



Germany in Central America: Competitive Imperialism, 1821-1929

Thomas Schoonover

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Using previously untapped resources including private collections, the records of cultural institutions, and federal and state government archives, Schoonover analyzes the German role in Central American domestic and international relations.

Of the four countries most active in independent Central America-Britain, the United States, France, and Germany- historians know the least about the full extent of the involvement of the Germans.

German colonial expansion was based on its position as an industrialized state seeking economic well-being and security in a growing world market.

German leaders were quick to recognize that ties to the cheap labor of overseas countries could compensate for some of the costs and burdens of conceding material and social privileges to their domestic labor force.

The Central American societies possessed limited resource bases; smaller and poorly educated populations; and less capital, communications, and

technological development than Germany. They saw the borrowing of development as a key to their social, economic, and political progress. Wary Central American leaders also saw the influx of German industrialists as assurance against excessive U.S. presence in their political economies and cultures.

Although the simplistic bargain to trade economic development for cheap labor appeared to succeed in the short term, complex issues of German domestic unemployment and social disorder filtered to Central American countries and added to their own burdens. By 1929, Germany had recovered most of its pre-World War I economic position.

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