 1914 divided time into a "before" and "after," Germans in Australia were living their lives across cultures. They were bicultural as well as bilingual, able to switch. Like the Australian vineyards, which were usually German in origin but grew largely non-German grapes, they were hybrids.

Most German immigrants to non-English-speaking countries were to be found in Latin America. A few thousand went there in the early nineteenth century. At least 150,000 followed them between the 1840s and 1914. More than half went to Brazil, the rest to the Spanish-speaking countries, with Argentina and Chile the two most common destinations.³⁰ The more modest in size the community, the likelier it was to consist of the socially well established, or at least young men of good family looking to make their way in the world. A classic example of the type was Rudolf Ludwig, the eldest son of a Württemberg clergyman, who went out to Bolivia at the age of twenty-one to represent an import-export firm. In letters to his parents and his brothers (one of whom, also footloose, settled

in Shanghai), Ludwig offered an upbeat account of life in Latin America, "the land of my fortune." He described the pleasures of being his own boss, the material opportunities, the good food and wine, the riding, and the Indigenous servant girl that came with wealth, as well as the balls at which "Don Rodolfo" was much sought after. "Here, I am the big shot," as he wrote his mother. We can see the element of self-fashioning in all this, the determination to prove that he had made it. Even when the letters adopt a querulous tone, Ludwig makes it quite clear what kind of life he has chosen. He complains that a zither has not yet arrived, and asks that his family send him German illustrated magazines, not religious tracts. He also complains about the rain, mosquitoes, and occasional bouts of homesickness. Ludwig nonetheless expected not to return to Germany, but to stay in South America, or perhaps seek a position in China, Japan, or Australia.³¹

There were many German merchants in Latin America. Mexico City is a good example of a German community built around a mercantile core. Just fifty strong in 1820, the German colony had grown to more than twelve hundred people by 1914. The once predominantly male population included many more women and children. Sojourners had become permanent residents, the loose German diaspora an ethnic enclave. The last twenty years before World War One saw the founding of a German newspaper, sports clubs devoted to rowing, riding, swimming, and gymnastics, masonic lodges, a women's organization, and a German school. In this self-sufficient world, intermarriage was rare and German continued to be spoken in the home, except for the minimal Spanish needed to instruct servants.³² There were German communities like this across Latin America. They had merchants or financiers at their center, and included engineers, scientists, academics, diplomats, and the occasional army officer. Where there were also German miners or settlers in the country, there would be virtually no contact between them and the well-heeled urban Germans. They lived in separate worlds.

The two largest German communities were in Brazil and Argentina, although in both cases it is probably misleading to use the term "community" for such diverse groups. Take the booming nineteenth-century city of Buenos Aires. It had a German merchant colony, which by midcentury had established its own social organizations and a Protestant church. But the bankers and merchants were soon surrounded by a broader swathe of professionals and scholars, printers, restaurateurs, and the entrepreneurs who

established breweries just outside the city. All helped to sustain German sports clubs, theater, and newspapers (the conservative *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* and the liberal *Argentinisches Tageblatt*). The immigrants' children attended the many German schools in the city, which were supported by parental contributions and generous subsidies from the German Foreign Office, tens of thousands of marks a year by 1914. The teachers themselves, typically volunteers who filled short-term positions abroad before returning to Germany, were another link with the homeland. This conscious cultivation of German language and culture did not preclude intermarriage with social equals among the local population. Buenos Aires was home to Belgrano-Deutsch, a hybrid mixture of German and Spanish that took its name from a wealthy suburb of the capital.³³ It was in Belgrano that the later Nazi "blood and soil" food minister Walther Darré (full name Ricardo Walther Oscar Darré) was born in 1895, the son of a German merchant of Huguenot origins and a mother who was of mixed Swedish, German, and Spanish ethnicity.

Less salubrious parts of the city had many more Germans. The port of Buenos Aires became a great entrepôt for shipping out wheat and beef from the pampas. Thousands of German sailors passed through the city. Some of them stayed. A rough measure of their numbers is suggested by the twelve hundred merchant seamen from Hamburg alone who jumped ship in Buenos Aires between 1890 and 1910—a good place to do so, because Argentina had refused to sign an extradition treaty with Germany. As for the German sailors who did return to their ships, the moral perils they supposedly faced led the Protestant "inner mission" to establish a German sailors' home in the waterfront district of La Boca.³⁴ The cheap board, showers, mail service, and picnics (beer included) were popular. Whether they were entirely successful in preventing sailors from visiting brothels or in "hindering the growth of a useless seafaring proletariat" is less certain.³⁵ What is certain is that large-scale German immigration in the decades before 1914 created a proletariat on dry land. In Buenos Aires, as in Adelaide, German craftsmen and laborers arrived with socialist ideas in their baggage. In 1882 they founded a socialist organization with a newspaper, *Vorwärts*, and applied German-style class analysis to the stockyards and factories of the booming capital. Buenos Aires was part of an exploitative global market, they argued, advising German workers to learn Spanish and join the Argentinian labor movement.³⁶ The contrast with the way that bourgeois Germans saw the world could hardly have been greater.

Ethnic Germans from Russia also moved to Argentina. They were a distinctive group, rather like the Lutherans of South Australia. Some were Mennonites. These German immigrants to Argentina in the 1880s were descendants of those who emigrated from southwest Germany a century earlier in search of land, encouraged by Catherine the Great. Having left the Rhine for the Volga, they now left the Volga for the Río Plata. Having abandoned Russia because their separate schools and exemption from military conscription were under attack, they were welcomed in Argentina and offered special concessions as settlers in areas recently "pacified" by a murderous military campaign against the Indigenous population, the Argentinian version of the U.S. Indian Wars, known as the *conquista del desierto*. The "clearing" of the pampas put into practice what Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Argentina's Germanophile president, called the triumph of civilization over barbarism. It opened up vast new territories for stock raising and grain cultivation. The Volga Germans who built colonies in the former frontier provinces of La Pampa and Río Negro were as much a part of that process as the German merchants and workers in Buenos Aires.³⁷

The Germans in Brazil also helped to open up the South American hinterland. Germans had been active in the business of sugar cultivation since the sixteenth century. In *Nine Generations*, his history of a Hamburg merchant dynasty based on family papers, Percy Ernst Schramm describes the three decades one of his forebears spent in Brazil during the mid-nineteenth century. Ernst Schramm went there with his wife and child to run a sugar export business founded by his brother in a town on the Sergipe River. Steamship service had been established just a few years earlier when, in 1858, he wrote home about the "huge resources" of Brazil and the wonderful things that might be achieved by the "cultivated European hand of man." Alas, he added, everything was still neglected and undeveloped, for it was the "curse" of the lands most favored by nature that their human inhabitants were the most "careless and indolent." It was a typical European view. So was the attitude to slavery recorded by his wife, Adolphine, in a letter: "We are reasonably happy with our slaves; they all steal and lie, naturally. But we never beat them; the greatest punishment is when we threaten to sell them, for they love us and the good life enough to make them shrink from any change." She hastened to assure her friend in Germany that the Schramms would dearly have liked to free their slaves, but—so she argued—slavery was a "necessary evil" and emancipation "a more complicated question" than sentimentalists believed.³⁸

That was how things looked in sugar country. But everywhere in Brazil we find clusters of German merchants, professionals, and scholars in the towns and cities, as in other South American countries. And, of course, wherever there were mines there were German mining engineers. But most Germans in Brazil lived rural lives. They settled in the three southern states of Rio Grande do Sul, Paraná, and Santa Catarina, which absorbed a majority of the roughly 100,000 German immigrants between the 1820s and World War One. Their birthrates were exceptionally high. Families with ten children were common, so the numbers of second- and third-generation German-Brazilians rose quickly. Rio Grande do Sul alone had 150,000 inhabitants of German descent by 1914. German immigrants established three hundred settlements in all, many formed by clearing the interior rain forest of the south and establishing stock-raising or growing cash crops—wheat, maize, tobacco, and cassava. Rural businesses like mills, tanneries, and stores developed to service these *colonias*, as well as heavily German towns like Pôrto Alegre. There was much pioneer myth-making about the arduous labor and sacrifice involved in conquering "wild nature," a story line amplified by German travelers to Brazil and writers back home who praised the order that had been created by "German" hard work. Commentators passed over the slash-and-burn agriculture, just as their gaze passed over the Indigenous peoples who stood in the way of commercial development.³⁹

The late-nineteenth-century Brazilian government policy of encouraging European immigration had a racial as well as economic motive. It was intended to be part of the process of *embranquecimento*, or "whitening" the population.⁴⁰ The Germans were, in that sense, a racial tool, like the more numerous Italians, Spanish, and Portuguese. But Germans kept to themselves more than other European immigrant groups, a self-segregation that went hand in hand with their relatively isolated rural settlements. They established their own German-language schools in which Portuguese was not taught, the only Brazilian schools of which that was true. This led to complaints about German arrogance and unwillingness to assimilate. The schools were Protestant, something else that set Germans apart.

Some German Protestants belonged to nonmainstream sects. This was the milieu that spawned a violently messianic movement in the rural district of Rio Grande do Sul in the early 1870s. Jakobine Mentz was the daughter of Anabaptists who had fled Germany as religious émigrés in 1824. She married the settler Georg Maurer, who had a reputation for

performing miraculous cures, and in 1872 Jakobine Maurer began to call herself a "female Christ" who communed directly with Jesus and the Almighty. She quickly acquired a cult following, like many European female prophets of the nineteenth century, proclaiming that the end-times were near and only those who followed her would be saved. The movement took on increasingly darker tones as Jakobine encouraged violence against opponents and apostates, culminating in the night of June 25, 1874, when scores of German colonists were killed by her loyal disciples in shootings and arson attacks on more than a dozen homesteads. The first detachment of soldiers sent to put down what was now considered an uprising were ambushed and forced to withdraw, with thirty-five officers and men killed or seriously injured. A second contingent, this one five hundred strong, then moved against the well-provisioned tabernacle-cum-fortress that cult members had built. A bloody shoot-out ensued, first at the fortress, then in the surrounding forest. The death toll among sectarians and soldiers almost certainly ran to more than one hundred. The violence perpetrated by cult members was then repaid postmortem by outraged colonists who dismembered their dead bodies. The event completely upended the usual settler narrative. Karl von Koseritz, the liberal Protestant editor of *Die Deutsche Zeitung* in nearby Pôrto Alegre, wrote an account of events for readers of a German weekly magazine. It was filled with a sense of outrage that this kind of "fanaticism"—and from Protestants, no less!—should have erupted in the age of progress and overshadowed what hardworking German colonists had achieved.⁴¹

The experiences of Germans in Australia, Brazil, and Argentina were remarkably diverse. They showcase a wide range of German and hybrid identities. Yet these communities were relatively small. The place where we find every possible variation of the German diasporic experience was the place to which, by a wide margin, they went in the largest numbers: the United States. The great majority of Germans who migrated overseas in the nineteenth century went to America, around 5 million out of 5.5 million. That is to say, nine out of ten Germans went to the United States, a higher proportion than we find among other European emigrants.⁴² They went in waves, with peaks resembling those to other destinations in the 1850s and '60s, and especially the 1880s. Two million German men, women, and children arrived in the United States between 1878 and 1893.⁴³ The peak period of German mass migration coincided with the movement of other north Europeans across the Atlantic (Anglo-

Scots, Irish, Scandinavians), and it overlapped at the end with the growing numbers reaching America from Italy and eastern Europe.



An undated photograph of German emigrants taking a meal in Hamburg before boarding their ship to cross the Atlantic.

Where did they go? Almost everywhere. The original eighteenth-century German settlements were on the eastern seaboard. The newcomers moved into the Ohio River Valley and the midwest. After the Civil War those seeking land fanned out into Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota, then farther west. For a long time, accounts of the "German element" in the United States emphasized sturdy farmers on the western frontier.⁴⁴ And is true that the arrival of early German immigrants during a period of westward expansion and white settlement meant that many peasant families exchanged the land hunger of Baden or Württemberg for a farm in Indiana or Wisconsin. A generation after the Homestead Act of 1862, about one-third of the German-born population in America was engaged in agriculture.

But the typical German experience in the United States was urban, and increasingly so as the century went on. German-born immigrants and their

children helped to fill growing American cities from the Atlantic coast, through upstate New York and the industrial towns of Pennsylvania and Ohio, to the "German triangle" in the midwest between Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Milwaukee.⁴⁵ One measure of the spread of Germans into urban areas was the decision of major U.S. cities to introduce German-language instruction into public schools. Eight did so between 1864 and 1874.⁴⁶ Milwaukee was the most German city of all. More than half of its inhabitants in 1910 were first- or second-generation Germans and it was said that "a visit to Milwaukee is almost like a visit to one of the cities of the Rhine."⁴⁷ But just to the south, along the shore of Lake Michigan, the numerical presence of Germans in Chicago was even greater. They made up between a quarter and a third of the masses who fueled the astonishing growth of the city, from 300,000 in 1870 to 1 million twenty years later. Chicago in 1900 was one of the leading "German" cities in the world, as Paris had been fifty years earlier.

Germans created distinctive urban neighborhoods: Klein Deutschland in New York City, the Swillburg in Rochester, New York, Over-the-Rhine in Cincinnati, Deutschtown in Pittsburgh, Little Saxony in New Orleans. In Tennessee, both Memphis and Nashville boasted a Germantown. The larger cities had German newspapers and periodicals, theaters, choral societies, gymnastic and shooting clubs, associations of every kind, and of course beer gardens. The sheer density of these institutions was astounding. In the early twentieth century there were more German-language periodicals published in the United States than all other non-English periodicals combined.⁴⁸ So pervasive was German-American theater that we have studies of it in twenty cities and states.⁴⁹ Eating and drinking, singing and playgoing—the outgoing conviviality of German-American life was often remarked on by others. It appeared "more public and more sensuous" than the surrounding culture.⁵⁰ These thousands of institutions helped to create a German-American world. They marked out the "invention of ethnicity" by German migrants.⁵¹

That does not mean the German neighborhoods were homogeneous. In the cities, unlike many rural settlements, the Germans came from different areas back home. They were also divided in their religious observances. Among the beer gardens, stores, and clubs in German neighborhoods were churches serving both Protestants and Catholics. German urban communities were also socially diverse. The people emphasized by the heritage industry, alongside the highly visible '48ers, are the captains of industry,

the famous success stories. They have been the subject of a major study on German "immigrant entrepreneurs."⁵² It has 128 entries on individuals, many of them household names: Pfizer (pharmaceuticals), Singer (sewing machines), Levi Strauss (jeans), Steinway (pianos), Wurlitzer (musical instruments), Berlitz (language schools), Kroger (grocery stores), Filenes (department stores), the Goldman of Goldman Sachs (finance), the Ridder of Knight Ridder (newspapers), both halves of Anheuser-Busch, as well as Pabst and Yuengling (beer). It might well have included the founder of the H. J. Heinz Company, born shortly after his parents left the Palatinate for Pittsburgh in the 1840s. There were others, too, who were not household names but helped to define American life. Claus Spreckels, the "Sugar King of the West," introduced both granulated sugar and the sugar cube to the United States and became one of the ten richest men in the country while doing so.⁵³ Some of the successful entrepreneurs were German-Jewish immigrants, who (like the much larger number of their fellow Jews who did not become rich) remained invisible in many earlier accounts of Germans in America.⁵⁴ Stepping back, though, the single most striking aspect of this entrepreneurial roll call is how many businesses were in the service sector—food, drink, retail, apparel, leisure. This points to a broader characteristic of German-Americans, which is the size of the lower-middle class of small businesses and service workers.

But the largest single group of Germans in the United States consisted of workers. That became increasingly true because later German immigrants were no longer small farmers but factory hands and laborers. Germans were very active in supporting and sometimes founding trade unions, socialist parties, and left-wing newspapers. This politically conscious proletarian milieu, female as well as male, helped to support the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in Germany during the period of political persecution, between 1878 and 1890. German socialism in America even reproduced some of the same divisions that existed within the German SPD between radical and pragmatic or reformist elements. A classic embodiment of the latter was the Milwaukee socialist leader Victor Berger, who became an "evolutionary moderate."⁵⁵ The same divisions ran through the trade union movement. In Milwaukee, German-Americans led both the radical Central Labor Union and the more moderate Knights of Labor.⁵⁶

Then there were the German anarchists. They are probably best known because of the Haymarket affair in May 1886, when a peaceful demonstration in Chicago in favor of the eight-hour day ended when an unknown

person threw a bomb that killed seven police officers and four others. Eight anarchists were subsequently tried for conspiracy. The trial, which took place against the background of a "red scare," was seriously flawed and ended with seven death sentences and one sentence of fifteen years, despite the absence of evidence that the accused had any role in the bombing. Two of the sentences were later commuted by the governor of Illinois, one defendant committed suicide in his cell, and the remaining four were executed. Like the Sacco and Vanzetti case thirty-four years later, the Haymarket trial became an international cause célèbre. Five of the eight defendants were German-born immigrants and a sixth was American-born with German parents.⁵⁷

From immigrant entrepreneurs to immigrant radicals, Germans left their imprint. The architecture of entire city neighborhoods, like the ornate brick vernacular of Over-the-Rhine in Cincinnati, bore the stamp of the Germans who built them. Downtown Milwaukee had its Pfister Hotel, Pabst Theater, and Schlitz Palm Garden, as well as the city's first skyscraper, the thirteen-story Pabst Building completed in 1892.⁵⁸ It was a second-generation German who gave America the Louisville Slugger, Germans who gave America its pretzels, brats, and beer—the last-named a major source of friction with nativist temperance supporters.⁵⁹ It was the Germans Rudolph Dirks and Harold Knerr who gave America one of its first and most enduring comic strips, *The Katzenjammer Kids*, based on the children's stories of Wilhelm Busch about the mischievous Max and Moritz.⁶⁰ All this belonged to one side of a double-sided process, for in numerous ways America left its imprint on German immigrants. There were changes in reproductive patterns, as families became smaller in the second generation. Modifications in names marked a further shift. Consider just one German-American baby born in Manhattan in 1891 and brought up in Brooklyn. He became the celebrated but controversial writer Henry Miller. The son of Heinrich Miller and the grandson of Heinrich Müller, he was the perfect example of a three-generation name shift.

Both of Henry Miller's parents were German, but "marrying out" was another way German-Americans became acculturated. There were many others. German-American women's organizations show how this happened in everyday life. At social events mounted by the women's sections of clubs, the American flag was displayed alongside club banners. Women formed themselves into female branches of masonic lodges, copying an American practice that remained unknown in Germany before 1914. Even a tra-

ditionalist Catholic organization like the Christian Mothers Association borrowed American methods that were unfamiliar at home, such as door-to-door collections.⁶¹ In the labor market, workers mingled with workers of other ethnicities—male workers, at any rate, for the proportion of German women who worked outside the home was lower than in any immigrant group other than Italians.⁶² The fact that Germans were disproportionately engaged in the service sector, earning a living as brewers, tailors, tobaccoists, and sellers of musical instruments, inevitably brought them into contact with non-German customers. They might even be seen as brokers between communities. As for the thousands of German newspapers and periodicals, they served the purpose of "translating" America to German speakers and showing how it worked, even if the guardians of "institutional" German-American culture wanted them to shore up German identity.⁶³ The heated discussions among self-appointed guardians of German culture about the "Americanization" of youth suggest just how widespread the phenomenon was.

Language was the key. German-American teachers noticed how the children of German families spoke English among themselves. English was spoken in German gymnastic societies and even by the typesetters on German-American newspapers.⁶⁴ But this was not a straightforward matter of German language and identity being "lost" in an American melting pot. Many German-Americans spoke a mixture of mother tongue and foreign language, moving between German as a domestic language, or *Tischgespräch*, and English as a public language.⁶⁵ In a larger sense, they created a hybrid culture with hazy boundaries. They lived across and between cultures. As in Australia, this happened more quickly in cities than in rural areas, and it accelerated as the flow of new arrivals dried up and earlier generations died off. The cycle began early in a city such as New Orleans, where the inflow of new immigrants was shut off unusually early.⁶⁶ In most places, the 1890s marked a high point in the size and influence of the German press and theater that was never reached again.

What impact did the German immigration to America have on society at home? Many emigrants returned, especially when the journey by steamship was reduced to a mere nine or ten days. They went back in larger numbers than the Irish, although in smaller numbers than the Italians, and the pace picked up in the late nineteenth century. The precise numbers are hard to pin down because returners have to be disentangled from business travelers and visitors, but we are talking about hundreds of thousands. The

reasons were many. Some were disappointed in their hopes. One disillusioned upholsterer and decorator who went to upstate New York wrote to a friend complaining that the positions available in America were worse than those in Germany. He had become thoroughly miserable after just nine months: "Life in Buffalo is a real dog's life." He begged his friend to go to his mother and tell her he would shoot himself unless she sent money for the return journey.⁶⁷ But the disappointed "failures" were probably a minority of returners. Most had greater assets when they returned than when they left. They came back to pursue their old craft with more capital behind them, to buy a plot of land, or to retire on their American earnings. Johann Albert Diercks went to the United States as a sixteen-year-old in 1872, working as a commercial clerk in New York and in Savannah, where he opened a grocery store and then a bar. In 1903, he returned as a forty-seven-year-old to Bremen, where he lived comfortably off the income from his business and properties in Georgia.⁶⁸ Another type of returner was the entrepreneur looking to apply techniques learned in America to the German market. Most who re-migrated were surely not pursuing comparative advantage in this way. But all, in one way or another, were leading transnational lives. And so were the political returners: the '48ers who eventually went back to Germany (some after twenty years), and the Social Democrats who fled to the United States in 1878 and stayed until Bismarck's antisocialist law was lifted in 1890. They carried their American experiences back to Germany with them, just as they had carried their German experiences with them to America.

The American impact on Germany went beyond the physical presence of those who returned. The uncle in America became a clichéd figure in German society by the late nineteenth century; a picture of America formed in the minds of everyone who read letters from friends and relations.⁶⁹ An imagined America was also created by the voluminous German travel literature and fiction about the United States.⁷⁰ Friedrich Gerstäcker contributed to both genres. The Hamburg-born son of an actress and an operatic tenor, young Gerstäcker was destined for a life in commerce after his father died, but rebelled. Having devoured both *Robinson Crusoe* and the Leatherstocking tales of James Fenimore Cooper, he told his mother that he wanted to emigrate to America. He did so in 1837, just short of his twenty-first birthday. His mother persuaded Gerstäcker to acquire some training in agriculture before he left, so he could succeed as a farmer, but he lived a picaresque existence in the United States, earning his living vari-

ously as a farmer, hunter, lumberjack, deckhand, riverboat stoker, chocolate maker, silversmith, trader, and hotelkeeper. He returned after six years. His novel *The Arkansas Regulators* appeared in 1845, *The River Pirates of the Mississippi* three years later. Both were bestsellers, allowing Gerstäcker to devote himself full-time to writing. Other novels followed; so did dramas, poetry, and essays. Gerstäcker made two further visits to America. Out of his experiences he fashioned lively works of reportage for German readers—*In the Arkansas Backwoods*, *Rambles Through America*, *Scenes of Life in California*, and many more. He also wrote about German emigrants to America, together with a book—*To America!*—that encouraged others to follow.⁷¹

There were other prolific nineteenth-century German writers on America. Charles Sealsfield, the pseudonym of Moravian-born Carl Anton Postl, was one. Like Gerstäcker, he had lived in the United States and knew the country well. Neither was true of Karl May, the most famous German writer on America (and Hitler's favorite), whose many works about Winnetou, Old Shatterhand, and the American west were untouched by personal experience. May did not visit the United States until 1908, when he spent six weeks far removed from the west in New York and Massachusetts.⁷² America also turned up in Gustav Freytag's bestseller *Soll und Haben* (*Credit and Debit*). The character Fritz von Fink first truly finds himself on the American frontier, before returning to help his friend and the hero of the novel, Anton Wohlfahrt, to defend a German settlement against Polish rebels on another "frontier," this one in the German east rather than the American west.

As the German love affair with the Polish cause faded after 1848, it is remarkable how often the clash between white settlement and Native American resistance suggested itself to German writers as a parallel to ethnic conflict closer to home. Germans routinely wrote about the Poles, dismissively, as "Indians" or "redskins," something the Polish writer Ludwik Powidaj noted as early as 1864, in an article called "Poles and Indians."⁷³ Germans were clearly cast as the hardy, fearless settlers, a view that also found its way into historical and fictional works about German medieval settlement in the east that appeared in large numbers in the late nineteenth century. In these, Germans were always "pioneers" who brought farming, trade, and the rule of law, while the indigenous Slavs were nomadic peoples who tried to resist the march of civilization. This was a form of German self-image, expressed in the language of the frontier, which would

gain even greater purchase in the first half of the twentieth century. But it was at odds with another form of self-image that became increasingly popular toward the end of the nineteenth century, not least because of Karl May—the honest, upright German and the “noble” Native American as kindred spirits.⁷⁴ Could Germans really be both sturdy frontiersmen and noble Native Americans? In the twentieth century they would be forced to choose. In the nineteenth century America remained for Germans in Germany a mirror—actually, a large distorting mirror—in which they saw their own society reflected.

Colonies

GOVERNMENTS, WORRIED ABOUT LOSING PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS, had often tried to restrict emigration. But they also saw the value of exporting potential unrest. This “safety-valve” view commanded widespread support in the nineteenth century, going back to the disastrous year of postwar famine and rural distress in 1817, when the diplomat and politician Hans von Gagern wrote that mass emigration was “without doubt desirable and hugely beneficial to internal order.”⁷⁵ Later commentators agreed that, in light of German “overpopulation” (the term was routinely used), emigration should be encouraged to head off the threat of pauperism and social unrest.

But there was another side to the question. Paul Pfizer was already worrying in the early 1830s in his book *The Correspondence* about Germans being assimilated by their host societies and losing their “Germanness.” Many contemporaries wrote in similar vein. Friedrich List was one of the most influential. He knew the United States well because he had lived there in the 1820s before returning to Europe. He had also seen at first hand as a Württemberg official in the crisis year 1817 how government indifference and incompetence drove people to leave. He loathed the consequences. “How does it help the German nation,” asked List, “no matter how happy the emigrants to North America become, if their persons are lost to German nationality for all time?”⁷⁶ The same question was posed by the Frankfurt parliamentarians in 1848.⁷⁷ The “loss” of *Volkskraft*, or national energy, exercised many German minds in the era of mass emigration after the mid-century. The fact that Prussia and other states ceased to recognize the continued citizenship of emigrants who had lived abroad uninterrupted for ten years heightened the concern. It was in response to fears about “lost”

Germans that the 1870 citizenship law of the North German Confederation, which became German law the following year, modified the ten-year rule. Germans abroad could now retain their citizenship if they reported to consular officials every ten years—not a very high bar, although it did require emigrants to be thinking about returning home, or at least keeping their options open.⁷⁸

What to call those who departed Germany—“emigrants” or “Germans abroad,” *Auswanderer* or *Auslandsdeutsche*? The second term began to replace the first after midcentury. It conveyed the consoling message that those who had left were not really “lost” to the homeland, but remained a part of the imagined nation, spreading the values of German culture, hard work, and discipline around the globe.⁷⁹ The invention of “Germans abroad” as a label was how nationalists reassured themselves, like the Italian elites who referred in the same way to Italians abroad—the *Italiani al estero*.⁸⁰ The idea that a global Germany existed beyond the confines of Bismarck’s nation-state was an article of faith for radical nationalists. An organization was founded in 1881 to support the German diaspora. It lobbied the Foreign Office successfully to subsidize German schools overseas. The tens of thousands of marks that went to German schools in Buenos Aires were among the millions of marks that flowed around the world by 1914 to fund German teachers, books, maps, and gymnastic equipment.⁸¹

Maps and vaulting horses no doubt served to tend the flame of German identity, but nationalists wanted stronger responses to the “loss” of Germandom abroad. The one they favored was the establishment of German settler colonies. For much of the nineteenth century, German colonial advocates looked to the United States as the most suitable place for them. In 1817, Hans von Gagern sent his cousin on a fact-finding mission to explore the feasibility of a German colony in the American west, but concluded regretfully that such a colony would be politically impossible to establish.⁸² That did not deter other enthusiasts. The *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* pushed for the establishment of German colonies in North America as a matter of urgency. “Germany could spill her heart’s blood for centuries if she does not found a new Germany on another continent,” wrote the paper in 1843.⁸³ As German emigration soared in the 1840s, so did the number of newspaper articles linking emigration with colonization. Well-known America experts like Friedrich List and Robert von Mohl were among those who weighed in.

The writers differed on where exactly these German colonies should

be. Sometimes they pointed to the American midwest, sometimes to the southwest, sometimes to the far west. The democratic nationalist Franz Löher, hedging his bets, proposed that the German Confederation purchase land for German settlement from either Canada or Mexico.⁸⁴ The liberal nationalists Hermann Blumenau and Ernst Ludwig Brauns both pointed to the west as the ideal place for German settlers. Brauns made the case forcefully, even belligerently. Instead of allowing German nationality to seep away in scattered settlements, he wrote, a consolidated colony should be established west of the Mississippi. Germany was not San Marino, and Germans should not be treated as an "appendage" of the Yankees, a "helot" people. The German population should not "allow itself to be disparaged like a Negro from the African coast."⁸⁵ Let Germans purchase land from Mexico or from the "bold Comanchees and Apaches," establish a New Germany in the west, and proudly fly the German flag.⁸⁶

There had, in fact, been an attempt to create a German colony in the southwest just a few years earlier. It was undertaken by the Mainzer Adelsverein, popularly known as the Texas Association, a company formed in 1842 by Rhineland aristocrats to establish a German colony in Texas through organized mass emigration. It eventually settled just seven thousand Germans in Texas, more than half of whom died. The enterprise was a fiasco. The company had clearly failed in its main objective by 1845 and went bankrupt in 1853.⁸⁷ But it is impossible, anyway, to imagine that a New Germany of the kind Blumenau and Brauns envisioned could have established itself in Texas or California. This was the era of American "manifest destiny" (the phrase was coined by newspaper editor John O'Sullivan in 1845). The United States annexed Texas in 1845, and fought a war with Mexico the following year to retain it. In the same campaign, Commodore John Sloat sailed into Monterey Bay and the American government secured military control of California.⁸⁸ In those same years Americans harbored dark suspicions about British designs on Oregon. There is no chance whatsoever that U.S. leaders would have tolerated a sovereign colony that flew the flag of the German Confederation.

The revolutionary year 1848 nonetheless brought renewed enthusiasm for German colonies in the United States. Politicians in Frankfurt argued that the creation of a new German nation-state would be the springboard. Unified Germany would have the leverage that individuals or small states lacked, and Washington would welcome this because it would strengthen the "natural friendship between us."⁸⁹ The enthusiasm for establishing Ger-

man colonies in North America was most pronounced on the left, although it existed across the political spectrum. The revolution energized politics and gave the issue new life. Twenty-two new organizations concerned with emigration and colonization in America were founded in 1848-49. Dozens of plans, petitions, and memoranda on the subject poured into Frankfurt.⁹⁰

It remained illusory, however, to believe that the Germans already in the United States or later arrivals who went as a part of directed settlement plans could become the raw material of German colonies—that it would be possible, somehow, to convert the qualities associated with German settlers into a form of sovereignty. These dreams were being pursued at the very moment when the lands singled out by the dreamers were, one by one, joining the Union as states—Texas in 1845, Iowa in 1846, Wisconsin in 1848, California in 1850. The radical democrat Wilhelm Schulz urged Germans to "make haste," but in fact it was already too late. By the 1850s colonial fantasies had been quietly laid to rest. There was still discussion of German settlers in America, in popular journals and specialist publications, but these now emphasized the German contribution to American westward expansion, a flattering self-image of the role the "German race" supposedly played in the opening up of American continental space by white settlers.

Many German colonial enthusiasts shifted their sights after midcentury from North America to South and Central America, where allegedly "soft" Hispanic inhabitants were expected to exert less pressure to assimilate.⁹¹ The case for South America was already being made in the 1840s and the plans kept coming. Baron Alexander von Bülow founded the Berlin Colonization Association, which settled a hundred German families in Nicaragua in 1853. Despite many examples of misbegotten settlements in the recent past, the "mosquito coast" continued to exert its allure.⁹² Karl Gaillard, a writer and music critic (he was an early Wagner enthusiast), was one voice in the chorus. He foresaw Germans spreading out from Nicaragua to Guatemala, and beyond. "Spanish America—that is our Canaan," he suggested grandly.⁹³ Gaillard also proposed a German colony in Brazil, the darling of many colonial advocates as a place where German-dom could flourish.

By the 1870s, there were few places in the world that had not been identified at one time or another as the ideal site for a German colony. Friedrich List, tireless in coming up with places where Germans might settle, had eyed Australia, New Zealand, and the South Sea islands. The Lower Danube Valley, Bermuda, Abyssinia, Borneo—all had their advocates.⁹⁴ In

1847, a pamphlet on Prussia's future as a naval, colonial, and world power identified Africa as "the key to the world," and proposed that the continent receive 10 to 20 million Prussians who would Germanize "100 million Blacks." The three great German empires (in Africa, Europe, and America) would then allow "German blood" to rule the world with "humanity, virtue and justice."⁹⁵ Thirty-two years later, in his widely read book *Does Germany Need Colonies?*, Friedrich Fabri, a former missionary and colonial advocate, was more sober in tone but no less confident about the "tasks" facing the German race and no less global in his ambitions. He identified two main kinds of colony, for settlement and trade, while noting briefly a third kind—penal colonies to which a variety of political "subversives" could be packed off in the age of anarchist plots. Fabri offered no suggestions on where Germany might find its version of Russian Siberia or France's Devil's Island. His ideas about where Germany should look to fulfill its other colonial "needs" had, by the late 1870s, become familiar. Fabri pointed to Asia Minor, Australia, and New Zealand, but above all South America as places to which organized German emigration should be directed. As for trade colonies, he saw opportunities everywhere, from the Samoan islands to Central Africa.⁹⁶

It was a series of German territorial acquisitions in Africa, in the mid-1880s, that propelled Germany into the ranks of European imperial powers. Within the space of just two years there were German colonies in Southwest Africa, Togo, Cameroon, and East Africa. A second flurry of new colonies followed in the late 1890s, with the province of Kiaochow in northern China and its hinterland on the Shandong peninsula, then the Pacific territories of eastern New Guinea, Samoa, and some smaller island chains. By the end of the century, Germany presided over the fourth-largest European empire.⁹⁷ How do we explain this quite sudden move to acquire colonies, and what were the effects at home?

The causes were, to borrow a term from Sigmund Freud, "over-determined"—that is, we have more reasons than we need to explain why Germany became a colonial power when it did.⁹⁸ One driving force was the pressure exerted by public opinion and lobby groups. Books like Fabri's, and Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden's *German Colonization*, represented a new, more aggressive advocacy.⁹⁹ They amplified the message coming from such organizations as the German Colonial Association and the Society for German Colonization. The writers and pressure groups voiced a number of concerns. One was the long-standing nationalist complaint that emigration

meant a loss of "national energy." The last and largest wave of emigration in the 1870s and '80s raised this anxiety to a new pitch and brought urgent appeals to preserve German culture through settlements.¹⁰⁰ The same years brought the "Great Depression," the global economic downturn that began in 1873 and triggered a move toward tariff protection and a new kind of imperialism. The so-called scramble for Africa was the classic expression of this. Businesses, colonial pressure groups, and other advocates argued that colonies offered the triple advantage of raw materials, markets, and a place where capital could be profitably invested. That was the case made by Fabri, who presented colonies as a solution to the problems of where to export people, goods, and capital. His landmark work offered "a comprehensive crisis therapy."¹⁰¹

These arguments for colonies were not just economic, and the noneconomic arguments were not just rationalizations of material interests. They were signs of the global imagination evident among members of the reading public by the 1880s. Germans had become familiar with reports about distant parts of the world. Some were produced by missionaries; others came from scientific travelers or explorers and were published in the major geographical journal of the day, *Petermann's Geographical Transactions*, but also in popular weeklies. Captain Karl Koldewey's second North Pole expedition of 1869–70 became a source of national pride when its crew, having wintered over in pack ice, arrived back in Bremen while the Franco-Prussian War was underway to find themselves toasted as having "gloriously demonstrated German nautical proficiency, German persistence and German striving for the enrichment of science."¹⁰²

The cold, white Arctic was a place to plant a flag or name a sound. Africa, "hot" and "dark" in the German imagination, held a greater exotic, racially suffused fascination. Heinrich Barth, the geographer and explorer, had published his five-volume *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa in 1857–58*, but it was mainly scholars who were interested. Gerhard Rohlfs was a more popular public figure. A youthful volunteer with the nationalist Schleswig-Holstein campaign in 1848 and a former physician with the French Foreign Legion, he was more adventurer than scholar. Rohlfs crossed the Sahara Desert in the mid-1860s from Tripoli to the Gulf of Guinea.¹⁰³ He was just one of a string of German Africa explorers who enjoyed a heyday as celebrities in the 1860s and '70s. Gerhard Rohlfs, Georg Schweinfurth, Karl Mauch, Gustav Nachtigal, Eduard Mohr—the list is long. Their travels took in the west and east coasts and the interior,

although most ventured at some point into the Sahara. All fed a thirst for knowledge about Africa they had themselves helped to create.¹⁰⁴ They fostered a sense of European superiority and a belief that Germans had a civilizing mission—in Africa, and other parts of the world—by virtue of their supposedly greater energy and more developed culture.¹⁰⁵

German colonial acquisition also had a tangled political background. The shift that occurred in the mid-1880s was partly a result of facts on the ground created by African adventurers like Carl Peters and Adolf Lüderitz. Peters, a clergyman's son who earned a doctorate in history, had spent time in Britain and saw himself as the German Cecil Rhodes. He founded the Society for German Colonization in 1884. At the end of that year Peters mounted an East African expedition in present-day Tanzania during which he signed a series of unscrupulously one-sided "treaties" with local chiefs granting him rights to commercial exploitation of the land.¹⁰⁶ Sixteen hundred miles away to the southwest, on the opposite coast of Africa, Adolf Lüderitz was up to the same tricks. Lüderitz came from a Bremen merchant family that dealt in tobacco. After working in the tobacco exchanges of the United States and trying his hand unsuccessfully as a rancher in Mexico, the twenty-five-year-old Lüderitz returned to Bremen bankrupt, but married into money and took over the family tobacco business when his father died. In 1882 he acquired a trading company on the Gold Coast, but that business failed. The following year he bought the Bay of Angra Pequena, in present-day Namibia, then conducted a series of dishonest negotiations with Africans chieftains that led to his owning a private empire of 225,000 square miles.

Bismarck agreed to make these territories German protectorates. That was what marked the beginning of Germany's formal empire. Rather like the sovereign entity established on Borneo by James Brooke, the self-styled Raja of Sarawak (the model for Rudyard Kipling's *The Man Who Would Be King*), Peters and Lüderitz carved out private states—"rogue empires." That was one of the things that recommended these territories to Bismarck, well-known as a colonial skeptic, especially after Peters threatened to cede his holdings to King Leopold of Belgium. German Foreign Office officials kept Bismarck carefully briefed on the Sarawak precedent. In theory, German East Africa and German Southwest Africa would not be a drain on public revenue even after Bismarck designated them formal protectorates (he avoided the word "colony"), and his decision to do so marked no major change of direction for the German chancellor. However, the decision to

establish protectorates had the effect of sucking the state into greater colonial engagement (and eventually military engagement), in a pattern that was common to other European empires.¹⁰⁷

Bismarck was also thinking about domestic politics. He saw the colonial issue as an opportunity to rally the parties of the center-right behind him with a Reichstag election coming up, and perhaps even to counteract the appeal of the Social Democrats to German workers by waving the national flag.¹⁰⁸ Both conservatives and liberals made this argument. Friedrich Fabri's book presented the conservative variant.¹⁰⁹ Liberal nationalists had their own version of "social imperialism," the idea that workers could be weaned from socialism if given reasons to identify more strongly with the nation. Not all German liberals took this view. There was always a stubbornly anticolonial strand among progressives. But in the 1880s, as in 1848, many liberals of different shades argued that in an increasingly competitive world a nation needed colonies, just as it needed a navy to protect them, and this outward projection of German power would have an educative effect at home on the lower classes.¹¹⁰ There was one more powerful sentiment that helps to explain the widespread support for colonies. It was the belief that Germany, finally united, needed to make up for lost time. Call it a new assertiveness within the "belated nation," a desire to cut a figure in the world, often accompanied by sideways glances at Britain, which was both admired and envied. That was a view widely held in conservative and liberal circles, among business elites and the educated middle classes, although it encountered opposition from Social Democrats, Catholics, and some progressives.

Supporters advanced the same mix of economic arguments to justify the colonial acquisitions of the late 1890s, although the downturn in German emigration meant that settlement colonies received less emphasis, while a rapidly globalizing economy meant that naval bases and coaling stations received much more. Social imperialist arguments about the domestic usefulness of an aggressive foreign policy became even more central. They were made by ministers like Navy Secretary Alfred von Tirpitz, the admiral who was the architect of the German battle fleet and who saw great national tasks as "a strong palliative against educated and uneducated Social-democrats."¹¹¹ But they also came from liberal imperialists like the sociologist Max Weber, one of many "naval professors" who joined the Navy League, a mass-membership civic organization. The case for colonies based on prestige, or Germany's proper place in the world, had a sharper edge in

the 1890s, with Britain still serving as an admired but often resented point of reference.

The tone was set by Kaiser William II, who came to the throne in 1888 and voiced his desire for an assertive "world policy." One of his chosen instruments was the suave and self-confident Bernhard von Bülow, William's foreign minister from 1897 to 1900, then German chancellor until a great falling-out with the kaiser in 1909. Bülow's first speech as foreign minister contained two phrases that quickly found their way into the dictionaries of quotations. One was "place in the sun" ("we do not want to put anyone in our shadow, but we also demand our place in the sun"); the other was a sharply worded rejection of the idea that Germany was the contemplative "land of writers and thinkers." As Bülow put it, "The days when Germans granted one neighbor the earth, the other the sea, and reserved for themselves the sky, where pure doctrine reigns . . . those days are over."¹² It was while he was foreign minister that Germany acquired its second major tranche of colonies, the ones in China and the Pacific.

The German colonies lasted for just thirty years. The Dutch were in Java eleven times as long, the British in India six times as long. But during those thirty years Germans exercised every form of rule in the imperial repertoire—direct, indirect, "scientific" and developmental, paternalist, and brutally violent. This diversity was a result partly of the differences in size, environment, population, and function of the German colonies—whether they were seen as places where trade, plantations, or settlers had primacy. How power was exercised also depended on the nature of pre-existing political structures, on the reactions of Indigenous peoples to colonial authority, and on what Germans learned or adapted from other colonial nations during an era when one-fourth of the globe fell under the control of western powers. As in other empires, authority was often exercised by men on the ground, mostly few in number—just four hundred German officers and administrators ruled German East Africa in 1900. There were nonetheless major shifts over time in the policy handed down from Berlin. In the earliest, experimental stage, informal authority was exercised by a few individuals, primarily merchants and adventurers, under the protectorate system of royal charters. The resulting mismanagement and crass abuses, requiring interventions from Berlin, led to a more centralized system after 1890 (and Bismarck's fall from power) under a new colonial department within the German Foreign Office. This second phase of colonial rule ended when German policies provoked resistance, above all

in East and Southwest Africa. It was answered by military violence, which reached genocidal proportions. The eventual result, after the colonial crisis ignited domestic political criticism, was a relatively less draconian exercise of colonial power after 1907 under Bernhard Dernburg, the liberal head of a newly created Colonial Office.¹³

German rule was most tolerant and paternalist in the Pacific: in New Guinea, which became a formal colony in 1898, after the German New Guinea Company failed, and in Samoa, acquired by international agreement the same year, following an equally inauspicious period of indirect rule by a German trading company. There was a reason for the tolerance, and it went beyond a desire to live down the earlier exploitation by German companies and planters. Going back to the time of the Forsters' and Chamisso's travels in the Pacific, Germans had read about the romantic "paradise" of the South Seas and the "noble savages" who lived there. That inveterate world traveler Friedrich Gerstäcker wrote in a similar vein during the 1860s. And at the end of the nineteenth century, as Germany took possession of its Pacific colonies, sentimental fascination with these (in jaded European eyes) simple, innocent peoples enjoyed new resurgence in an era when an affected distaste for materialism became fashionable once again.¹⁴

The governors who ruled after 1899 showed a notable sensitivity to local culture. Albert Hahl, the governor of New Guinea and a Bavarian lawyer by background, set out to limit the German planters' influence and supported native cultivation of the land. He used local officials to mediate between the German administration and the Indigenous population; traditional power structures were turned to German advantage rather than overturned. While governor, Hahl learned the Tolai language and maintained a relationship with a Tolai woman, with whom he had a child. In Samoa, Wilhelm Solf became governor in 1900. A philologist with a PhD in Sanskrit, Solf gave his children Samoan names, used Samoan terms and rituals when he met with local leaders, and happily performed the role of native king when it suited his purposes. These symbolic acts were a way of appropriating Samoan forms in order to exercise German authority noncoercively. There were no German military or police force in Samoa. But there was no doubting ultimate German authority. When it came to local culture, Solf permitted but regulated both long-standing customs and newer enthusiasms like cricket; he also challenged missionary zeal in protecting the local practice of *avaga*, a form of elopement. His chief justice, Erich Schultz, agreed to the imprisonment of Samoans who insulted local chiefs,

part of a larger German design of working through traditional power structures. Schultz, who succeeded Solf as governor in 1911, even had himself tattooed.¹⁵

Solf, Schulz, and Hahl all faced down the German planters, relatively few in number, to try to prevent the exploitation of Indigenous peoples. But all was not sweetness and light. A report of the Rhenish Mission from New Guinea in 1903, five years after the New Guinea Company had relinquished control, claimed that missionaries still had to act as "advocates of the natives against many an unscrupulous European." Their meditation had prevented "injustice and baseness," possibly "bloodbaths."¹⁶ Even the successes of German governors in protecting the *Indigenes* of New Guinea and Samoa rested on dubious foundations, for one way they prevented the exploitation of "noble" native peoples of the Pacific was by importing cheap Chinese "coolie" labor to work the cotton, coffee, and cocoa plantations. Some thirty-five hundred Chinese and two hundred Malays worked in the two German colonies by 1914. Their treatment caused Chinese ambassadors in Berlin to submit a series of diplomatic protests.¹⁷

In China itself, German rule differed fundamentally from the pattern in the Pacific. Kiaochow became a German colony after the murder of two Catholic missionaries in 1897. The ninety-nine-year leasehold (like the one the British enjoyed in Hong Kong) was part of the settlement with the Qing court over the missionaries' death. But the murders were really a convenient pretext to take control of an area long identified as a potentially valuable naval base and coaling station. Ferdinand von Richthofen, a German geographer and traveler in China who had been passing on his local knowledge to Bismarck since the 1860s, described Kiaochow Bay in 1882 as "the biggest and best ocean harbor in all of northern China." Admiral von Tirpitz visited the site and called for its occupation; in 1896 William II instructed the Imperial Navy Office to draw up plans. The killing of the missionaries the following year then provided the opportunity for Germany to pounce.¹⁸

The province and its main town, Qingdao, were directly run by the Navy Office, which made it singular among German colonies. Kiaochow was intended to be a naval base and a foothold for trade interests; it was also supposed to be a "model" colony, a showcase for German culture and scientific know-how. Exactly what this meant in practice changed over time. It always included the ostentatious display of German technological prowess. New harbor facilities were built in Qingdao and a new town

laid out on the basis of a master plan. Rivers were regulated, railways constructed to link the port with the coal-rich interior, and specialists brought in to oversee the German-owned coal mines. German engineers were everywhere. In the early years of the colony, this hyperactivity by the "foreign devils" led to Chinese resistance by the Boxer rebels, which in turn was met by a brutal "pacification" campaign after the murder of a German envoy in 1900. The kaiser notoriously urged the departing soldiers to behave like "Huns," and the soldiers under the command of Alfred von Waldersee were guilty of massacres, violence that was loudly criticized by anticolonial opinion at home.

Most German administrators and residents of Qingdao showed racist contempt toward the Chinese. The colony was designed on a racially segregated basis as it grew in just fifteen years from a fishing village to a port and trading center with more than 55,000 inhabitants, mostly Chinese. Around 1904, however, the emphasis shifted and the "model" aspect of the colony acquired a different meaning. A combination of things—greater pushback by the Chinese state, the desire to accommodate Chinese business interests, the influence of more liberal Foreign Office factions—led to a change of course. Sinophile officials, translators, and missionaries went to Kiaochow and made their voices heard in the formulation of "native policy," drawing on a prior tradition of respect for Chinese culture that was now resurrected. The Seminar for Oriental Languages in Berlin fed sympathetic newcomers into the colony, and new institutions came into being. A German-Chinese college was established in 1909, the only university-level institution in the German colonies. Where once German residents had used whips on Chinese who failed to move off the sidewalk quickly enough, some Chinese were now permitted to play tennis at the Tsingtau Club. Whereas the earliest German architecture in Qingdao was designed to be authoritatively European, later buildings incorporated elements of the Chinese vernacular. None of this overturned the fundamentals of racial segregation, but it was a sign of cultural rapprochement and exchange, superimposed on the original system—an outcrop of what might be called benign Orientalism. Having shown northern China the mailed fist, Germany drew on the velvet glove.¹⁹

In Africa, the direction and severity of German rule varied greatly across the different colonies, but physical force was never far from the surface. The episodes of extreme violence against the African population occurred a generation after the Germans arrived, when military power was used to crush full-scale rebellions. Resistance was a response to policies

that undermined and in some cases destroyed the existing way of life. That process began with the drawing of arbitrary boundary lines on the map, which casually divided African peoples between German and other colonial powers. Even the "tribal" units they took as the defining feature of local peoples were to a significant degree a European construct, a projection onto Africans of the conquerors' own understanding of ethnicity and identity.¹²⁰ While German administrators made some use of local ceremonial forms (like the *shauri* in East Africa, a kind of negotiation procedure), local power holders were constantly undercut and sometimes deposed by district officers wielding huge authority on the ground. This was especially true during military expeditions into the interior, from the coastal regions where the German rulers felt most secure. What administrators and missionaries arrogantly presented as a "civilizing mission" also weakened Indigenous cultural practices, religious rites, gender relations, and inheritance customs. Most subversive of all were the economic arrangements Germans imposed on unwilling Africans. Everywhere, land was expropriated, sometimes to make large plantations growing cotton, cocoa, sisal, or other single-crop monocultures, as in Cameroon and East Africa, sometimes to provide farms for German settlers, as in Southwest Africa.

Three-quarters of their land was confiscated from the Herero and Nama peoples in Southwest Africa, and much of their livestock with it. Governor Theodor Leutwein said in 1894, "The entire future of the colony lies in the gradual transfer of land from the hands of the work-shy natives to the Europeans."¹²¹ Land and livestock seizures, taxation policies, and education designed to inculcate European "work-discipline"—all were intended to turn seminomadic African cattle herders into a pliant labor force living on reservations. An outbreak of rinderpest, a cattle disease, in 1897 ravaged the Hereros' remaining cattle and heightened the distress. The backlash came in the form of attacks on German settlers, a revolt led by Samuel Maherero, who had earlier cooperated with Governor Leutwein in order to slow the pace of land seizures. The uprising of the Herero began in 1904 and lasted for three years. It was eventually crushed by military force under the command of General Lothar von Trotha, a veteran of earlier pacification campaigns in East Africa and China. Trotha, who was appointed governor in place of the more conciliatory Leutwein, was frank about his policy. Africans were "all alike insofar as they only yield to violence. My policy was, and is, to exercise this violence with blatant terrorism and even cruelty." He promised to finish off the rebels with "rivers of blood."¹²²

Trotha was as good as his word. After his forces failed to achieve total victory over the Herero at the Battle of Waterberg, which "enraged" Trotha, he followed a policy of "annihilation." German troops shot men, women, and children, then pursued the remaining Herero into the Omaheke Desert, a western extension of the Kalahari, where they were trapped and denied access to water. Those who tried to escape were shot. Other Herero were imprisoned in concentration camps with grossly inadequate food supplies. The Nama also rose in 1904, conducting a guerrilla war that was met with equal brutality. They too were imprisoned in poorly provisioned camps, including the notorious Shark Island. As many as 65,000 out of 80,000 Herero lost their lives as a result of these genocidal campaigns, and around half of the 20,000 Nama did.¹²³

The death toll from the nearly contemporary Maji-Maji risings in German East Africa was even higher. The revolt was caused by similar anger about administrative high-handedness, interference with local cultural practices, and a new economic regime that meant land seizures and plantations on which Africans were reduced to forced labor. It was the last of these that triggered revolt in 1905. The uprising was fueled, like the Boxer Rebellion in China, by millenarian religious sentiment, and was crushed with equal ferocity. Captured rebels were summarily executed, often fifty or one hundred at a time, on the grounds that they did not deserve the treatment afforded in warfare among "civilized" Europeans. As many as 80,000 Africans lost their lives in the fighting, another 200,000 in the famine that followed.¹²⁴

It was in East Africa and in Southwest Africa (the "colonial grotesque")¹²⁵ that the breech-loading gun and machine gun were wielded most conspicuously by German troops as "tools of empire."¹²⁶ But in Cameroon, too, there were punitive although less deadly campaigns to snuff out resistance to land seizures and forced labor on the new cocoa and cotton plantations. The governor there was a career diplomat, Jesko von Puttkamer. He was a friend of the British diplomat and Irish nationalist Roger Casement, who played a large part in exposing colonial abuses in the Belgian Congo. But Puttkamer proved to be an autocrat, a governor who promoted military expeditions into the interior and tolerated widespread violence against Africans on the plantations, a policy condemned by missionaries. Critics eventually forced his early retirement, although he was brought down over minor peccadilloes, not his autocratic ways.¹²⁷ Even in the so-called model colony of Togo, a coastal trading post where merchants and missionaries

together prevented large-scale land seizures for plantations, military campaigns were conducted into the interior. During the "Tove war" of 1895, collective reprisals were undertaken against insurgent villages, farms and houses were torched, and prisoners of war were used to perform forced labor. Local crafts were vindictively destroyed, like the pottery industry, mainly in the hands of women, whose artifacts were smashed into shards that still littered the roadside years later.¹²⁸ Even in Togo then, the state deployed violence, even if intermittently. There, as in every German colony in Africa, ostentatious public executions and the display of bodies were intended as reminders of the power that the colonial authority held in reserve. Everywhere, too, Africans experienced the "soft" violence of residential segregation and curfews, as well as routine beatings on plantations and in private households.

Overt violence had a place in the German colonies, especially in Africa, that it did not have at home. Racism and cultural contempt made colonial subjects into dehumanized objects, while Berlin was willing to give wide discretion to the men on the spot and not ask too many questions unless a missionary or member of the Reichstag made a case of abuse too public to ignore (and the missionaries often kept quiet, because this gave them a hold over the colonial administration that increased their own freedom of action).¹²⁹ Violence was also the other side of the coin of weak everyday control: the "islands of rule" in East Africa, the uncertain state power in Southwest Africa outside the designated "police zone." In other words, German rule never achieved the kind of reach or established the level of legitimacy that it did within the borders of the 1871 nation-state.¹³⁰ That alone hardly set Germany apart from other European powers, all of whom sanctioned or tolerated high levels of violence against their colonial subjects, and for similar reasons. If there was something that made Germany distinctive, it was the size of the gap between the socially and bureaucratically disciplined society at home and the violent practices that marked German rule in Africa. Compulsory school attendance enforced in some German cities by gendarmes, the factory whistle and time clock, the presence of uniformed government officials in every walk of life, the workhouse—these exerted their own kind of disciplinary power. They made public executions and violent whippings, quotidian events in Cameroon and Southwest Africa, unheard of in Württemberg or Saxony.

Conscription was another of those disciplining agencies within metropolitan Germany. There were high levels of violence in the army, includ-

ing the whipping of conscripts. Social Democrat Karl Liebknecht exposed these in his 1907 polemic against militarism.¹³¹ But Liebknecht also noted that the German army intervened less to break up strikes than in most European countries. He might have added that the same reserve was generally true of the army's relations with minority communities on Germany's borderlands. The most notorious instance of the German army's domestic misbehavior was in the Alsatian town of Zabern in 1913, when insults by a junior officer directed against the local population led to protests, which in turn led to wholesale arrests. Twenty-six people were locked up in a coal cellar overnight; martial law was briefly declared. Zabern became a cause célèbre, the subject of a full-scale parliamentary debate about militarism. But no one died or was seriously injured.¹³² By comparison with what happened in Southwest or East Africa, the scandal seems almost laughable, just as the actions of prewar antisemitic students who let mice loose in Jewish-owned department stores seem merely obnoxious in light of what was to follow thirty years later.

That prompts a big question. The colonies were sites of violence. Were they also breeding grounds of genocidal violence? Anyone who wants to argue for a line that runs from German atrocities in Southwest Africa to Nazi crimes in eastern Europe ("from Windhoek to Auschwitz") can point to continuities of people and ideas, there is no doubt about that.¹³³ But the lines of continuity are complicated. It is as plausible to argue that the Germans applied in Africa the lessons of their brutal responses to French franc-tireurs during the war of 1870–71 as it is to pin the "barbarism" of German military culture after 1914 on earlier colonial episodes.¹³⁴ The violence of the German colonial experience may loom larger in hindsight than it did to contemporaries. It is instructive to look at this through the eyes of Major Charles Edward Callwell, a pioneering British writer on colonial counterinsurgency. His book *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*, published in 1896, was concerned with irregular, guerrilla conflicts in European empires—the French, Dutch, Belgian, Portuguese, and Italian as well as the British. Callwell has a few comments, too, on the United States and Japan. On Germany, however, there is nothing. Only in the third edition, in 1906, does Germany enter the picture, and then only barely.¹³⁵

Were the German colonies "laboratories of modernity" in a larger sense—places where it was possible to try out things that could not be tried out at home?¹³⁶ In some ways, they were. Consider agriculture. In East Africa the German state established a two-million-mark agricultural research station,

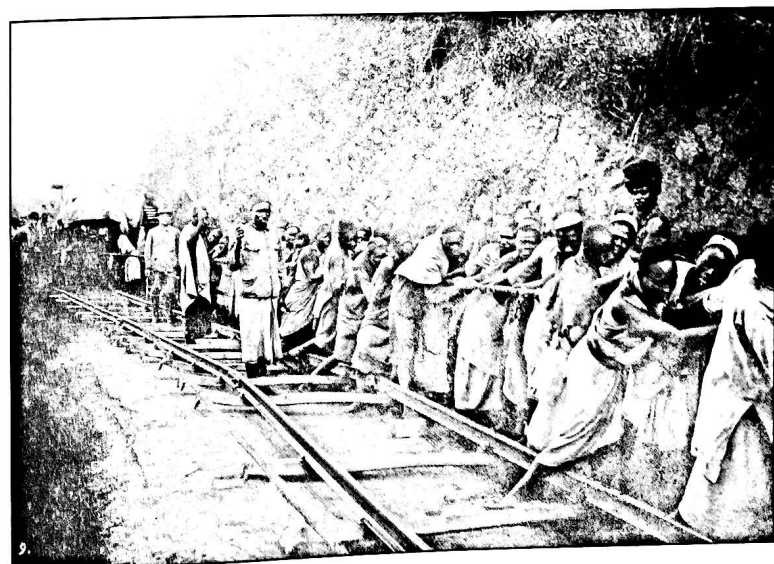
the Amani Institute. New crops like cotton, sisal, cocoa, and tobacco were introduced on a major scale, especially in Africa. In one case, Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute in Alabama was invited to send an expedition to Togo, in the hope that a cotton economy like that of the American south could be established in West Africa, a striking episode of three-way transfer.¹³⁷ Many of these experiments failed, as has often happened when monocultures are established. The German colonizers ignored the virtues of African interplanting, a practice well adapted to the local climate that conserved the soil but looked messy and asymmetrical to European eyes.¹³⁸ There were also sustained German efforts at town planning not only in Qingdao but in Douala, in Cameroon, in both cases based on the ruthless appropriation of land, the destruction of existing street plans, and the objective of creating racially segregated communities.¹³⁹ Hong Kong may have had some impact on the master plan for Qingdao. In the end, though, German urban planning in the colonies did not rival the scale of French efforts in Morocco, Indochina, and Madagascar, or similar projects in British India.¹⁴⁰

Often, policies that look as if they owed their existence to the greater opportunities (read: lack of resistance) in a colonial setting turn out to be no bolder than policies enacted at home. Were the blueprints for Qingdao or Douala really any more daring than James Hobrecht's 1860s strategic plan for the development of Berlin, with its fifty-year time frame?¹⁴¹ To take another example, German colonial authorities assumed major powers in policing the movement of Indigenous people, but it is not obvious that these efforts went beyond the increasingly strict controls imposed within Germany itself, especially on non-German groups such as Poles, Sinti, and Roma. Even the relative ease with which it was possible to deport Europeans from the German colonies has to be set against the history of deportation of Europeans—Alsations, Poles, Danes, and German Jesuits—from metropolitan Germany.¹⁴² Nor did these policing and deportation practices at home have colonial dress rehearsals, for they mostly came before, not after. The same is true in the realm of medicine. The inoculation of soldiers against typhoid may have been tried out first in Southwest Africa; however, compulsory immunization against smallpox had already been introduced in Germany in 1874, just three years after unification.

Germans nonetheless flaunted their technological accomplishments in the colonies. These went by the name "progress," a domestic keyword of liberal nationalists in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, now transferred to a global stage. That is what made colonies a liberal project as much

as a conservative one, especially after 1907, when the "civilizing mission" took a progressive turn. One aspect of this was the huge railway-building program undertaken during the later years of German colonialism, especially in Africa. Rail lines were strategic battering rams into the interior, and a means of transporting German products in and raw materials and precious metals out. They were also demonstrative, a form of braggadocio. The Germans were, of course, watching other colonial powers (above all the British), and there was some gnashing of teeth over what the British had achieved in matters of infrastructure. The Aswan Low Dam in Egypt was widely envied.

Germans took pride in their tropical medicine, immunology, and veterinary science. The colonies provided a showcase for all of them, but many instances of "success" had a dark side. German scientists developed a vaccination against rinderpest, but the vaccine was used to preserve European rather than African cattle stocks. The differential rate at which the two herds died made a critical difference in destroying the basis of the Hereros' existence in Southwest Africa. Colonial medicine was shot through with eugenicist assumptions based on racial thinking. Hans Ziemann, who headed the medical administration in Cameroon, made a study of malaria



*Africans laboring on the East African railroad.
A photograph from December 1909.*

and came to the conclusion that the incidence of the disease in the African population justified strict residential racial segregation in Douala on hygienic grounds.¹⁴³ It is tempting to project this forward to the racist eugenics of the Nazi regime. But German conduct in this sphere differed little before 1914 from what other colonial powers were doing. Colonies gave a boost to European institutes of hygiene and tropical medicine. In Germany, as elsewhere, the effect of colonies was felt in many disciplines—medicine, zoology, anthropology. The self-conscious application of science was probably more pronounced in the German colonies. Even those with no liking for the Germans acknowledged this grudgingly.

Many also saw the colonies as a potential source of German “renewal,” a place where virtuous settlers could live out the ideals of Germandom. That had been an important part of Friedrich Fabri’s case for colonies. It was very much the view of a younger figure from the same milieu, Ernst Fabarius, a military chaplain in Koblenz and secretary of the Rhineland branch of the Protestant Africa Association. In 1899 Fabarius founded a German colonial school at Witzhausen in the Werra Valley. The school trained young men as farmer-settlers and “cultural pioneers.”¹⁴⁴ The Women’s League of the German Colonial Society* also founded a colonial school for women to train would-be female colonists in maternity care, cooking, darning, and the other skills of the loyal helpmeet on the frontier. The numbers of those who passed through these schools was small, but the modest numbers were in line with the dimensions of German settlements. Southwest Africa, the only true settler colony, never had more than 14,000 German residents. That was the same number of people who moved to Greater Berlin every four months—every four months for forty years.

Settler colonialism enjoyed the mystique it did partly because it embodied the white family, as opposed to the racially mixed marriages—or other sexual liaisons—between German men and Indigenous women that were common, especially in the early years of German colonial rule. These raised the specter of white men “going native” or indulging in behavior that undermined Europeans’ supposed racial superiority. In 1905 marriage between German men and African women was forbidden by administrative decree in Southwest Africa and made retroactive, so that already existing marriages were annulled.¹⁴⁵ The same prohibition was later extended to

* The German Colonial Society was formed in 1887 via the merger of the German Colonial Association and the Society for German Colonization.

East Africa and Samoa. Similar concerns prompted Governor Leutwein’s 1898 proposal to pay the passage of single German women to Southwest Africa—sending “suitable female breeding material from the Reich,” as the feminist Gertrud Bülow von Dennewitz contemptuously called it.¹⁴⁶ But many German women, in the colonies and at home, supported these policies. Grete Ziemann, who went to Cameroon to keep house for her brother Hans, the medical officer, left no doubt where she stood: “In my opinion, race pride—naturally only in the best and noblest sense—cannot be exercised strictly enough. *If Germany wants to conquer Africa, in no circumstances may a mixed race arise.*”¹⁴⁷ Even a feminist like Minna Cauer saw a case for encouraging women to go to the colonies because (in the classic argument of contemporary feminism) they would “civilize” the “uncivilized” conduct to which men were always prey.¹⁴⁸

When the Women’s League of the German Colonial Society placed an advertisement inviting women to apply for assistance in traveling to the colonies, it was surprised by the large response. In addition to the “undemanding, simple girls” who were most easily placed, there were educated women—housekeepers, Kindergarten teachers, companions—who wanted the opportunity to fashion a more independent life for themselves than they enjoyed in Germany. They were rejected by Margarete Schnitzler, one of those vetting the applications, because there was no demand for such women in the colonies. These educated young women she turned down with regret. Other applicants wanted to get away from their husbands, “had gotten into distressing situations, usually because the father had died,” or “just wanted to get out a bit” or “had lust for adventure of all kinds written plainly all over their face.”¹⁴⁹ Schnitzler turned these women down straight away, with no regrets.

Yes, at the same time, many men in the German colonies conducted themselves in ways that not only mocked the idea of a “civilizing mission” but exceeded what was acceptable under the double standards that governed male and female behavior. What could get you into trouble with the government, even deported? Indigence, for one—failing as a settler and taking to drink (not necessarily in that order), becoming a disreputable hanger-on. That was letting down the white race. So were homosexual acts, especially if performed with African men.¹⁵⁰ Then there were crimes that went beyond the tacitly accepted everyday violence, including sexual violence. German missionaries in Southwest Africa complained repeatedly about the rape of African women. Some took to calling the *Schutztruppe*

("protective force") the *Schmutztruppe* ("dirty troops").¹⁵¹ But this had little effect and it required something out of the ordinary to create a scandal. A man named Heinrich Odelwald was jailed, then deported from Southwest Africa in 1912, for raping an African child.¹⁵² The misuse of alcohol featured in many cases that became scandals. A settler called Kurt Berner was recommended for deportation from Southwest Africa after he shot one of his African workers in an alcohol-fueled rage.¹⁵³ An incident involving alcohol and sexual assault occurs in one of the African novels written by Frieda von Bülow, a distant cousin of Gertrud and herself a feminist as well as a radical nationalist who sought personal freedom in East Africa in the late 1880s, where she founded and ran German nursing facilities. In *Tropic Rage*, the heroine's brother and his friends drunkenly break into African homes and attempt to rape the women.¹⁵⁴ It is worth noting that while in East Africa Bülow had an unhappy love affair with the colonial adventurer Carl Peters, who was forced to leave the colony after shooting two Africans, his concubine and her purported lover.¹⁵⁵ Franz Giesebrecht, a left-leaning cultural critic, wrote a study of Peters in 1897 in which he called him, sarcastically, a "German colonial hero." It is a psychological portrait of a monster, but Giesebrecht suggests that the monstrosity—the "colonial abominations"—were somehow released by Africa: "Out there, in the wild land . . . culture and civilization went to the devil." That was where the evil, previously hidden, emerged and triumphed—"the beast inside the human."¹⁵⁶ It was as if Giesebrecht could imagine the horror being released only in an African setting. Here was a *Heart of Darkness* script several years before Joseph Conrad's famous book.

The colonies assumed an outsized importance in the German imagination. One aspect of that, not to be overlooked, is the criticism that some Germans leveled against the brutality of colonial exploitation. This reached a high point in 1906–07, while two wars were being fought in Africa, and was triggered by criticism of the colonial administration in the Reichstag by members of the Catholic Center Party who had been briefed by missionaries. The Social Democrats, long-standing critics of colonialism, added harsh strictures of their own. The upshot was a parliamentary election in 1907 called by Chancellor Bülow, the so-called Hottentot elections, designed to isolate Catholic and Social Democratic critics. The policy worked, although what followed was a reform-minded new colonial regime under Bernhard Dernburg. The lineup of parties that backed Bülow in the election—Conservatives, right-wing National Liberals, and Progressives—

indicates the broad support for the colonial project. But its greatest support came from branches of the Veterans' Association and the radical right: the Colonial Society, Pan-German League, and Navy League. They were the organizations that produced wall charts and maps for schools and doctors' waiting rooms, and sponsored lectures and slide shows where famous figures like Gerhard Rohlfs and other "experts" held forth on Germany's colonial mission. These drew packed crowds, as many as seven hundred for an evening lecture even in a midsized town like Osnabrück. That was where, in February 1913, the "Africa adventurer" Albert Spring spoke about East Africa. Before the Germans arrived, he explained, it had been in "an almost completely primeval state. The Negroes squatted idly into front of their filthy huts." Then came the transformation: "Now there are clean villages in which the electricity shines at night. The steam-powered steed traverses the fruitful land. Well-clothed Negroes and Negresses go to the station, just as we do in provincial places, to wait for the train."¹⁵⁷ This was the disdainful racism of the "civilizing mission."

Was it likely that a German would encounter Africans in Germany? Possible, certainly, although not likely. Africans from the German colonies did travel to Germany, mainly from Togo, Cameroon, and East Africa. Some were the children of social elites, whose families wanted them to have a German education. Others went as translators and language instructors, as the personal servants of colonial officials, or as part of training programs run by one of the German missions. A few were sailors, or apprentices learning a trade their German instructors expected them to practice when they returned to Africa. They were, in other words, a very disparate group of individuals. Those who came from Cameroon included both Christians and Muslims and speakers of four different languages.¹⁵⁸ The experiences of Africans in Germany varied as well. Two children from elite families in Cameroon, placed in a Protestant school in the small Württemberg town of Aalen, were greeted by a brass band when they arrived and were apparently very popular. But unwanted curiosity or abuse were more frequent.¹⁵⁹ What Africans in Germany had in common was that they expected (and were expected) to return, which explains the high turnover in Germany's Black African population. Several thousand probably passed through in the three decades before 1914, but the population at any given time numbered less than a thousand.¹⁶⁰ That was around 1 in 70,000 of the overall population on the eve of war.

Germans were more likely to encounter representations of Africans,

generally caricatured and demeaning. The slides that accompanied talks like Albert Spring's in Osnabrück were part of a society suffused with exotic images from the colonies. Mass-circulation illustrated newspapers jostled alongside posters, placards, and advertisements. Navigating the growing big cities of the kaiser's Germany meant learning to read these visual cues, while those who wanted to advertise a show or a product tried to catch the attention of hurrying city dwellers with spectacular images.¹⁶¹ Many advertisements played up the exotic. Stylized, often grotesquely caricatured images of Black people appeared in ads selling a wide range of products: chocolate, ready-made cake mix, margarine, cigars and cigarettes, alcohol ("Herero Liquor"), bicycle tires, sodium bicarbonate, soap, toothpaste, metal polish, and boot and shoe polish. Products that claimed to clean things and images that showed cleaning in some form were especially prominent, like the white soap being applied to a child's Black face in a Mohr's soap advertisement.¹⁶² Similar images adorned trading cards and posters advertising wax museums, exhibitions, and shows.

Some of the shows featured live exhibits of colonial peoples and others from around the world deemed to be "exotic" or "primitive." These were the notorious "people shows," in which non-Europeans from the tropics to the Arctic Circle—Africans, Inuit, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, Singhalese—were placed on display for European audiences.¹⁶³ These exhibits began as carnival sideshows several decades before Germany acquired colonies, but they soared in popularity and became more mainstream in the 1880s. That was when prominent scholars gave the shows their seal of approval as scientific, and therefore edifying. The scientists studied those being displayed, vouched for their "authenticity," and provided a cover for the impresarios. This amounted to a kind of "commercial ethnography," the joining together of moneymaking entertainment with scholarship.¹⁶⁴ More than a hundred large-scale people shows and countless minor ones toured German and other European cities in the thirty years before the war. For Carl Hagenbeck, the best-known German organizer, the people shows grew naturally out of his previous business, which was importing wild animals for zoos.¹⁶⁵ Zoological gardens were among the respectable, middle-class places where people shows were mounted.

A variant was the minutely choreographed "native village," complete with huts, tools, and animals, which became a standard part of major exhibitions. The Berlin Trade Exhibition of 1896 boasted such a display. So, the following year, did the Saxon and Thuringian Trade Exhibition in Leipzig,

which included forty-seven Africans expressly brought over for the purpose and handpicked to represent "inner-African tribes" unfamiliar to Europeans. The veneer of seriousness and public edification that was always a part of these staged displays was undercut in this instance by the trade fair newspaper, which shamelessly played up the element of spectacle by suggesting that members of the Wadoe tribe practiced cannibalism and might have been responsible for eating three German sailors who had gone missing in 1888.¹⁶⁶ Ethnographic displays also took place at large popular festivals, such as the Oktoberfest in Munich. Bavarian Prince Regent Luitpold visited the Samoa Show there in 1910.¹⁶⁷

The original "sideshow" form of display meanwhile enjoyed new life in the wax museums, or Panoptiken, that sprang up in German cities in the late nineteenth century with Madame Tussaud's in London as their model. Castan's Panoptikum in Berlin was the first, in 1871, with four provincial branches opening later. Rivals and imitators followed in St. Pauli, neighboring Hamburg, and Frankfurt. Carl Gabriel, a circus director's son who was already mounting shows every year at the Oktoberfest, then opened his International Panoptikum in Munich.¹⁶⁸ These businesses usually had a theater attached to the wax museum, which is where the people shows were held. All emphasized the exotic and sensational.

Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich were big cities. But images and accounts of a wider, "exotic" world also made their way into smaller towns. In 1905, an "African village" was on display in Oldenburg, in the north German fens.¹⁶⁹ Weimar, the small but famous town whose residents during its late-nineteenth-century silver age included musicians (Franz Liszt, Richard Strauss), art connoisseurs (Count Harry Kessler), and a mad philosopher (Friedrich Nietzsche), was also a hotbed of colonialism, thanks in no small part to Grand Duke Carl Alexander. He funded Carl Peters lavishly, maintained a close personal relationship with Adolf Lüderitz, and gave land to Gerhard Rohlfs, who built a villa in the town. Weimar's newspaper carried extensive material on Africa and the local chapter of the Colonial Society was very active. The local regiment also participated in the Boxer Rebellion and the Herero war, another link to the colonies.¹⁷⁰ There were many conduits through which that wider world reached into provincial life. Street names and commemorative plaques were an everyday reminder of the colonial. So were those colorful advertisements, and the "colonial goods" shops that sold the commodities they advertised. Illustrated magazines carried colonial stories. Germans could buy cheap editions of colonial adven-

ture stories or the "*Farmersfrau*" style of memoir pioneered by Frieda von Bülow.¹⁷¹ Nor should we forget the literature, games, and toys produced for children and young people. Just as the model train set domesticated that great symbol of nineteenth-century progress, so board games like *Die Kolonisten* and models like the miniature African village domesticated the distant colonial world. They allowed children to "play empire."¹⁷²

These influences were pervasive.¹⁷³ But did they necessarily encourage people to identify with the German colonial empire? Some obviously did—a local regiment that had fought there, street names honoring German "colonial heroes," wall maps of the German empire, colonial literature set in Southwest Africa. But the elements of the "exotic" were often quite unrelated to German overseas possessions. The African village in Oldenburg called itself a "Somali village." Any claims it might have had to authenticity concerned a part of Africa divided between Britain and Italy. That was no accident. The Herero displayed at the Berlin Exhibition of 1896 were the last Africans from the German empire to be part of any people show or display. The missionaries in Southwest Africa had objected at the time.¹⁷⁴ Four years later the German government caught up with them. Chancellor Chlodwig von Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst and the Colonial Council (a group that advised the Colonial Office) banned the export of native peoples from the German colonies for display in Europe, on the grounds that these moneymaking ventures possessed no educational value and had adverse effects on the health of the individuals concerned and on colonial relations.¹⁷⁵

The often spuriously labeled peoples who appeared in later shows came from all over the world. They were Nubians, Burmese, Zulus, and North American "wild Indians" and "Eskimos." Advertisements, board games, and popular literature also included a much wider range of peoples than were to be found in the German colonies. The racist sentiment that was fed by these cruel displays and grotesque caricatures belonged to a wider racialized European imagination.

World Economy

CONTEMPORARIES KNEW THAT THE WORLD WAS GROWING smaller. They were also aware how economic exchanges were helping to drive that process and create a "world horizon" (in the words of the theologian Ernst Troeltsch).¹⁷⁶ A truly global economy took shape toward the

end of the nineteenth century, marked by the extraordinary multiplication of trade links and tied together by the rapid growth in shipping, undersea cables, and the activity of merchants and bankers whose frame of reference was international. Almost nowhere on earth remained untouched by the ability of a dynamic capitalist system to commandeer new resources and open new markets. That is why the period before 1914 is now widely regarded as the first age of globalization, its interconnections and linkages unequaled until the closing years of the twentieth century.¹⁷⁷

German observers were especially quick to spot the trend. The economist Adolph Wagner was already writing in 1879 that "current conditions have allowed commerce to unite the national economies into a single globe-spanning world economic organism."¹⁷⁸ The term *Weltwirtschaft*—world economy—was widely used from the 1880s, decades before it became familiar in English.¹⁷⁹ One reason is that, since the time of Friedrich List earlier in the century, economics was typically viewed in Germany through a national lens. German economists therefore saw the globalizing trend as just the latest stage of a development from domestic, to urban, to national, to global economy. More than that, however, Germany's increasingly active role in global trade became a contentious issue in domestic politics. The economic strength of the new nation was a source of widespread pride, especially when—in some areas, at least—it began to overtake Britain, which was at once model and rival. But Germany's expanding role in the global economy followed from the fact that it had, in the jargon of the time, made the transition from "agrarian" to "industrial" state. That shift encountered resistance from conservative intellectuals, and from those—a minority by the 1890s, but a large one—who lived in the countryside and small towns, felt left behind, and saw world trade as a threat, not an opportunity. Germany's place in the global economy often caused antagonism to flare up between town and country, industry and agriculture, when political battle was joined over trade treaties, tariffs, and seemingly innocent matters like veterinary border controls.

That Germany had become an economic leader on the world stage is beyond question. A few statistics will show how intimately the German economy was enmeshed in the global movement of commodities. The value of German imports increased from 2.8 to 10.8 billion marks between 1880 and 1913. Exports followed a similar trajectory, rising from 2.9 billion to 10.1 billion marks over the same period. In both cases, the curve rose most steeply in the last prewar decade. Germany was the world's most dynamic

capitalist nation, rivaled only by the United States, when it came to the growth of external trade. Even as it imported more foodstuffs from overseas to feed a growing urban-industrial population, the share of GNP accounted for by exports almost doubled. In 1880 the German share of the global export of manufactured goods lagged a little behind France and was less than half that of Britain. Fast-forward to 1913, and the German share was twice the French and closing in rapidly on the British.¹⁸⁰

Steel tells the story dramatically. In 1880 Britain produced twice as much of it as Germany; by 1913 the positions were reversed.¹⁸¹ The example of steel is potentially misleading, though. It is true that German output in the "heavy metal" branches of iron and steel, like the related production of coal, increased dramatically in these years. But the real secret of German export success lay in more sophisticated goods. Some were the products of engineering companies, like the armaments made by Alfred Krupp and marketed around the world, the turbines made by the J. M. Voith Company in Heidenheim that were installed at Niagara Falls, and the spark plugs patented by Robert Bosch in Stuttgart, a company that earned 90 percent of its income from exports by 1913. Other German global successes came from companies in quintessentially modern branches of the economy that came into their own in the late nineteenth century: Siemens and its electrical products; Carl Zeiss of Jena, maker of precision optical instruments; and companies such as Bayer and BASF, which had global markets for their chemicals, dyestuffs, and pharmaceuticals. It was in Germany that methamphetamine was first synthesized (in 1887) and the drug we know as aspirin synthesized and marketed by Bayer (in 1897-1899). By 1914 Germany was the European leader in chemicals and pharmaceuticals, the world leader in electrical goods. Germany was king when it came to the products of the so-called Second Industrial Revolution.

These were the goods marked "Made in Germany." It is ironic that the label originated with the British Merchandizing Marks Act of 1887, which aimed to protect British consumers by identifying "cheap and shoddy" German products. Fear of German competition drove this British attempt to stigmatize foreign imports, but the association of German products with low quality was not entirely cynical or wrongheaded at the time. The German exhibits at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia were denounced for their poor quality by German journalists. It was only later that the designation "Made in Germany" became a marker of quality, and the nature of British concern started to shift. Between 1886

and 1900, the six largest German firms filed almost a thousand patents in Britain, while the six largest British firms filed fewer than a hundred. By the beginning of the twentieth century, some British firms were slapping a "Made in Germany" label on their products as a way of passing them off as higher quality.¹⁸²

During the decades when Germany became a dominant economic power, the value of imported food and raw materials was slightly higher in most years than the value of exports. This negative trade balance was one of the trends that disturbed conservatives, already alarmed by the speed of Germany's transition to an urban-industrial society. The trade gap was filled, as it was in the case of Britain, the industrial pioneer, by "invisible earnings." They included repatriated profits from German businesses that established plants outside the country, either to circumvent tariffs or to take advantage of lower labor costs. There were also earnings from services, such as the German contribution to international construction projects (the rail tunnel through the Gotthard Pass, the Berlin-Baghdad railway), for these were years when German engineers and architects started to enjoy a higher profile in the world. In the late 1880s, before he achieved fame in Germany for his advocacy of the English arts and crafts movement, the architect Hermann Muthesius worked as a construction supervisor in the Japanese office of the German firm invited by the Meiji government to develop a plan for rebuilding Tokyo as a modern city.

German capital was also invested overseas on a growing scale. By 1914 Germany had become the world's third-largest creditor nation, thanks to direct investments by companies and the purchase of foreign government bonds. Germany still exported much less capital than Britain or France; its overseas investments were just a third of Britain's.¹⁸³ Germany also offered no competition to the City of London when it came to the arcane world of underwriting and reinsurance. But in another sphere where Britain had long been dominant, Germany was catching up quickly. That was merchant shipping. In 1880 Germany still had less steam tonnage than Spain; thirty years later German steam tonnage was three times greater than the French, four times greater than the American. Only the British merchant marine was larger. It was a remarkable transformation, helped by subsidies to shipbuilders in Hamburg and Bremen and a dizzying tempo of investment in new harbor facilities. By 1914 the value of the trade passing through the port of Hamburg was exceeded only by New York and Antwerp. German shipping lines such as the Hamburg-Amerika and the Nord-Deutscher

Lloyd had a worldwide presence, supported by a global network of agents and coaling stations.

The first German steamship lines reached the coast of Africa in the 1880s and Germany's transformation into a global economic powerhouse coincided with its acquisition of colonies. Was it just a coincidence? How important were German colonies to its dramatic growth spurt? One of the main arguments on behalf of colonies was economic, after all. It was merchant adventurers such as Adolf Lüderitz who often drew Germany into imperial entanglements, and hardheaded organizations like chambers of commerce, banks, and manufacturers' associations all expressed keen interest in what colonies had to offer. The membership of the German Colonial Association read like a who's who of the business world: Krupp, Stumm, Siemens, Kirdorf. Individual firms certainly benefited. The colonies provide a market for capital goods like railroad track, electrical equipment, and dynamite for mining. Copper mining was a lucrative enterprise for the companies that undertook it in Southwest Africa and so, even more, was diamond mining after the precious stones were discovered there in 1908.¹⁸⁴ The colonies also turned a profit for companies that traded in raw materials such as palm oil, peanuts, cocoa, rubber, and ivory from Cameroon. Hanseatic merchants were very much to the fore. Hamburg handled a third of all West African trade by the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁸⁵ German East Africa, meanwhile, was a valuable source of raw cotton for the domestic textile industry at a time when world supplies were uncertain. It was, in the words of one German economist, a way to break "the economic rule of America over the European cotton industry."¹⁸⁶ Yet, in the end, even if some companies benefited, most colonies needed subsidies and their overall contribution to the economy was negligible. Just 2 percent of German capital investment went to the colonies, which accounted for less than 1 percent of German exports and only one-half of 1 percent of imports.¹⁸⁷ Africa was "irrelevant" in terms of trade, said economist Adolph Wagner.¹⁸⁸

He was not quite right. It was colonial borders that were really irrelevant. German economic success in Africa was greatest in areas not under German jurisdiction—Egypt, the Congo, and above all South Africa, where Deutsche Bank had a major presence and German companies exported steel, machinery, chemicals, and household goods, held the local dynamite monopoly, and supplied the water. This was the opposite of the situation in Qingdao, where Germany invested heavily in infrastructure but most of the imports came from Japan and the German share of the trade pass-

ing through the port was just 8 percent.¹⁸⁹ On balance, Germany came out ahead. It did good business in other people's empires and in parts of the world where it lacked any formal political influence. South America is the classic case: the biggest political influences were British and American, but Latin America became an important market for German manufactures, an essential source of food, and a place where 3.8 billion marks were invested by 1914.

Germany became a global economic power, but its most important trade by far was with other European countries. Its eight top trading partners in 1913, ranked by the value of German exports, were Britain, Austria, the United States (the sole non-European country), Russia, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland.¹⁹⁰ But the economic importance of Europe went beyond these core countries. German exports penetrated Scandinavian markets to the north and Italian markets to the south. The primacy of Europe was evident when industrialists warned about antagonizing Spain during a dispute over the Caroline Islands, because Germany stood to lose much more in trade with Spain than it could ever gain in the Pacific.¹⁹¹ In the early 1890s Leo von Caprivi, Bismarck's successor as chancellor, negotiated a series of trade treaties with other European countries. Four of them—with Austria-Hungary, Russia, Serbia, and Romania—indicate the expansion of German trade to the east and southeast. Tsarist Russia, industrializing in a hurry in the decades before 1914, borrowed French money and spent it on German goods. German economic tentacles were meanwhile reaching into *Mitteleuropa* and along the Lower Danube into the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire. These areas purchased German railroad track and manufactured goods, supplying food and (in the last prewar years) oil in return. In 1913, German exports to Romania were three times more valuable than exports to all the German colonies combined.¹⁹²

Economic power brought global prestige. The major powers and those looking to join their ranks compared themselves constantly, almost obsessively, against one another. The harsh, pseudo-Darwinian language of the "survival of the fittest" ran thorough contemporary discussions of economic trends, with the suggestion that competition was a zero-sum game.¹⁹³ Attachment to an older liberal economic order did not entirely disappear. It was still passionately advocated by leading economists like Lujo Brentano (a nephew of Clemens Brentano), who looked to Britain as a model.¹⁹⁴ In the emotive language of another liberal economist, Heinrich Dietzel, free trade was like the human body—"to sever the sinews of trade is to slice into

one's own flesh."⁹⁵ But by the time Dietzel said this, in 1900, his view was more likely than would have been the case twenty years earlier to be dismissed as outdated Manchesterism, the derisive label attached to English-style free trade. To conservative economists, free trade was dangerous. It made Germany vulnerable to the vagaries of a global economic order, they argued, including manipulative ventures like the attempt by a Chicago dealer named Joseph Leiter to corner the world wheat market in 1897–98. Above all, it threatened national security and Germany's ability to feed itself in the event of war by making the population dependent on imported food.⁹⁶ Capital recognized "no fatherland," in Wagner's ominous phrase.

The gathering interest in imperialism and the calls for protective tariffs to insulate Germany from world markets were both reactions against economic globalization. They were signs of what the political scientist Karl Polanyi described seventy-five years ago as "the new crustacean kind of nation."⁹⁷ Antiglobalization was a global phenomenon. The McKinley tariff in the United States (1890), the Mendelev tariff in Russia (1891), and the Méline tariff in France (1892) were outcrops of the same instinct. Protectionism was more the norm than the exception in these years. That is why, although one German historian has referred to Germany's "tariff isolation," it would be more accurate to talk about Britain's free-trade isolation.⁹⁸ But Germany does illustrate as well as anywhere the crustacean reflex of the era, which meant being unavoidably part of a globalizing world, yet putting up defenses against it. The economists argued over these issues; so did the political parties and Germany's well-organized economic interest groups. Questions about trade and tariffs, or how to position the nation within the global economy, were a red thread that ran through imperial German political debates.

Tariffs were introduced by Bismarck in 1879, in response to the Great Depression that began six years earlier, although there was also political calculation in play, as there usually was with Bismarck.⁹⁹ Other countries retaliated, with negative effects on German exports. The trade treaties that Chancellor Caprivi negotiated with other European countries in the early 1890s aroused violent political opposition and led eventually to his downfall. A decade later, in 1902, tariffs were raised again by Chancellor Bülow. *Cui bono*—who benefited? The conventional answer is: heavy industry and agriculture. Tariffs sealed the "marriage of iron and rye," an alliance of industrial barons like Krupp with the Junkers, the aristocratic Prussian estate owners, directed against the interests of finance, export industries,

and consumers. There is a pleasing symmetry to this idea, which puts two of German history's bad boys in the stocks together. Nor is it entirely wrong. These were the main beneficiaries of the 1879 tariffs. The 1902 tariffs then granted agriculture higher levels of protection, while heavy industry benefited from the steel-devouring new battle fleet. But if this was a marriage, it was one in which the two partners were constantly at odds. As in a bad marriage, each thought the other partner unreasonable. Heavy industrialists shared with more liberal, export-oriented branches of industry the view that the agrarians went too far with their tariff demands. Representatives of agriculture, for their part, did everything possible to slow down Germany's transition to an industrial economy tied to world markets, and if possible to reverse it.¹⁰⁰

It was German agrarian interests that demanded protection most loudly, because agriculture was hardest hit by the impact of a globalizing economy. The prices of primary commodities tumbled in the 1870s as freight rates fell and cheap grain came in from Russia and the North American prairies, as well as cheap meat from Argentina, a business that was transformed by refrigeration. Falling prices exacerbated other problems like labor shortages (the so-called flight from the land) and the costs of fertilizer. Primary producers also faced new challenges that arose from industrialization, like the competition the dairy industry faced from the chemical product margarine. That would have existed whether or not Germany was tied to global markets, but it was still one of many symbols (like cheap overseas grain) of life-and-death decisions being made in distant centers of power. The margarine factories on the Lower Rhine had a similar place in the agrarian demonology to the giant commercial mills on the Upper Rhine that processed American wheat. More than one-third of the German labor force in the early twentieth century was still employed in agriculture, where there were big increases in productivity during the prewar decades. But that did not stop primary producers from feeling that they were being taken for granted and exploited.

There was a major rural revolt in the early 1890s. It followed another downturn in world prices, which coincided with feedstuff shortages, outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease, and—the final straw—Caprivi's trade treaties. The Bavarian Peasant League and the Central German Peasants Association founded by the folklorist and archivist Otto Böckel represented an eruption of populist rage, directed against urban consumers and anyone associated with "internationalism": liberal politicians, financiers,

"Jewish" speculators. More disturbing to established elites, these populist movements also attacked them—"against the Junkers and the Jews" was the rallying cry of Böckel, "the peasant king of Hessen," who also demanded a progressive income tax. The Prussian political maverick Hermann Ahlwardt used the same populist and antisemitic rhetoric when winning a Reichstag seat from the Conservatives in 1892. The Bavarian Peasant League took on nobility, clergy, and other elites with its 1893 election slogan "No aristocrats, no priests, no doctors, no professors, only peasants for the representation of peasant interests."²⁰¹

The elites were alarmed but responded quickly. Catholic peasant leagues kept their members within the ambit of the church and the Catholic Center Party. Leaders of the party were willing to tolerate a good deal of antisemitic rabble-rousing at the local level to appease angry rural constituents. The Conservative Party traveled even further down the same road, mindful that (as one of its leaders put it) "we could not avoid the Jewish question unless we wanted to leave the demagogic antisemites a full wind in their sails with which they would have sailed right past us."²⁰² The "demagogic antisemites" were men like Ahlwardt, but the Conservatives themselves became consummate demagogues, setting up the Agrarian League and enrolling some 330,000 members in it by 1914, mainly peasants and craftsmen whom they pointed politically against their putative "cosmopolitan" enemies. In the process, the Conservatives were effectively taken over by the economic interests of the Junker landowners who dominated the party. Conservative and Catholic Center Party politics was meanwhile filled with rhetoric about the peasant and craftsman as the hardworking core of a healthy society, the wholesome elements that would keep Germany fed and defend it in the event of war.

Protective tariffs certainly helped Prussian Junkers and other large landowners, but they also benefited small and mid-sized peasant farmers.²⁰³ So did other pieces of legislation, such as a measure designed to support dairy farmers by requiring margarine to be dyed an obnoxious color to differentiate it from butter, laughably presented as a bill to protect the consumer, which passed with backing from the parties of the center right and far right.²⁰⁴ But many demands were rejected, especially the ones that challenged the basic direction of German economic policy. Agrarians received a no to bimetallism (the favorite solution of agrarian populists everywhere), which would have taken Germany off the gold standard, a no to nationalized grain imports at a fixed price, a no to changes to the bulk mailing



A membership card of the Agrarian League, with its idealized imagery of a common rural front and the slogan "Unity is strength." This card was issued in 1893 to a peasant farmer named A. Haupt in Berlstedt, Thuringia.

rates that (agrarians argued) favored business, a no to scrapping the special workers' trains that (they also argued) encouraged the growth of an industrial proletariat, and a no to cancellation of the Mittelland Canal, a symbol of industrial development against which they raged. But it was not just that these demands failed. Beyond the dramas of agrarian windmill tilting, countless pieces of everyday legislation were enacted, by conservative-leaning administrations, on patents, the credit system, company law, trade descriptions, the bankruptcy code, accounting procedures, and a hundred other subjects, measures that confirmed Germany's emergence as a sophisticated industrial and commercial economy absolutely dependent on trade with the rest of the world. That was also the lesson of a new round of trade treaties that came into effect in 1906.

Even the tariffs of 1902 were lower than agrarians had asked for. But they still kept prices higher than they would otherwise have been, and thus harmed consumers. Tariffs made Germany more self-sufficient in foodstuffs and led to an effective redistribution of income from town to country. For that was the double-sided coin of low commodity prices on the world

market. They triggered violent opposition from agrarians but represented a cheap supply of calories that permitted German cities to grow at a fantastic pace by feeding those now laboring in the factory and not on the farm. For the workers themselves, they allowed living standards to edge up even as wages remained flat. Tariffs, even at modest levels, cut into that improvement. It is no surprise that the Social Democratic Party (SPD), easily the world's largest socialist or labor party in the early twentieth century, made "cheap food" the centerpiece of its campaign in the Reichstag election of 1903, which immediately followed the noisy, contentious reintroduction of tariffs.²⁰⁵ In attacking the "hunger tariff," the SPD was part of a global movement, for the protectionist turn of the 1890s was followed by a pro-consumer backlash from Vienna to Santiago.²⁰⁶

One set of agrarian protectionist measures in Germany consisted of veterinary laws that kept out cheap foreign meat. A "pork war" rumbled on through the 1880s. The *New-York Tribune* declared dramatically that "Bismarck's war against the American pig" was the greatest German conflict since the time of Frederick the Great.²⁰⁷ Measures were also taken against the import of other live animals and of meat. The German Meat Inspection Law of 1900 then virtually excluded American products. The political lineup was a familiar one: Conservatives and Catholic Center voted in favor, Social Democrats and liberals against. There is no question that veterinary concerns were used as a protectionist weapon. But the health arguments were not entirely spurious. There was reason for alarm about the threat posed by trichinosis in pigs, tuberculosis and pleuropneumonia (so-called Texas fever) in cattle, and foot-and-mouth disease in livestock of every kind. These were international concerns, and they were mounting in an era when animals and meat were being shipped across borders on an unprecedented scale.²⁰⁸

Animal diseases, or epizootics, were just one sign of a larger problem closely linked to global economic exchanges. Call it the problem of stowaways. Trichonosis and cattle tuberculosis accompanied their animal hosts, uninvited. So did the vine disease phylloxera and the Colorado beetle, which attacked potatoes. This mattered in a country that produced 40 million tons of potatoes a year by the early twentieth century.²⁰⁹ Adolf Wermuth, a government official charged with addressing these threats to German agriculture, wrote a lightly ironic account many years later about the "war of extermination" waged against these and other harmful insects, but humor was in short supply at the time.²¹⁰ The problem of invasive spe-

cies was felt on water as well as on land. The zebra mussel and other molluscs were carried into international waterways like the Rhine, where they established themselves in already damaged ecosystems. So did the common water hyacinth, native to the Amazon basin and a tenacious invasive species elsewhere, which began to infest German rivers in the nineteenth century. These problems became more acute when the ballast tank came into general use around 1880, intensifying the "ecological roulette" of aquatic invasions.²¹¹

The language of zoological threats and invasive species started to be applied to people in the late nineteenth century, a disturbing portent of what was to come. During the *Kulturkampf* in the 1870s we find a nationalist writer lumping phylloxera and Colorado beetle together with the Jesuits and "other enemies of the Reich."²¹² Language that elided the distinction between human and nonhuman species served a purpose. Catholics were dehumanized as a prelude to persecution, just as Jews were described as a "bacillus" or "vermin" by followers of the pseudoscientific antisemitism that emerged at the end of the 1870s.²¹³ A generation later, proposals that Germany recruit cheap Chinese labor were greeted by one newspaper with the response that the United States, Australia, and South Africa had all learned to fear "the yellow plague."²¹⁴ The link between a class of humans and the biological "threat" of "invasion" and "infection" was perhaps most broadly applied by Germans of the late nineteenth century to seasonal migrant workers.

Nationalists had complained in the past about mass emigration as a threat to Germandom. Then, around 1890, Germany changed from an exporter to an importer of people. As a result, nationalists complained instead about the threat supposedly posed by foreigners inside German borders. By 1914 there were around 1.2 million foreign laborers in Germany. Most were Polish, others Italian and Dutch.²¹⁵ The rise in seasonal migration was driven by the shortage of agricultural labor, especially on the estates of Prussia's eastern provinces, as Germans moved to better-paying jobs in the cities. A network of agents, middlemen, and village mayors was established in Habsburg Galicia to recruit Polish laborers for Germany. Others came from Polish areas of Russia. On the large farms in the south, rural labor was brought in from Italy. In Catholic Upper Swabia a distinct form of seasonal migration quickened in tempo in the late nineteenth century, namely the use of child laborers—the so-called Swabian children—who crossed the Alps from Austria and Switzerland to be auctioned off as

farm servants and cowherds at markets held every spring in Württemberg.²¹⁶ Foreign laborers also worked in factories and especially in "dirty jobs" like street cleaning and construction. The giant dams that were built in the early 1900s could not have been built without them. These construction projects employed as many as a thousand men at a time. Bosnians, Croats, Poles, and Czechs were among the army of workers who were excavating, stone-breaking, dynamiting, or operating the steam-driven winches. Italians were invariably present as skilled masons as well as laborers. On the biggest sites temporary townships of barracks were constructed, larger than the villages scheduled to be drowned behind the new dam walls. However, it was where the laborers were not separated from the locals that antiforeigner feeling was strongest.²¹⁷

Fears about "invasions" by non-German peoples were amplified by ultra-nationalist organizations like the Pan-German League and German Society for the Eastern Marches. Chauvinist sentiments were fed from many sources, including the tacit message sent by German governments. Between 1880 and 1914, for example, some 2 million Russian Jews passed through Germany on the way to ports that would take them to the United States. They were permitted to do so (a Conservative Reichstag motion to ban their entry was defeated), but subject to strict transit controls to prevent them from remaining on German soil, and almost none did.²¹⁸ In effect, a cordon sanitaire was placed around them. Something similar happened in the case of Poles. Bismarck had expelled Poles from eastern areas of Prussia in 1884–85, but urgent labor needs made Polish workers indispensable. They were therefore allowed into Germany, but strictly as seasonal migrant laborers, without their families, and required to leave the country during the winter "waiting period." Their coming and going was regulated and monitored; registration was mandatory. There were hygiene checks and disinfection stations at border posts, which could handle up to ten thousand people a day, and the laborers carried ID cards that bore the name of their employer as well as their own. These procedures, and what they implied, were as eloquent in their way as the openly racist sentiments espoused by members of the Society for the Eastern Marches or the crude representations of the "Slav flood" that became common in literary and historical works during the prewar years.²¹⁹

These movements of people generated hostility. The Jews who passed through Germany on their way to America, the Poles who stayed in Germany (but only from spring through fall), and the Chinese sailors on Ger-

man vessels who created a "Chinese quarter" in Hamburg (but one that numbered in the hundreds only) all aroused antipathy. Sometimes it came from unexpected quarters. The prominent liberal academic Max Weber had notoriously critical things to say about the cultural and civilizational "backwardness" of Polish laborers in his Freiburg inaugural address of 1894.²²⁰ Weber wanted to expose the landowning Junkers' hypocrisy for arguing, on the one hand, that agriculture needed special protection because it served the national interest and, on the other hand, calling for the import of cheap Polish labor.²²¹ His rhetoric was harsh, but Weber was, and remained, a fierce critic of what he contemptuously called "zoological nationalism." Members of the Sailors' Union opposed the hiring of Chinese crew by German owners and were supported in this by the Social Democrats. They did so on good trade union grounds, arguing that the owners were interested in cost cutting and oblivious to safety—but they also made odious comparisons between the "yellow peril" and "yellow unions," i.e., the company unions set up by shipping lines.²²² Overall, however, the trade union movement and the SPD played a much underrated role in inoculating German workers against racism, or at least making the open expression of racist views unacceptable in the labor movement.

The picture looked very different on the political right. Hostility to any kind of cross-border movement by non-Germans was strong among the peasants and craftsmen. Like hostility to free trade, it was part of the backlash against the global economy in its many forms. Populist demagogues played on these resentments, and established conservative politicians were happy to steal the demagogues' slogans. Many in the growing white-collar class also proved susceptible to arguments about the threat supposedly posed by racially defined outsiders. But material security and education conferred no immunity when it came to racist attitudes. The colonial societies and nationalist organizations like the Pan-German League had solidly bourgeois memberships. A fourth of the Pan-German League's local chapter leaders held PhDs. At the beginning of the twentieth century it was here, as much as anywhere else in German society, that we encounter a noisy, racially imbued kind of hypernationalism emerging more aggressively in response to a globalizing world.

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CHAPTER EIGHT: ON THE MOVE

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GERMANY IN THE WORLD

A GLOBAL HISTORY
1500-2000

DAVID BLACKBOURN



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