

GERMAN IMMIGRATION in TORRES, Why?

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INTRODUCTION

The old Colonia São Pedro de Alcântara, the fifth district of Torres, today the municipality of Dom Pedro de Alcântara, still did not have this name and was already colonized by German immigrants. This happened from 1826, when Torres was not much more than a simple geographical reference in the maps of the time.

Of course the lands were very fertile, this is proven even today, and they asked to be cultivated. So perfect for a colonization.

Wild, inhospitable, isolated and far from the great centers, so was Torres in that distant year of 1826. But it was precisely in this way and in this environment that Torres received that year the German immigrants. There were around 84 families, with a total of about 400 people.

It is very likely that those in charge of German immigration in our State had, in previous years, problems with the religious creed of immigrants, very rigid at the time. The truth is that here the procedure has been somewhat different. German immigrants professed the Protestant religion, around 40 families or 50%, were settled in the Three Forks Valley, while Catholics were settled here near Torres, more precisely in the Mampituba valley.

But why a German colonization here in Torres, when it would be right not to separate them from the settlement centers, close to each other, as had been previously established, that is, in the valleys of Sinos, Caí, Rio Pardo, etc.? All these places, as well as nearby, had direct connection, by waterways, with the capital of the Province. In this way, they could easily, in addition to progress, maintain their origins, culture, customs, folklore, in short, they did not lose their roots. Unfortunately, the same did not happen here in Torres. By circumstance we are going to report later, they were thrown into the woods in their own fate, which led them, in the face of bitterness and adversity of all kinds, to struggle only for survival, for their own lives. Those who extended their hands were the few caboclos who lived here by the ponds. When they encountered those blond, blue-eyed, completely lost and bewildered individuals in the midst of the inhospitable jungle, they were taught to make stick houses (walls of sticks with clay), forming the stucco huts of clay, woven with mats woven from American (uricana) straw. These houses held up so much and were so common that they were still used, in a few cases of course, in the 1930s. Strangely enough, even today there are details of these stucco walls in some houses in this county.

It was with these caboclos that they learned to make balaios, the pestle to make canjica, to shave (peel) the rice and so many other utilities that the pestle had. They also taught how to hunt, fish, make tea with herbs, precautions with snakes and wild animals. In short, they taught the settlers how to survive, since they were left to fend for themselves.

At the same time, there was also a similar attempt of colonization by German immigrants in the Missions area, which was a real failure, with settlers even facing hostile Indians, not enough unknown diseases, caused by insects, ticks, etc., without minimum conditions for the

treatment of the diseases, due to the isolation in which they lived. This is also a colonization that to this day does not yet have a plausible explanation for the fact, nor what the real reason to colonize the missions at that time.

The real reason for the settlement of German immigrants here in Torres, where there seems to have been more interest from third parties than the colonization proper, is still discussed today. Let's face it. Through references and even found documents, there are strong indications that many immigrants were separated, it is not known by what promise, from their original nuclei and sent to Torres against their will. The subsequent behavior of the immigrants themselves proves this, since there was an attempt by some settlers to exodus, with vehement requests for transfer to other bands, such as Three Forks (Tres Forquilhas), Tramandaí, etc., requested, of course, unmet.

But what would have been the real reason to colonize Torres with German immigrants? The mentor or mentors of the colonization in Torres were Colonel Francisco de Paula Soares and Manoel Ferreira Porto. Already well before the request to the government of the Province to colonize Torres with German immigrants, they tried to construct a road that linked the prison in Torres to Serra do Malha Coco, passing through the valley of the Mampituba, where Ferreira Porto possessed vast area of land. Coincidentally, it was precisely here that the immigrants were settled when they arrived in Torres in 1826, precisely on 17 November. It is easy to imagine that someone wanted to take advantage of the well-known and well-known laborious hand of the Germans, whose agricultural production would certainly be plentiful and could easily be drained by the road made up by saw up to the consumer centers, as well as the estates that already existed on top of the mountain range. But would this be pure patriotism, wanting the development of the region and its mentors? It really is a puzzle that is at the discretion of each one and that can be interpreted in several ways. Everything seemed to be a thousand miles and it seems that the interests of both parties, both the mentors and the settlers, were being realized. But, behold, nature decided to make itself present in the early days and to liquidate with everything, whatever was right, what was wrong, frustrating the interests of the mentors or who had them, if they really were. The rains began to fall mercilessly, soaking and flooding the entire valley of the Mampituba. The colonists, terrified, gathered their junk, saved what they could, and plunged into the woods toward the nearby hills, east of the lagoon of Morro do Forno (Hill of the Oven), where they settled. Another terrifying coincidence: the lands where they settled in the nearby hills, located where today is the zone of the Jacaré (Alligator), belonged to Colonel Paula Soares, where even the same already had in operation a mill of sugar cane. If there were any second interests on the part of Paula Soares with the settlers, as we have told before, by the irony of fate this one had preached a play. The land area that belonged to Paula Soares was 400 Ha (Ha = Hectar, unit of measurement for agricultural areas corresponding to one hundred ares or one hectometer square (10,000m²)). This area comprises exactly the useful lands that currently exist in the locality known as Jacaré (Alligator). After the rains, floods and floodwaters, the settlers firmly refused to return to the Mampituba valley, thus creating a major headache for the mentor of the colonization. What would have been the attitude of Paula Soares on this occasion? After all, his interests were at stake. How would he have reacted by seeing his plans crumbling to the ground, one by one? The settlers were also terrified, discontented with all those situations, not wanting to settle on the land, expressing the desire to leave. The government, wanting to

force them to work the land, cut them the subsidy. It was then that an agitator appeared among the settlers. Of dubious origin, an adventurer of French origin, named Louis Boudier, taking advantage of the instability of the settlers, infiltrated among them, in order to revolt them, what he really succeeded. The settlers under Boudier revolted, demanding that their demands be fulfilled, that is, the transfer to other lands, as for example to Tramandaí, one of their demands, even if, with the subsidies cut, a new settlement would bring them the subsidies back for a long period. But who was Boudier? The mere fact of being a related French among the German immigrants is already a question mark. However, this can be relieved. But why would a Frenchman of dubious origin have bothered to set the colonists up? What purpose? Was it for self-interest or commanded by someone also interested in a settler uprising? If so, who would have that interest? We can not forget that Boudier was part of the security service (= police) of the own inspector Paula Soares. In case Boudier succeeded, that is, the settlers were transferred to other lands (Tramandaí), who would profit most from it, but Paula Soares, since the majority of settlers were settled on their land (400 Ha) in Jacaré? Of course, we are only making conjectures, but surely in the future the history of German immigration in Torres will already have elements for a more in-depth study on the subject. Boudier failed in his attempt, even if he succeeded, as he did, in a petition, under the name of 29 settlers, including his own, addressed to Inspector Paula Soares himself. Without power or not wanting to solve this situation, the settlers rebelled in commission until the capital of the Province to take their claims personally to the government. Arrived at the capital, things rushed. There were even the arrest of some settlers who later, of course, were released. The government, bored with all these troubles, resolved, once and for all, to put an end to this terrible situation. He sent for the settlers and, among other things, he probably would have said more or less like this: "either you settle on that land, or you go back to Germany on foot." End of the revolt. Giving the case as a *fait accompli*, impotent at the decision of the government and probably very hurt, they accepted the decision, returning to Torres and definitively fixing itself in the lands of Jacaré and its environs. Inspector Paula Soares also hurt, as can be seen in his reports to the provincial government, which changed the course of events. Between losing his lands and the concept he had with his superiors, not wanting to fall into disgrace, he chose to lose his lands. Then asked to his superiors a surveyor was sent to measure and demarcate the said lands, in order to deliver the respective batches to the settlers. We can not, as well, rule out the possibility that Paula Soares later bargained with the government for her lands. In the face of all these events, he made a decision. He arrested Boudier, sending him on serious charges to his superiors to be engaged in the armed forces, which at the time meant almost his death sentence. If it were in modern times, we would simply say that it was "a burning file". From then on, Inspector Paula Soares proceeded to make his superiors, merely simple and melancholy reports of local events in the performance of their duty, spending their lives, at least for the settlers, to lose themselves in time and history.