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## SETTLING IN THE JUNGLE

The settlements founded by emigrants from Germany after 1933 in the surrounding districts of the town of Rolandia in the state of Paraná in Brasil are situated between the 23rd and 24th Latitudes and 51st and 52nd Longitudes. They are from 2,000 feet to 2,400 feet above sea level and the climate is sub-tropical. To-day the district can be reached from Sao Paulo by train in about 22 hours or by plane in just under two hours. When the first settlers arrived the area was largely jungle. The transformation from jungle to civilization and the cultivation of maize, rice, beans and, above all, of coffee have been brought about with such rapidity, that the oldest settlers look back on the period of fifteen to twenty years ago as an almost "prehistoric" era. Indeed, recollections of these times are now being written, so that the younger generation, growing up under completely different conditions, may realise what it used to be like when their fathers and grandfathers, exiled from Europe, began to build a new life for themselves under the most primitive conditions in the jungle. Since that time, not only has the whole world undergone great changes, but also the formerly little known Rolandia has assumed a new importance. Together with the new and expanded coffee producing zone of North Paraná, it has become one of the vital factors in the world coffee market. Moreover, living as we do at the edge of the jungle, we have felt more acutely than the big towns the economic inter-dependence of the world; especially during the war when petroleum and gasoline were scarce and when we took the place of Asia in supplying Menthol-oil and nut-oil.

From 1933 to the outbreak of war some sixty families emigrated to Rolandia from Germany due to the rise of National Socialism. Of these sixty families only ten were of Jewish faith. Numerically a very small community. It has always been the case that Jews do not settle easily in isolated places and, even less, in jungle territory, remote from the towns. In this case, even the additional temptation of being able to buy jungle territory with marks in Germany, attracted very few although this meant that they were able to transfer their capital at a much more advantageous rate. However, this method of transfer via the English company, Paraná Plantations Ltd., enabled the immigrants to invest their capital and also to obtain their Brazilian visas. Very few of the immigrants had been farmers in Germany; most of them had worked in towns and thus had to reorientate themselves completely. The fact that they succeeded is due to their determination, to the excellent soil eminently suitable for growing their main product, coffee—and to the fine communal spirit among the settlers. In the first years many difficulties had to be overcome, many sacrifices made. But to compensate for all this hardship, there was the wonderful feeling of living on one's own land in freedom, in a country that knew nothing of racial discrimination.

Once the most elementary practical problems had been solved, the new settlers of Rolandia began, quite deliberately, to shape their way of life. They sought to retain the Western cultural heritage whilst at the same time fitting in with and understanding the special conditions prevailing in Brasil. In the dwelling-houses on the different plantations, which are several miles apart, lectures are arranged, there is a great deal of music and singing, and visitors from all over the world are cordially received. Everyone seeks to share his own particular knowledge with others. Rolandia does not have its own Jewish Community, but it is closely linked with the Congregacao Israelita in Sao Paulo in many ways, and its paper, the "Cronica Israelita," is read on the Jewish plantations. These also receive "Aufbau" and "Commentary" and keep in touch with events in Israel. Occasional services have been held by rabbis from Sao Paulo and from the U.S.A. The extent to which the Jewish religion is practiced here, depends largely on the spirit of each separate house, for the instruction of the children, be it by the parents or by tutors, takes place only on the Fazendas. On the other hand in Rolandia itself a High School and several private schools have recently been opened to supplement the elementary school; but in the early days of the settlement, the children came from neighbouring plantations on horse-back through the jungle to visit whichever farm was being used as a school.

As is to be expected in such a district as this, there is no native population, even less an indigenous Jewish Community. Once jungle territory like this is opened, a stream of newcomers—Brasilians of Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, German origin, as well as many Negroes and Mulattoes—arrives, without any traditions or ties with the past, anxious only to civilize the district as quickly as possible. The Nazi victims from Germany have given Rolandia its character, although they form only one per cent. of the total population and are in no way a unified community.

What will be the future of this strange community, especially of the younger Jewish generation, is hard to say. Both older and younger generations of immigrants have almost all become naturalised Brazilian citizens; children born in Brasil become Brasilians automatically. All beliefs and creeds are tolerated in Brasil. The division between Church and State is complete, although the social and political influence of the Catholic Church is still quite considerable. Nevertheless there are few parts of the world where man can live according to his own beliefs and inclinations with so little interference: a great boon for the older people, but, at the same time, a danger for the youngsters. For they have never experienced the truth of Hillel's dictum: "If I care only for myself, who am I?" However, the older generation is striving to keep alive a consciousness of its origin and of the traditions of Judaism among the Jewish youth. Thus one may hope that, living so close to nature, the younger generation will draw from it a vital spiritual and religious impetus.