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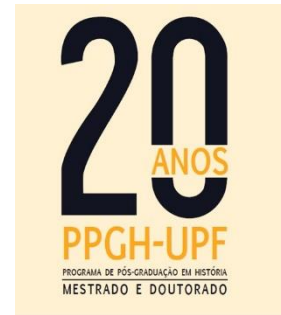
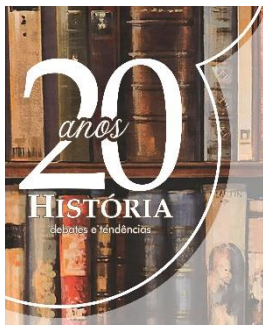
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“Red Fascists”: anti-Nazi Germans under suspicion of the FBI

“Red Fascists”: alemães antinazistas sob a suspeição do FBI

“Red Fascists”: alemanes antinazis bajo sospecha del FBI

Wanilton Dudekⁱ

Abstract: Since the rise of Adolf Hitler in Germany in 1933, German opponents of Nazism had look for exile on the American continent, forming complex political movements across the American continent. The presence of the Free German Movement and the Council for the Democratic German in Los Angeles has alerted the US authorities, especially because of evidence of their links with communism and their relations with political movements in Latin America. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the role of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in investigating German anti-Nazi exile groups in California and south of the United States border in the context of World War II.

Keywords: Anti-Nazism. Exile. FBI.

Resumo: Desde a ascensão de Adolf Hitler na Alemanha em 1933 alemães opositores ao nazismo buscaram exílio no continente americano, formando complexos movimentos políticos em todo o continente americano. A presença do *Free German Movement* e do *Council for a Democratic German* em Los Angeles ligou alerta nas autoridades norte-americanas, principalmente pelos indícios de ligações desses grupos com o comunismo e suas relações com movimentos políticos na América Latina. O objetivo deste trabalho é analisar a existência dos movimentos políticos antinazistas de fala alemã e a atuação do *Federal Bureau of Investigation* (FBI) nas investigações destes grupos na Califórnia e ao sul da fronteira dos Estados Unidos no contexto da Segunda Guerra Mundial.

Palavras-chave: Antinazismo. Exílio. FBI.

Resumen: Desde el surgimiento de Adolf Hitler en Alemania en 1933, los opositores alemanes al nazismo han buscado el exilio en el continente americano, formando movimientos políticos complejos en todo el continente americano. La presencia del Movimiento Alemán Libre y el Consejo para el Alemán Democrático en Los Ángeles ha alertado a las autoridades estadounidenses, especialmente debido a la evidencia de sus vínculos con el comunismo y sus relaciones con los movimientos políticos en América Latina. El propósito de este documento es analizar el papel de la Oficina Federal de Investigaciones (FBI) en la investigación de grupos alemanes de exiliados antinazis en California y al sur de la frontera de los Estados Unidos en el contexto de la Segunda Guerra Mundial.

Palabras clave: Antinazismo. Exilio. FBI.

Introduction

The advancement of persecution of the anti-Nazi Germans triggered a strong wave of exile to the Americas, leading to major changes in political and social structures, particularly in the border regions between the United States and Mexico. A large police apparatus organized to investigate the actions of German and Austrian exiles on US territory. Between the 1930s and 1940s there was a significant increase in agents at the FBI, which now numbered more than 7,000 agents, representing an increase in spending from \$ 6 million annually in 1941 to \$ 30 million in 1943. The methods of FBI Director-General John Edgar Hoover were considered excessive by the public in the United States, earning him the nickname "J. Edgar Himmler", receiving harsh criticism from even the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, when she stated that there were many similarities between the Hoover methods and the Gestapo (USC Special Collections, Noah Isenberg. BOX # 1).

The Hitler-Stalin pact made in 1939 received with great surprise by the US authorities. Therefore, in many documents produced by FBI researchers, the term used to mention German-speaking exiles in the United States was "Communazis" and "Red Fascists." Thus, behind the apparent sense of freedom that foreigners enjoyed in America, the US police and intelligence agencies produced more than twenty dossiers, containing about fourteen thousand pages, with investigations into the activities of these writers during the period that they were in the United States. Thomas Mann, Bertolt Brecht, Lion Feuchtwanger and Heinrich Mann were some of the main targets of these investigations, and they were great references for anti-Nazi German-speaking groups in South America. Thus, in many cases the investigation went beyond the borders of the United States targeting the possible relationships they had with groups in the same condition in Latin American countries. Spying on US government agencies focused on three main "scenarios": Los Angeles, New York, and Mexico. Initiatives were centered on the FBI, but other agencies such as the Office of Strategic Service (OSS), and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the methods used were telephone interceptions, correspondence violations, wiretapping, and even checking the rubbish of houses and places frequented by German-speaking exiles (STEPHAN, 2000).

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the existence of the German-speaking anti-Nazi political movements and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) actions in the investigations of these groups in California and south of the United States border in the context of World War II. In addition to bibliographic references, documentary sources from the Exiled German Speaking Archives, available at the University of Southern California (USC), Los Angeles,

used to produce this article.

In recent decades the work of historians Ehrhard Bahr and Alexander Stephan has expanded the scope for research into the political performance of anti-Nazi German-speaking exiles in the United States and Mexico. Bahr elaborated a large study on the exile of German writers in Los Angeles and the political debates between them in the context of the growing Hollywood film industry. The work reconstructs the daily life of recurring discussions between writers in exile, revealing the diversity of ideological affiliations that made up the anti-Nazi movements.

The term “Weimar in the Pacific”, which gave its name to his work, explains the author's general approach by bringing to light the problem of lack of unity between them, reflecting the political context of the Weimar Republic period, exemplified by the discussions between Thomas Mann and Bertolt Brecht on the position that groups in exile should take in relation to events in Germany.

The author also stressed the influence that the cultural and political universe of Los Angeles had on German-speaking exiles, showing that much of the his positions taken in the fight against Nazism were in defense of the “liberal values” experienced in the US In a recent publication, “Hitler in Los Angeles: How Jews Foiled Nazi Plots Against Hollywood and America,” the department's historian Steven Ross History of the USC, analyzed the participation of exiled Jews in Los Angeles and their effective action against Nazism. that of the Jews with the Hollywood industry, in cooperation with the US authorities in Nazi counterintelligence (ROSS, 2017).

This literature demonstrates the multiple possibilities of study in relation to anti-Nazi exile on the American continent. As this is a border region, we chose to use the methodological perspective of Transnational History, represented here by Micol Seigel and Barbara Weinstern,

The idea is not to change from the cultural sphere to the political sphere; on the contrary, the argument is the impossibility of understanding political developments without a more careful consideration of cultural exchanges, and the role of culture in inter-American projects (whether promoted by Americans, Latin Americans or those without a point of origin). that we can clearly identify) (WEINSTEIN, 2013, p. 17).

This proposal aims to demonstrate the interaction between political analysis and cultural relations established between exiles in different countries with different political structures (SEIGEL, 2005).

Anti-Nazi groups and the FBI

FBI investigators watched every step of the foreigners in Los Angeles, keeping track of the people they dealt with in the city and the correspondence sent and received by them. The FBI files contain everything from Heinrich Mann's traffic tickets for drunk driving to the plans he was discussing with Freie Deutschland about Germany's future. To coordinate investigations in Los Angeles, Hoover appointed agent Richard B. Hood, who led the entire team of OSS special agents in producing dossiers for exiled writers in Southern California.

Heinrich Mann, Thomas Mann's brother, was one of the main targets of FBI investigations, especially for his rapprochement with communism and his active participation in anti-Nazi movements. After leaving exile in France in 1940, Heinrich Mann settled in Los Angeles. It did not adapt to the conditions of literary production in the same way as Thomas Mann. He was fired from Warner Brothers Studio after working for a year, without seeing his scripts being used in any film production. According to OSS documents, "Heinrich Mann was much more interested in his political life. He lives in Los Angeles suburbs and maintains intense political activity." This led agents to focus not only on Heinrich Mann's internal activities, but also on his involvement with the political activities of other groups in Latin America from Mexico, where he was recognized as honorary chairman of the "American Committee of Free Germans."

Heinrich Mann, 73, Czech citizen of German descent, was born on 27/03/1971, Luebeck, Germany. He is a German exile allegedly aided by "underworld" groups on his departure from France in 1940. He entered the United States as a visitor on 13/10/1940 in New York City, and applied for a permanent visa on 29/03/1941 in San Ysidro, California. It was received in Los Angeles by Bertolt Brecht and Lion Feuchtwanger, German refugee writers with communist inclinations. These three are very active in the Free German Movement, aiming to establish a post-war German government in favor of Russia. Heinrich Mann is honorary chairman of the Latin American Free German Committee, an organization where all Western German Free German Movements are united. He attended the meeting for the purpose of endorsing the Moscow Manifesto, announced by the Free German Committee in Mexico in July 1943 (USC Libraries, Box L11, folder 38).

By highlighting the "communist inclinations" of refugees, the Free German Movement's intentions to ally with Moscow and using the expression "underworld" when referring to the French resistance, the FBI seemed to misunderstand the fight against Nazism and the inter-state alliance. States and Soviet Union that was inserted in this context. The FBI censors' concern with Nazi spies seemed to be less compared to the "Red Threat" present in exile groups.

The idea of the "Red Threat" often appears in the FBI's documentation of the Free German Movement in Southern California, stating that this was a new attempt to create a

government in exile, as it had with the “Thomas Mann Committee”. ”But now under the leadership of a communist leader, Heinrich Mann. In describing its intentions and activities in the United States, the FBI stated that

The Free German Movement aims to establish a post-war German government in favor of the Soviet Union. The findings of this office state that some of those involved in this movement intend to move their activities to Europe as soon as possible.” (USC Libraries, Box L11, folder 38).

When a group of exiles called by the FBI the “German-Russian Committee” met at the home of German writer Berthold Viertel a year later to discuss the formation of the Free German National Committee in Moscow, Thomas Mann stated that “soon after Then a public statement would be made expressing support for the newly formed group in Russia.” This approach to Moscow has always been the main reason why Thomas Mann did not declare himself an effective member of the Free German Movement. Later, in 1944, the FBI investigated Heinrich Mann's rapprochement with the New York-formed Council for Democratic Germany, which, according to the investigators, “was a group of nineteen individuals, all communists, who intended to establish Heinrich Mann as future president.”

The transit of German exiles between California and Mexico, as well as the exchange of correspondence between them, prompted the opening of specific investigations by US authorities beyond the southern border from May 1940, the year Hoover reported to the President. Roosevelt about sending FBI special agents to Mexico City. In the same year the Special Intelligence Service for Latin America (SISLA) was created to monitor the activities of anti-Nazi groups in Latin America, and their relations with exiles in the United States, operating until 1947. Thus, it was granted the Mexican government's permission for the FBI to monitor mail exchanges and messages between exiles residing in both countries (STEPHAN, 2000, p.224).

As investigations progressed, the FBI's structure adapted to the needs met by federal agents. Thus, in 1941 the FNB (Foreign Nationalities Branch) was formed, with a major focus on the performances of groups of members of anti-Nazi groups, such as the Free German Movement in Mexico. Despite the actions of the FBI investigations, political movements such as the Pro-German Culture League and the Free Germany Movement (with its extension to Latin America, called the Latin American Free German Committee), found space in Mexico to disseminate their publications, among others. they are America's premier anti-Nazi magazine, *Freies Deutschland*, allowing the influence of their ideas to expand beyond the borders of Mexico, circulating among German-speaking exiles from Southern California, New York,

Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil. .ⁱⁱ

Historically there was already a massive presence of Germans involved in political activities in Latin America since Bismarck's anti-socialist laws, especially in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. Unlike agricultural and industrial workers, intellectuals found it more difficult to perform the activities they were used to in Europe. In many countries, lack of resources and tight surveillance of immigration services made it difficult for foreigners to engage in political activities, with significant differences from country to country.

One of the main functions of the anti-Nazi organizations was to assist refugees, so cooperation agreements were maintained for those who needed visas and ship tickets to the Americas. The Latin American Free German Committee sought to represent the interests of all German-speaking communities in exile, including the Jewish ones, by establishing networks of writers living in isolation in South America, establishing alliances against Hitler, and seeking to construct the idea of a New Germany. The choice of the movement's leaders made obvious the plural ideological composition of the group: Heinrich Mann, moderate socialist; Hubertus Prinz zu Lowenstein and Kurt Rosenfeld, both liberals declared, who organized the German-American Emergency Conference in the United States; Balder Olden from Buenos Aires; and Austrian Karl von Lustig-Prean, a former member of the Christian Social Party and leader of the Free German Movement of Brazil. There were many efforts to maintain coordinated activities across America so the Latin American Free German Committee's area of activity extended from North America to South America.

The difficulty in forming a network of contacts that could more effectively organize the movements of anti-Nazi Germans was, among other reasons, the intense vigilance of the authorities of the countries in which they were established. The intention has always been to keep groups connected in the United States, such as the Council for a Democratic German, and in South America, *Das Andere Deutschland*, led by August Siemsen in Argentina and the Free German Movement in Brazil.

On February 28, 1943, the FBI-linked Office of Censorship intercepted a correspondence sent by Mexico's Latin American Free German Committee to Heinrich Mann in Los Angeles. In the letter, there was a request for Mann to accept the post of honorary president of the movement, and information on the movements that had joined the formation of a single front of the "Free Germans" were. *Alemania Libre* (Mexico); Free German Movement of Brazil; *Germany Libre* (Costa Rica); *Germany Libre* (Chile); Preparatory Committee *Alemanes Libres* (Cuba); *Aleman Movement Pro Democracy and Freedom* in Ecuador; *Aleman Antifascist Committee* (Uruguay); *Ausschuss Der Deutschsprachigen Hitlergegner* In

Honduras; Preparatory Committee German Libres (Santo Domingo); Friends of Alemanes Libres (Panama, Venezuela and Guatemala). In addition, there were demonstrations of approaches from other groups that declined to make a formal agreement with the Latin American Free German Committee. These were the cases of Bolivia, with the Asociacion de los Alemanes Libre, and Colombia, which was in the process of creating a movement among the exiled Germans in that country. In the case of Argentina, there was no response from the La otra Alemania movement, led by August Siemsen (USC Special Collections, Box L11, folder 38, p. 01).

Since the formation of the Latin American Free German Committee, a large network of media and publications has been used to publicize the group's manifestos and intentions across the Americas, focusing primarily on German communities that have established themselves in the Americas. Thus, the FBI listed the media that served as the main propaganda media of the anti-Nazi movements in the Americas:

Freies Deutschland in Mexico, in Argentina Volksblatt in Argentina, Illimani in Bolivia, Freies Deutschland in Chile and Freies Europa in Colombia. In Brazil some newspapers and especially correspondence report to the Free German movements. Radio programs are also available to the Latin American Committee of the Free Germans of Mexico, Chile, Uruguay and the United States (USC Special Collections, Box L11, folder 38, p. 02).

Another form of activity of the Latin American Free German Committee was the organization of congresses, with the purpose of discussing the direction of the movement throughout America, as well as the direction that the war took in Europe. Thus, at the beginning of the 1940s the Congress of German Anti-Nazi Germans of South America was held on January 29, 30 and 31, 1943 in the city of Montevideo, and on February 15 of the same year, a "Convention Commemorative of the Free German Movement" in Mexico, which was attended by seventeen organized groups, including trade unions and anti-Nazi movements. America's leading anti-Nazi leaders attended both events, with speakers Ludwig Rena, Vicente Lobardo Toledano, Jeanne Stern and Anna Seghers. The general topic of the different discourses was the question of the domain of "Hitlerism / Fascism" and its repercussion in Latin American countries. Everyone seemed to agree that despite the Allied countries' military victories against the Axis powers. It was necessary to discuss the postwar changes that should take place in the countries that were dominated by the Nazi regime, and that to do so would not only have to eliminate Hitler, but change the whole German government by "introducing order and re-establishing democratic rights". "At the same time, we express faith in the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and throughout Latin America." (USC Special Collections, Box L11,

folder 38, p. 03).

The group maintained a financial cooperation network to help exiles in need of support. Among the organizations sending funds to the Latin American Free German Committee were the League of American Writers, an association of writers, journalists, playwrights and literary critics, founded in 1935 in New York City and closed in 1943. The objectives of the group were changing according to the world context. First it was an anti-fascist group, with many of its members linked to the United States Communist Party (CPUSA), which organized congresses across the country and supported the German exiles persecuted by the Nazis. During the Spanish Civil War the group helped many writers to enter the United States, and after the start of World War II began to partner with the movements of anti-Nazi Germans in the United States and Latin America. Despite attempts by the FBI to summarize the association as a "group of communist subversives," the League of American Writers had members who were unrelated to communism, such as Thomas Mann, one of the League's most active writers (FOLSOM, 1994).

The rapprochement with the Mexican government's official press agencies has resulted in some attendance at the National Civil Defense Department's radio programs. By correspondence, Heinrich Mann was informed in Los Angeles that he would be able to give speeches on broadcasts that would reach Mexico and Southern California, as did Enrique Guttman, a member of the American Free German Committee, using the space provided by the Mexican government. On the tenth anniversary of Hitler's rise to Germany, Guttman broadcast to all Mexican radio stations a denunciation tone about what was happening in the Nazi regime and the persecution of Germans that did not condone the Hitler government. Mexican President General Avila Camacho himself praised the committee's attitude, saying it fully approved the speech by Enrique Guttman (USC Special Collections, Box L11, folder 38, p. 04).

With the plurality of ideologies and interests among the anti-Nazi groups, there was often conflict between them. Concern for some episodes was expressed by Paul Marker in a correspondence sent to Heinrich Mann, where he reported "disputes and violent fights" between exiles in Mexico. The disputes would have occurred because of the differences between the political directions of the anti-Nazi activities that members of the groups defended in their meetings. (USC Special Collections, Box L11, folder 38, p.04). This was common in all German exile organizations in the Americas, most of them driven by disagreement about approaching the USSR.

The main link between organized movements in German-speaking exile was the magazine *Freies Deutschland*. Publications of the publication circulated in California, Mexico,

Argentina, and Brazil, examples of which are magazines seized by the FBI in the United States. *Freies Deutschland* magazine, or *Alemania Libre* for Mexicans, was founded in November 1941, soon became the main vehicle for publication of exiled German anti-Nazi Germans, and ceased its publication in 1946, when most of the exiles had already left the Mexico. It was composed of literature, political analysis, culture, and debates about Germany, allowing in distant places in Latin America to discuss the political directions of the country. The contributors and editors were German and Austrian exiles who settled in Southern California and Mexico, mostly writers and intellectuals. Although not an exclusively communist magazine, it had collaborations of various ideological nuances, for example, some had served the International Brigade in the battles of the Spanish Civil War and belonged to the KDP (German Communist Party), such as writer Bodo Uhse, who moved from Hollywood to Mexico City in March 1940. According to Mexican historian Maria Clotilde Rivera Ochoa

The magazine was widely spread on the American continent. The precarious conditions that were printed and distributed made it difficult for difficulties to arise, but despite all these problems were published until 1946, without any interruption, 55 numbers in total. The different sections of the magazine form a material distribution scheme that reflects the balance reached by the free Germans between their historical-political writings and their artistic and cultural production (OCHOA, 1995).

With the United States entering the war, the editors added "V" - as a "sign of victory" for the Allies - on the cover of the magazine. Allied countries represented hope for the anti-Nazi groups of exiles, hence unconditional support for the country. The highlight of the publication was always for culture, always working with the concepts of democracy, freedom and progress. From the analysis of the magazine *Freies Deutschland* that circulated among the Germans, we can understand what were the exchanges of information, ideas and political plans that were shared among the movements of anti-Nazi Germans around the world. These were writers, intellectuals, businessmen, among others who sought to demonstrate that there was indeed a German thought opposed to Nazism.

The magazine was not only important for exiles, it was news sources from many to many countries, containing important information on modern science, art and literature. It was the result of Editor Bodo Uhse's extensive literary program, with the important contribution of exiled writers living in Mexico such as Anna Seghers, Egon Erwin Kisch and Bodo Uhse who wrote regularly for *Freies Deutschland*. Heinrich Mann and Thomas Mann, Berthold Viertel, Bruno Frank, Lion Feuchtwanger, Oskar Maria Graf, Ferdinand Bruckner, and Mascha Kaléko sent contributions from the United States. States, as did Paul Zech of Argentina.

Freies Deutschland remained active throughout the war, serving as a source of analysis

for the conflicts taking place in Europe, not only in the field of war, but especially as regards political affairs. The latest publications in 1945 and 1946 served to discuss the directions of Germany following the defeat for the Allies. Disagreements about the ideologies that should be adopted to reorganize the German state followed. In this same context, the materials released by the exiles were increasingly scarce, as for the US authorities, as soon as the war with the Germans and the Japanese was over their full attention was drawn exclusively to the enemy they represented. the greatest danger: communism, which led them to an extensive ideological war against the USSR, the Cold War.

Conclusion

The 1930's and 1940's were a crucial decades that defined the FBI way of acting, influenced directly by the geopolitical context, when US government was alert about Nazism and soviet communism, all of it aggravated during World War II. The FBI's investigative actions crossed the United States and Mexico borders, extending to wherever organized German-speaking anti-Nazi movements acted. Political activity in exile has always occurred transnationally, that is, overflowing across the borders of various countries of the American continent.

The broad network of investigations organized by the police systems in America has been severely influenced by the mode of operations undertaken by the United States around the FBI. Thus, it is possible to see that the strong anti-communist discursive apparatus determined actions across the continent. This means that at various times the Nazi threat became less relevant than the willingness to pursue anything that might pose a communist threat, so the use of the terms "Communazis" and "Red Fascists" to refer to German exiles and the various German-speaking anti-Nazi movements that acted throughout America.

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Notas

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ⁱⁱ Between 1940 and 1946, General Manuel Davila Camacho was president of Mexico, leading the transition from military to civilian government, with very positive impacts on Mexican public opinion, earning him the nickname “El Presidente Caballero”. Camacho, there was rapprochement with the United States in various sectors of the economy and national security issues in the context of World War II. (BEEZLEY, 2010).