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**Falangist networks in Latin America: the Nazi connection, 1937-1945.** This article discusses the relationship between Nazi Germany, Spanish Falangism, and the nationalist movements in Latin America during World War II. The influence of Falangism in Latin America was minimal, despite initial hopes of fostering pro-Axis sentiment due to the rise of anti-fascism in Latin America and strong pan-Americanism promoted by the US. The study shows that for both Nazi Germany and Spain, Latin America was not a primary focus but rather a means to achieve greater geopolitical goals. Ultimately, this connection had little impact on the outcome of the war, but it did damage Spain's international reputation and weaken Falangist influence.

**KEYWORDS:** Nazi Germany; Spanish Falangism; Latin America; Pan-Americanism; *Hispanidad*.

**Redes falangistas na América Latina: a ligação nazi, 1937-1945.** Este artigo discute a relação entre a Alemanha nazi, o falangismo espanhol e os movimentos nacionalistas na América Latina durante a Segunda Guerra Mundial. A influência do falangismo na América Latina foi mínima, apesar das esperanças iniciais de fomentar o sentimento pró-Eixo, devido ao aumento do antifascismo na América Latina e ao forte pan-americanismo promovido pelos EUA. Este estudo mostra que, tanto para a Alemanha nazi como para Espanha, a América Latina não era o foco principal, mas sim um meio para atingir objetivos geopolíticos maiores. Em última análise, esta ligação teve pouco impacto no resultado da guerra, mas prejudicou a reputação internacional de Espanha e enfraqueceu a influência falangista.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Alemanha nazi; falangismo espanhol; América Latina; pan-americanismo; *Hispanidad*.

## Falangist networks in Latin America: the Nazi connection, 1937-1945

Since Allan Chase published *Falange: The Axis Army in Latin America* (1943), researchers have proved the exaggerations of what was, at its core, a propagandistic work (Newton, 1992; Pardo Sanz, 1992; Rein, 2001). A party that constantly fought to expand its power in Francoist Spain could hardly become the Axis' fifth column that the United States feared it was. Yet, foreign sections of the Falange and the NSDAP met and collaborated abroad, which prompted fears across the continent, not just in Washington. Fears that, ironically, increased at the same rate the Falangist influence across the continent diminished (Naranjo Orovio and Tabanera García, 1998; Pardo Sanz, 1994). It seems harder to pinpoint, however, when, how, and with what aims did they collaborate. The lack of sources, making it hard for historians to rebuild the history of the Falange in Latin America, does not help here. Still, key works on the Falangist and Nazi presence in the area, particularly in the Southern Cone, can lead the way (Buchrucker, 1987; Farías, 2000; Gaudig and Veit, 2015; González Calleja, 1994; Newton, 1992; Zanatta, 2008). It's also important to highlight the recent publication of an edited volume (Madueño Álvarez, Velasco Martínez and Azcona Pastor, 2021), which has responded to the scarcity of sources with a prosopographical approach. This has identified contacts between the Falange and other movements across the continent and has further confirmed both the frequent tensions between the Falange and the diplomatic corps and the Falange's decline abroad towards the end of the Spanish Civil War and the early 1940s.

These works, however, need to be framed within research on Francoist and Nazi foreign policy in the region. For Spain, Latin America was a complement to African expansion and a way to highlight her value to the Axis, something further facilitated by a common interest in curtailing the us' pull over the region (Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla, 1992; Pardo Sanz, 1994). For the Falange, it was an opportunity to satisfy the very fascist desire of

re-establishing a spiritual and cultural empire in the old colonies (Box and Gosselin, 2013). In the German case, the prominence of the Ibero-American Institute (IAI) and the many contacts that its president, Wilhelm Faupel, had across the region contributed to the perceived Nazi menace in the area. Yet, the institute's work responded more to Faupel's aims and ambitions than to a centralised or foreplanned Nazi policy. However, the destruction of a good part of the IAI papers inevitably skews the historical record and prevents a full assessment of their activities (Liehr, Maihold and Vollmer, 2003). Still, it seems clear that the Third Reich took its time to outline a clear policy in the continent. This does not mean a lack of interest in the region, just that these interests were primarily economic – including competition with the US and Great Britain – and not expansionist (Leitz, 2003; Newton, 1992; Pommerin, 1996). Nazi Germany and particularly Faupel, were ready to exploit their relations with Spain when their presence and influence in the region could no longer survive US pressure over Latin American nations. This was not new, already during the First World War, Germany had aimed at exploiting the cultural links to Spain and ideas of *Hispanidad* to counteract US influence and guarantee Latin American neutrality. The intensification of cultural and trade relations confirmed that Spain could be used as a bridgehead to further influence Central and South America after the conflict, and eventually crystallised in the creation of the IAI in Berlin in 1929 (Albes, 1996, pp. 244-248, 372; Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla, 1992, p. 148; Hera Martínez, 2002, p. 106). It is, therefore, unsurprising that when confronted with an increasingly difficult climate in the region, Nazi Germany decided to intensify a tried and tested strategy.

As I will show, it was in the overlapping interest in neutralising the US presence and guaranteeing the region's neutrality in the conflict (Buchrucker, 1987; Quijada, 1994) that the Nazi-Falangist collaboration crystallised. One wonders how ultranationalist regimes, destined to eventually clash with each other, managed to collaborate in the international arena (Martin, 2016). What were the limits of collaboration and the fault lines that illustrate the tensions and competition behind it? Did Latin America's geographic position make this collaboration easier or more complex? Answering all these questions would require an in-depth archival study, which is currently hindered by the lack of sources and the scattered nature of the existing ones. It is also well beyond the scope of this article. Instead, I offer an exploratory study of the Nazi-Falangist connections in Latin America that will hopefully contribute to future answers. It aims at connecting often disparate historiographies to map key *loci* of contact and shed some light on the complexities of this collaboration. In this sense, while there were clear instances of cooperation, I would argue that a better term to understand this dynamic is an "entanglement of agendas", which

highlights the complexities, nuances, and tensions that characterised Nazi-Falangist interactions in the region. This implies a process marked by the overlap of distinct national interests rather than planned and efficient coordination. Finally, but no less significant, Nazi Germany's leveraging of Spanish-American relations was not a straightforward continuation of Germany's policy during the First World War. Spain's non-belligerency and, later, benevolent neutrality towards Nazi Germany added a new layer of complexity, that has not yet been highlighted. While Spain could be used as a bridgehead to influence Latin America, equally events there could endanger Spain's international position to the detriment of the Reich.

An exploration of Nazi-Falangist connections must commence with an overview of the Falangist presence in Latin America. Here, the Spanish Civil War played a key role. While the establishment of the Falange's *Servicio Exterior* (Foreign Section, SE) had taken place in 1935 to organise and support the Falangist effort abroad, it picked up pace in 1937, as it became a tool for channelling support for the rebel army abroad. A year later, with José del Castaño Cardona at the helm, the SE gained structural clarity and adapted to different national contexts. While its efforts were mainly propagandistic, trying to channel and encourage further support for the rebel cause, in its day-to-day activities, the section proved similar to the Italian model, aiming to nationalise, mobilise and further indoctrinate Spaniards abroad, with the goal of unifying them under the Falange's banner (González Calleja, 1994). The SE, including the foreign section of the Falangist *Sección Femenina* (Female Section, SF) – created in 1938 –, expanded across the region. Falangist organisations first emerged, often spontaneously, in Chile, Argentina, Cuba, Mexico and Uruguay, expanding throughout 1937 to Colombia, Brazil, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic, while the SF came to be present in all Latin American countries except Colombia, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua (González Calleja, 1994, pp. 296-297; Pardo Sanz, 1992, p. 220; Tessada Sepúlveda, 2019, pp. 27-28). Argentina played a key role, not in small part due to the influx of Spanish Falangists that arrived after escaping from the Spanish republican zone (Bertonha, 2012, p. 162). It was also in Buenos Aires where, in 1938, Juan Pablo de Lojendio, the Francoist diplomatic representative, established a press and propaganda office that served as a distributing centre for South America. Similar offices were set up in Chile and Uruguay, highlighting the importance of the Southern Cone (Pardo Sanz, 1992, p. 226). It's not a coincidence that the Female Section was strongest in Argentina and Uruguay, followed by Cuba (Tessada Sepúlveda, 2017, p. 155).

The propagandistic effort was shared between the diplomatic corps, the Falange, other pro-rebel organisations, and Latin American conservative

newspapers and religious publications (Pardo Sanz, 1992, p. 226). The SE was not the only organisation trying to coordinate the pro-rebel war effort in the region, but it aimed at establishing a monopoly not only in propaganda matters but also in the control and indoctrination of Spanish communities abroad. This led to constant clashes with other organisations and the diplomatic corps, a reflection of similar struggles for power in the peninsula. Despite Castaño's efforts to prevent the SE from politically destabilising the host countries, these clashes were most intense in countries where pro-republican support was in the majority, such as Argentina, Brazil, Cuba and Chile.

In Brazil, for example, Franco himself prevented the integration of other organisations into the Falange, while in Argentina, Lojendio was the one to do so. In other cases, pro-rebel support was integrated into a single institution, but not necessarily under Falange. In Mexico, it was the diplomatic representative, Augusto Ibáñez Serrano, who minimised the increasingly problematic Falangist presence, whose most important leaders were expelled from the country in April 1939, until achieving its total dissolution in 1942 (Pardo Sanz, 1992, pp. 222-224; Sola Ayape, 2019). In Chile, the Falange was founded and led by Miguel de Lojendio, who had previously served as secretary to the republican ambassador. He did his best to integrate the Spanish community under the Falangist banner. However, a failed coup by the Chilean Nazi Party and the arrival of the Popular Front to the presidency in 1938 placed the Falange in a delicate position. Lojendio was instructed to separate Falangist activities from the diplomatic representation and urged to re-join the diplomatic corp. As in other cases, the Falangist presence was minimised when threatening the normal development of traditional diplomacy. Quite soon, the Falange was censored and then banned in 1939, while the Chilean government recognised the Francoist government. Over the last months of 1939, Falange camouflaged itself in *Auxilio Social* (Social Assistance), stressing its welfare activities and the presence of women, until its dissolution in the early 1940s (Tessada Sepúlveda, 2021). Argentina also witnessed the dissolution of the Falange shortly after the war ended and following the government ban on foreign organisations, although it tried to continue its activities through the *Casa de España* and later *Hogar Español* (Ferreyra, 2020; Velasco Martínez, 2021). Cuba was slightly different. There, the Falange had grown in power and numbers by 1938, at times establishing contacts with homegrown fascist groups. But despite these successes – which no doubt motivated Allan Chase (1943) to name Cuba the stronghold of the Axis incursion in Latin America –, during the last months of the civil war, the Cuban Falange was the subject of a police investigation. Some of its leaders were expelled and the organisation decided, as in other places, to camouflage itself by strengthening its welfare

activities, aiming to minimise the threat to domestic politics it was seen to pose (Figueredo Cabrera, 2019; Naranjo Orovio and Tabanera García, 1998). Throughout the region, the Falange used similar tactics, unsuccessfully. The pressure on the Falangist organisations increased in 1940, particularly in the Caribbean and Central America, which experienced stronger pressure on the part of the US (Naranjo Orovio and Tabanera García, 1998). The end of the civil war did not result in a positive balance for the SE.

Considering the situation, one inevitably wonders what potential Nazi Germany saw in the Falangist, and more broadly Spanish, connection to Latin America. Any interest seems to have been motivated by three interconnected objectives: protect German economic interests in the region, maintain Latin American neutrality, and counteract US pan-Americanism. As mentioned earlier, none of these were new or specific to the Nazi government. Similar objectives had been pursued during the First World War and later continued in the interwar period by the IAI, against serious setbacks for German-Latin American trade, due to the war and the 1929 economic crisis. While trade steadily increased in the 1930s, particularly with the Southern Cone, such developments were soon to be threatened by both US policy – who saw in this expansion of trade a preparatory step towards territorial domination – and Nazi foreign policy, not least because Hitler had no interest in shaping Latin America policy and the region was not a priority (Leitz, 2003; Pommerin, 1996). Failed coups by the fascist Integralist Action in Brazil and the *nacistas* in Chile led the US and other governments to suspect German involvement and fear similar actions elsewhere. These fears took on a more serious tone, considering the presence of German immigrants in the Southern Cone – who had been key in the reactivation of trade –, the prominence of German schools in Latin America (Penny, 2013), and the *Auslandsorganisation's* (Foreign Organization, AO) presence in the region. Not only had the first AO cells abroad emerged in Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, but they aimed to prevent the naturalisation of ethnic Germans in their host countries. Even German diplomats had expressed concern, in July 1938, about the dangers of being seen to have any colonial aims in the region and urged the Foreign Office to define an appropriate long-term policy *vis-a-vis* the US (Newton, 1992, p. 192). While German immigrants should not be seen here as an extension of the Third Reich – only 5% joined the NSDAP (Penny, 2013, pp. 368, 381) –, they were still perceived as such in the ideologised context of the 1930s–40s. Unsurprisingly, these factors led to a ban against the AO in some countries and key resolutions against the political activity of foreigners at the Lima conference of 1938 (Bartelt, 2003, p. 110; Pommerin, 1996, p. 400). This, as we saw above, also affected Falangist activities. It was in the face of these developments and the preparations for

the coming war that the Foreign Office finally devised a policy for the region: maintain trade and access to raw materials and guarantee Latin American neutrality as a defensive bloc against the us, who they expected to keep out of the war (Bartelt, 2003, pp. 110-111). Just three months later, the war and the resulting British blockade would further damage German-Latin American trade (Leitz, 2003; Pommerin, 1996). As I will show, Germany and Spain's haphazard approach to Latin America and dynamics of competition with the us – economic in the German case, cultural in the Spanish one – help understand not only why Nazi Germany aimed to use Spain as a bridgehead, but more importantly, the roots of and tensions around Nazi-Falangist collaboration.

There was a clear continuation of interwar policies in terms of the Spanish-Latin American connection, but it was the Spanish Civil War that increased Spain's and Falange's potential as an interlocutor in the region. The Spanish conflict played a key role in Nazi Germany's anti-Bolshevik campaigns, while increasing both the Nazi presence in the country and contacts between the Falange and the NSDAP. Here, once again, Faupel appears at the centre of the story. It can be no coincidence that upon being appointed Ambassador to rebel Spain, Faupel – with a colourful career that accounted for many contacts across Latin America, including within the Argentinian and Peruvian armies –, was accompanied by Willi Köhn, previously head of the AO in Latin America (Gliech, 2003). As a result, German propaganda operations in Spain made Latin America one of their main targets and became enmeshed in the complex network of cultural organizations Faupel built around himself. *El Observador del Reich*, one of the two news sheets distributed by Köhn's propaganda team, was edited by the *Verlag Deutchdienst*, the German-Ibero-American Society, and the German Economic Association for South and Central America, being the last two controlled by Faupel (Hera Martínez, 2002, pp. 318-319; Liehr, Maihold and Vollmer, 2003). Similarly, the second propaganda agency established in Spain under Faupel and Köhn's watchful eyes, the *Antikomintern*, in charge of exploiting the conflict for their anti-Bolshevik campaign, targeted Latin America while distributing materials to other covert *Antikominterns* elsewhere. The *Deutscher Fichte Bund*, an anti-communist organisation founded in 1914, with which Faupel, as IAI's president, had established contact before the outbreak of the Spanish conflict (Bartelt, 2003, p. 84).<sup>1</sup> Moreover, upon the *Antikomintern's* absorption by the rebels' Ministry of the Interior, its own news sheet – *Servicio Antimarxista* – was distributed throughout Latin America through the Falangist SE (Moreno Cantano, 2006, p. 114; Waddington,

1 “Die Tätigkeit der Anti-Komintern in Spanien während des Bürgerkrieges”, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, MA 70 and MA 742 NSDAP/Hauptarchiv: Fichtebund 1934-1940.



2007). The news sheet might have appeared as purely Falangist, but it was the product of Nazi-Falangist collaboration.

The Axis assistance to Franco and Nazi-Fascist foreign organisations' support for the rebel army helped consolidate a strong collaboration with the SE (Moreno Cantano, 2006, p. 122). Thanks to the war, and probably Faupel's intervention, the *Deutscher Fichte Bund* established contact with the head of the SE, José del Castaño, even suggesting a joint surveillance of Spanish Exiles in Southern and Central America and requesting Falangist cooperation in distributing materials to that region.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that no participant was selfless, they all pursued their own interests, which aligned under the framework of the Spanish conflict. While the conflict could be used to rally support against Bolshevism and for the Axis powers, the Falange, until 1937 a minor partner in the rebel coalition, could use the prestige of Nazi-Fascism to prop itself up as representative of a future political order. Falange's high hopes were initially shared by some Berlin elites. Faupel's appointment as Ambassador confirmed the temporary success of the Propaganda Ministry's strategy in Spain, which prioritised contact with the Falange over the Foreign Office's desire to focus on Franco and his cabinet. This allowed Faupel to increase the budget of yet another organisation he led, the German-Spanish Society, which was responsible for supporting the Falange's local organisation in Berlin until February 1937. The German Falange showed its eagerness to collect detailed information on the Nazi state and disseminate Nazi propaganda in Spain. Additionally, the Society soon welcomed the heads of Hisma-Rowak – the industrial complex that monopolised German-Spanish trade – to its board, showcasing a strong connection between propagandistic, cultural, and economic interests (Bowen, 2000, pp. 13-14, 26-29; Janué i Miret, 2008a, 2008b). Janué (2008b) has suggested, however, that changes to the German Falange in 1937 might have aimed to limit its autonomy and initiative by the Francoist government. This coincided with a shift from Berlin that prioritised their support for Franco over a focus on the Falange. Faupel, convinced that any strong Spanish-German alliance depended on the Falange's success, did not fully fall into line, a fact that lost him his ambassadorship in favour of Eberhard von Stohrer in August 1937. Neither the Francoist government nor the German Foreign Office looked favourably upon Faupel's closeness to the Falange (Ruhl, 1986).

Upon his return to Germany, Faupel resumed his role as the head of the German-Spanish Society and the IAI in early 1938, and continued to foster

2 SE correspondence with the *Deutscher Fichte-Bund*, Archivo General de la Administración 9 (17.12) 51/20891.

a strong collaboration with Falangism. But it is important to remember that Faupel's fondness for Falange was framed within a policy that aimed to use Spain to increase Germany's cultural and economic influence in Latin America, and to increase his own value *vis-a-vis* the Propaganda Ministry and the Foreign Office. At every step, cultural activities and commercial interests went hand in hand, as exemplified by Faupel's presence on the boards of bilateral trade organisations in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. In this sense, it is telling that Spain never managed to obtain exclusive rights for the translation of German books to Spanish, an area in which the IAI played a key role (Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla, 1992, p. 99; Nagel, 2003, pp. 294-303). Yet these connections did not exist for the benefit of one party, rather they crystallised because there was an alignment around certain objectives. That was the case, for example, with Faupel's desire to counteract the French influence in Latin America through the replacement of anti-German French textbooks with more suitable Spanish ones. An objective that was happily shared by the Spanish diplomat, Merry del Val, stationed in Paraguay (Nagel, 2003, pp. 309-310). Another example of the strong link between economic and cultural opportunities was the trade agreements that gave the Nazi film industry access to Latin America via Spain. These were, however, strongly shaped by the economic interests of both partners (Díez, 1999).

The commercial exploitation of the Spanish-Latin American connection was not exclusive to the IAI but the institute succeeded in placing itself, at least for a while, at the centre of these dynamics. It became the go-to documentation centre on Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin American matters, and provided information on Latin American individuals' friendliness or hostility towards Nazi Germany. Moreover, Faupel's pro-Franco policies were supported by German diplomats in the region. However, as noted by Dawid Danilo Bartelt (2003), the IAI appeared as a force in terms of public policy and the media, but it remained a lightweight in terms of *realpolitik*. Still, its reputation and contacts gave it credibility both as a serious threat – Allen presented Faupel as the master puppeteer behind Falange's American presence – and a desirable partner, as proven by the many trips and contacts established between the IAI and the Falange.

The IAI's reach and a defined German policy could not overcome key obstacles. As has been noted for Argentina, at the beginning of the Second World War, Germany's economic strength made it an attractive partner, but its weaker cultural influence, much stronger in the case of Spain and Italy, undermined the appeal. Additionally, several fascist and pro-fascist groups across Latin America looked more favourably upon Falangist fascism than German national-socialism. As a result, German diplomats aimed to exert

their influence over the Argentinian nationalists indirectly via Spain and Italy (Buchrucker, 1987; Quijada, 1994; Virga, 2018); a move that was not exclusive to Argentina. In 1939, the German Foreign Office suggested that Spain could play a role in preserving Latin American neutrality and by 1940, in the only known comment by Hitler on this matter, the Führer mentioned to General Juan Vigón the useful role that Spanish propaganda in the region could play for Nazi Germany (Buchrucker, 1987, p. 190; *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945. Volume VIII – The War Years September 4, 1939 – March 18, 1940*, 1954, p. 304).

After the fall of France, German diplomats and the IAI also aimed to entice Latin American nations with the promise of stronger trade relations after Germany's victory, partnerships that would help guarantee their economic and political freedom (Bartelt, 2003, pp. 111-112). The possibility that the war would be over soon made these promises more credible. This was part of a multidirectional relationship. As Pommerin (1996) has highlighted, it is impossible to prove that German diplomacy was behind the decision of Latin American countries to maintain neutrality at the Havana conference in 1940. It makes more sense that they did not want to endanger future economic relations with a nazified Europe, which could become their most important trading partner. This was the case of Argentina, whose traditional support for neutrality was strengthened by a desire to maintain Nazi Germany as a trading partner which could counteract their economic dependence on the us. These decisions coincided with a rapprochement towards Spain – strongly based on economic interests –, which further increased, grossly exaggerated, us' suspicions of fifth-columnism (Druetta, 2021; Newton, 1992; Pardo Sanz, 1994; Quijada, 1994).

Nazi Germany's support for *Hispanidad* further increased such fears. Their support for Francoist Spain's "spiritual" claim over their ex-colonies aimed to counteract us influence and showcased Spain's value as a bridgehead (Bartelt, 2003, p. 90). However, *Hispanidad* would prove not to be a very solid bridge. Concepts and uses of *Hispanidad* varied across the IAI, the Falange, and Latin American nations. For the IAI, it meant opposing us-backed pan-Americanism through pan-Hispanism, in a move that, under Faupel's influence, initially encompassed France. In 1939, the German Ministry of Propaganda backed the strategy, instructing the media to replace the term "Latin America" with "Ibero-America". The idea was to present *Hispanidad* – and Spain's leadership – as a Catholic, cultural, and spiritual concept that treated Latin American nations as a family. This was to stand in stark opposition to us protestant (sometimes atheist) materialistic imperialism. Against this framework, us warnings against fifth-columnism were presented as a cover for outright

economic imperialism (Bartelt, 2003; Buchrucker, 1987, p. 193; Fariás, 2000, p. 231). This was also a message portrayed in the information bulletins produced by the German embassy in Madrid, whose content was disseminated across Latin America by the SE.<sup>3</sup> This is unsurprising, given that the German portrayal of *Hispanidad* strongly aligned with the Falangist one.

The idea of *Hispanidad*, introduced in Spain by Ramiro de Maeztu, defined the bonds that tied Latin America and Spain in spiritual terms. It was not race or geography that bound them, but a Catholic spiritual mission, which had forged a shared culture and history, harking back to Spain's Christianising of the Americas. Maeztu pictured *Hispanidad* as a community of freely independent nations bound by spiritual ties and religious principles but warned against an imperialist reading of the idea. The Falangist interpretation ran counter to such warning, considering *Hispanidad* an imperial concept. Spain had a guiding role to play among other nations that could only manifest itself through the empire. Spanish imperialism was usually framed in spiritual terms, but it remained paternalistic. Even less imperialistic and Falangist uses of *Hispanidad* justified Spain's paternal role over Latin America. In the context of the Second World War, Spain used *Hispanidad* to present itself as the spiritual axis that would connect Latin America and the New Order (Box and Gosselin, 2013; Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla, 2003, p. 142; Finchelstein, 2010, pp. 146-147; Iannini, 2021). This was an idea further supported by the Third Reich (Buchrucker, 1987, p. 199).

It's no coincidence that the *Consejo de la Hispanidad* (Hispanic Council, CH) was created in November 1940, following the fall of France and Ramón Serrano Suñer's appointment as minister of Foreign Affairs that previous October, with which the Falangist neoimperialist discourse gathered pace. The CH aimed to become a supranational organisation that would unify the cultural, economic, and political interests of all Hispanic nations under Spain's guidance (Barbeito Díez, 1989). Heinrich Himmler and Admiral Wilhelm Canaris' explicit support for the project illustrated its potential for Nazi Germany (Bartelt, 2003, p. 80). Interestingly though, the closest precedent to the CH, the Hispano-American Cultural Association (*Asociación Cultural Hispanoamericana*, ACH) (Barbeito Díez, 1989), had been an Argentinian creation. This was something less surprising given that the first formulations of *Hispanidad* by Ramiro de Maeztu and Zacarías de Vizcarra – both Spanish but living in Argentina in the 1920s – took place in Buenos Aires (Finchelstein, 2010, p. 146). The ACH had been created in Madrid in February 1940 by the Argentinian ex-ambassador, Daniel García Mansilla, and counted among its founders

3 Miguel Moya to Hans Lazar, 8 October 1940, AGA, 9 (17.12) 51/20891.

the then Spanish minister of Foreign Affairs, Juan L. Beigbeder. Its portrayal of *Hispanidad*, looking to legitimise the Argentinian resistance to US pressure, was expressed in opposition to pan-Americanism but was not fully in line with the Falangist interpretation. From a non-paternalistic approach, García Mansilla held the view that every Latin American country should define its national essence in connection to its historical tradition and Spanish cultural heritage. Ferreyra (2018) has noted this, and the fact García Mansilla was no longer an active diplomat, was one of the reasons why the ACH was not fully supported by the Francoist government. Regardless, the ACH did not want to be instrumentalised by the CH. In June 1941, the organisation requested the collaboration of the Spanish ambassador to host a conference on Spanish-American culture in the Argentinian city of Salta, yet when the CH chancellor offered to help – in January 1942 –, the organisers rejected the offer preferring to maintain the event's exclusive American character. By then, Operation Barbarossa and the US entry into the war had motivated an increase in US diplomatic pressure over Latin American nations. The event was denounced as Nazi-Fascist and most diplomatic representatives across the region did not attend, prompting the cancellation of subsequent conference meetings (Barbeito Díez, 1989, pp. 131-132; Bartelt, 2003, p. 80; Ferreyra, 2018, pp. 251-259). Events directly organised by the CH were not well received either. In 1941, representatives from Uruguay, Chile, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Colombia, following diplomatic pressure from the US and Great Britain, refused to take part in a celebration of *Hispanidad* in Madrid. Only one representative from Uruguay and the Argentinian nationalist Juan Carlos Goyeneche attended (Ferreyra, 2018, p. 259). More telling was the reception of the CH's first big event in commemoration of Peru's conquistador, Francisco Pizarro. The Peruvian press reacted strongly, stating the disdain such an event showed for Peru's independence and characterising it as another Spanish move in support of Hitler's ambitions (Barbeito Díez, 1989, p. 121). German propagandists constantly tried to control the narrative, presenting this and similar reactions as evidence of US anti-Spanish actions in the region.<sup>4</sup> Their constant reminder of the threat touched a nerve, as Spain interpreted US actions as an attempt at weakening, even destroying, any shred of Hispanic heritage in the region (Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla, 1992, p. 277). Such resounding failures and warnings from several diplomats led Serrano to tone down the imperialist tone of the CH in favour of a more catholic and cultural mission (Barbeito Díez, 1989).

The failure of the Falangist policy in Latin America was due to Allied pressure and differing notions of *Hispanidad*. The end of the Spanish empire and

4 Auswärtiges Amt, Politisches Archiv, Presselenkung 758.

anti-US sentiment had tamed previous Hispanophobia in the region (Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla, 2003; Finchelstein, 2010; Rein, 2001), but, as in the case of the AHC, this did not mean embracing a Falangist reading of *Hispanidad*. In Latin America, versions of *Hispanidad* took the form of local nationalisms, a way to vindicate a nation's independence against the pressures and influence of the big powers, particularly the US (Velasco Martínez, 2019, p. 10; Zanatta, 2008, p. 52). For example, Enrique Ruiz Guiñazú, the Argentinian chancellor, claimed the independence of Latin American nations had further strengthened their Spanish heritage. As such, he saw in the bond around this heritage a way for Latin American nations to resist the pressures of the major warring powers. This perspective took on special relevance at the Pan-American conference in Rio de Janeiro (January 1942), where he resisted US pressures to abandon neutrality (Ferreira, 2018, pp. 262-263). In the case of the Argentinian nationalists, Finchelstein (2010) has shown how most of them embraced the idea of *Hispanidad* through their own nationalist lens, interpreting Argentina as the legitimate heir to the Spanish empire, with a leading role in Latin America. The nationalists and filo-Falangists of the Argentinian journal *Sol y Luna* also rejected the paternalistic and neoimperialist tone of Falangist *Hispanidad*, showcasing it instead as a space where they could participate in the true and Catholic Europe through Spain. At most, *Hispanidad* was seen as a triangle formed by Spain, Mexico, and Argentina, but never as a project led exclusively by Spain. All of them, however, embraced *Hispanidad*'s anti-Americanism, often with strongly similar wording to that of Spain and Germany, opposing materialism to spirituality, and Protestantism to Catholicism (Iannini, 2021).

These alternative interpretations, combined with increasing US pressure, a democratic wave across the region, Falange's neoimperialism, and Franco's closeness with the Axis deprived *Hispanidad* of its potential and prompted rejection across the region. In Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and other places, governments and the media pointed at the CH as an instrument of Hitler. The CH was described as a trojan horse, a renewed *Consejo de Indias*<sup>5</sup> and a messenger of totalitarianism, to the point that some old Franco defenders were now heading anti-Nazi committees in their own countries (Barbeito Díez, 1989, p. 136; Zanatta, 2008, pp. 50-51). Paul Karl Schmidt, head of the press office of the German Foreign Office, who, in August 1940, asked to restrain the Falangist imperialist tone so as not to cause mistrust in Latin America, noted now how Mexico's *El Nacional* considered the idea of *Hispanidad* to

5 Paul Schmidt to the German embassy in Madrid, 11 December 1940 and October 1941, AA/PA Presselenkung 757 and 758.

have been crafted and promoted by the IAI.<sup>6</sup> The German embassy in Buenos Aires also cautioned against Falangist imperialism and suggested indoctrinating envoys of the CH at the Madrid embassy before their departure to Latin America (Barbeito Díez, 1989, p. 135). The situation was further complicated by Spain's dependence on the United States for oil, which prompted Lazar to dissuade Berlin from pursuing the publication of certain news in the Spanish press to protect oil shipments.<sup>7</sup> While Spanish actions could endanger German interests in Latin America, if not carefully managed, the anti-American agenda could also affect Spain in a way detrimental to Germany, pushing Spain closer to the Allies.

Warnings against excessive imperialism came from inside the Francoist structures as well. As noted above, the rejection of the CH's most imperialistic events prompted a moderation in Serrano's policy towards Latin America. Yet, warnings against working too closely with the Axis in the region had been sounded at intervals by the diplomatic corps since the Civil War (González Calleja, 1994, p. 301; Pardo Sanz, 1992, p. 227). The problem was that Spain and Germany's pro-neutralist and anti-American aims in the area aligned perfectly, and the *Hispanidad* discourse made their actions seem part of a coordinated policy that did not really exist; every country prioritised its own interests. Even if it existed, any coordination became much harder after the Rio conference of January 1942, when most Latin American nations severed relations with Nazi Germany. Only Argentina and Chile remained neutral. The new situation also greatly diminished the value and reach of the IAI, even though Faupel refused to admit it (Bartelt, 2003, pp. 111-112). Pommerin (1996) states that Nazi Germany's influence in the region was reduced to propaganda measures and could only count on the reticent collaboration of Spain. Pardo Sanz (1994, p. 216) supports this view by highlighting the reticence of the Spanish diplomatic corps to follow through. While this assessment may apply to diplomatic relations, it does not take into account the Falange's sometimes unilateral actions. Francisco Gómez-Jordana's return to the Foreign Affairs Ministry indeed put an end to the Falangist period in Spanish foreign policy, completing a return to neutrality that brought about a reconfiguration of Spanish-Latin American relations. Jordana and the General Director of Foreign Policy, José María Doussinague, traced a new policy that avoided any hint of imperialism and paternalism towards the old colonies and any mention of the war. They aimed to distance Spain from the Axis, while veering towards the

6 Paul Karl Schmidt to the German embassy in Madrid, 6 August 1940, and Telegram to the German embassy in Madrid, October 1941, AA/PA Presselenkung 757 and 758.

7 Hans Lazar to the Foreign Office, 7 November 1941, AA/PA Presselenkung 758.

us, but also alleviate the damage caused by previous policy in the area, where now most embassies, significantly, were vacant. Here, the Falangist presence in Latin America, though extremely weak, threatened to destroy Spain's credibility and Jordana's policy. The proposed solution was to temporarily suspend the SE, yet Franco refused to do so, arguing that Spain could easily maintain its international prestige through a staunch defence of neutrality. The dictator did not see, or did not want to see, Falange as a problem, because he counted on it acting as a balancing act among different political sectors at home. As a result, both the SE and the CH maintained a ghostly existence until the end of the war (Barbeito Díez, 1989; González Calleja, 1994; Sola Ayape, 2019, p. 159; Tusell, 1989). By 1942, Germany could only resort to propaganda to maintain some influence in Latin America. In this respect, Falange proved to be a stubborn collaborator, regardless of Jordana's policies.

The Falange had been collaborating with Nazi propaganda since the Spanish Civil War. News agencies like *Arco* were used to distribute pro-German news items to Latin America,<sup>8</sup> the SE distributed pro-Axis propaganda, a Nazi-Falangist courier and propaganda service was established in Argentina, and Nazi Germany subsidised publications by the Spanish communities in the continent (González Calleja, 2011; Newton, 1992, pp. 122, 248; Pardo Sanz, 1994, 224-226; Quijada, 1994, pp. 254-256). It was also common for the *Abwehr* (Military Intelligence) to move secret documents through Argentina in the luggage of Spanish officers, while Spanish ships were used to distribute Nazi propaganda, leading the Spanish Foreign Affairs Ministry to increase surveillance over its own fleet (Newton, 1992, p. 248; Quijada, 1994, p. 256). Such activities should have been halted under Jordana, yet the pro-Axis inclinations of the Falange were difficult to rein in. The Minister had to caution Falange, still in charge of the media through the *Vicesecretaría de Educación Popular* (Vice-Secretariat of Popular Education, VEP), against allowing EFE, the Spanish news agency, to instruct its representatives in Vichy France and other places through the German embassies there, and preventing the *Sindicato Español Universitario* (Spanish Student Union, SEU) from sending their publications to all Spanish embassies in Latin America (Barbeito Díez, 1989, p. 130; Moreno Cantano, 2008, p. 282). The Schmidt-Tovar Agreement best exemplifies the Falange's refusal to let go of the German connection. The Agreement, formalised in June 1941, aimed to minimise the harmful effects of a potential halt to Transocean's activities in Latin America. A halt that took place in 1942. It looked to use EFE as a conduit and involved the installation of a broadcasting

8 Ambassador Eberhard von Stohrer to the Foreign Office, 31 July 1940, AA/PA Presselenkung 757.



station at the Spanish border, paid for by the German government. The Agreement entailed a true collaboration, which would serve both the Falangist and Nazi agendas in Latin America. But the project stumbled upon the resistance of the Spanish Foreign Ministry, particularly after Jordana's return, and of the EFE director, Vicente Gállego, loyal to the Minister (Garriga, 1965; Moreno Cantano, 2008; Peñalba-Sotorrío, 2019; Ros Agudo, 2002). This and the reticence of the diplomatic corps towards the Agreement led Pardo Sanz (1994) to state that Spain never accepted the idea of being a bridgehead at the service of the Nazis. The Agreement was, indeed, never properly fulfilled and Spain did not want to become an instrument of Nazi Germany in her area of influence. However, in the face of these setbacks, the Falange helped Lazar find an alternative arrangement, motivated by its own aspirations in the region and a misguided desire to use Nazi Germany in their favour. Following the halt to German activities in South America in February 1942, EFE served as a conduit for news items (Longerich, 1987). Moreover, Lazar's alternative project, the use of the news agency *Prensa Mundial* to distribute propaganda to Latin America and establish the long-awaited broadcasting station, involved key Falangists and counted on the protection of the VEP (Peñalba-Sotorrío, 2019). Moreover, in July 1943, Jordana noted how broadcasts to Latin America controlled by the SEU portrayed international events in the same way as *Prensa Mundial*.<sup>9</sup> Not even the new censorship measures taken by the Foreign Affairs Ministry were sufficient to curb the Falange's pro-Axis enthusiasm (Moreno Cantano, 2008). Eventually, the shift in Spanish politics established by Jordana was accepted by Falange, but much later than anticipated. Chile's break with the Axis in January 1943, followed by Argentina a year later had an impact on Falange's capitulation. The party's Latin American connection had now truly evaporated.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the end, us-led pan-Americanism proved stronger than *Hispanidad*, even though their increasing anti-Falangist campaign suggested the opposite at times. Axis organisations continued to be banned across the continent, and by 1941-42 no properly functioning Falangist organisation remained. When Allan Chase published his book in 1943, the Falangist influence in Latin America seemed to have all but evaporated. In fact, the impact of Nazi-Falangist propaganda in Latin America, the most obvious feature of Nazi-Falangist collaboration, was minimal, not least because of the increasingly marginalised

9 Jordana to José Luis de Arrese, 28 July 1943, Archivo General de la Universidad de Navarra / José Luis de Arrese.

presence of pro-fascist groups in the region, an aspect that needs to be further explored. The balance of this connection was particularly damaging to Spain, as it highlighted its dictatorial character and deprived it of previous allies. Moreover, Spanish exploitation of the Latin American connection in two completely opposite directions, first towards the Axis and later the us, shows how the region was not truly prioritised but used to gain influence with other powers. In a similar vein, Nazi Germany did not see Latin America as a priority, leaving a space that both the IAI and the Falange occupied to further their own agendas. These became entangled despite the lack of coordination. In the case of Falange, this was sometimes contrary to shifts in Spanish foreign policy. Against this framework, the Spanish *Antikomintern*, the IAI and its associated organisations, and Falangist organisations, particularly the SE, the SEU and the VEB, emerge as key *loci* from which to further explore the connection and collaboration between Nazi Germany, Spanish Falangism, and Latin American nationalist movements. Such exploration will need to account for the pressures of us pan-Americanism, homegrown interpretations of the New Order and *Hispanidad* in Latin America, and Spain's role in Europe, including Germany's desire to prevent its turn towards the Allies. This highlights the complex and nuanced nature of these dynamics which, while not playing a central role in determining the course of the war or the fate of the Francoist and Nazi regimes, did nonetheless have important consequences. Spain came out clearly damaged in the international arena, the Falange side-lined but not destroyed, and us Pan-Americanism came out strengthened. In the case of Germany, it was the German colonies that paid the price in the region, being deprived by the us of much of their wealth under the cover of a justified reaction against the Nazi threat, in what was a clear move to prevent the re-emergence of German economic influence in the area (Penny, 2013).

Finally, even though the IAI and Falange did not achieve much, thanks to the haphazard approach of their governments towards Latin America, they became prominent agents in a complex and multidirectional network of interests shaped by clashes between pan-Americanism and *Hispanidad*, Falangist neoimperialism and Latin-American nationalism, Falangist aspirations and traditional diplomacy, and the economic interests of two big powers, the us and Nazi Germany. This, in turn, shows how Nazi-Falangist cultural policy was a political instrument not to be ignored, one whose imagined influence, regardless of the veracity and reach of the political threat, could significantly shape foreign policy.

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