CHAPTER SIX

German in Australia

The German language has a long history in Australia. There have been two major groups of German-speaking immigrants in the history of Australia - those who came in the 19th century and those who arrived after World War II. The latter group, comprising Germans, Austrians and German-speaking Swiss, form the third largest non-English-speaking migrant group to Australia since the World War II, behind only the Italians and the Greeks. Most post-war German-speaking migrants live in the cities, particularly in Melbourne and Sydney. The descendants of the 19th century settlers live primarily in rural areas.

Early German Settlement

German settlement in Australia began in 1838 when four shiploads of Germans arrived in South Australia. The reason for their immigration from Germany was what they saw as interference by the ruler of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm III, in their religious affairs. Friedrich Wilhelm was himself a Calvinist, but the majority of his subjects were Lutherans. In 1817 he had combined both protestant churches into a unified church using one liturgy. The Lutherans, for the most part, did not like this change to their form of worship and held out against it. In 1830 Friedrich Wilhelm ordered all congregations to comply with his reforms to the church, and pastors who were recalcitrant were arrested. In 1836 the pastor of the village of Klemzig, now in Poland, decided that the only solution was to take his entire congregation and leave the country. Through a chain of circumstances he and his congregation ended up in South Australia, and immigration from protestant parts of Germany continued in a more-or-less steady stream until 1914, when it halted entirely. An insignificant number of German Catholics immigrated to South Australia as well, but the vast majority were Lutherans, and the Lutheran church played a strong role in the German community in South Australia.

Friedrich Wilhelm died in 1840, but migration continued as a reaction to economic depression and restrictions on land ownership in eastern Germany. The Germans settled first near Adelaide in a village named Klemzig, after their village of origin. In 1839 the village of Hahndorf was founded in the Adelaide Hills. The Barossa valley had begun to be settled by 1842. Many original German settlers had worked on British estates in South Australia and had had to pay back the price of their fares. When they wanted to buy land themselves they had to pay ten times what the British aristocracy had paid, and if they borrowed the money, which they were compelled to do out of economic necessity, they had to pay interest of up to 20 percent. Credit was easier to obtain in Victoria and New South Wales, and therefore some of the South Australian Germans eventually emigrated to Victoria and New South Wales. Those Germans who settled in Hahndorf and the Barossa Valley were able to form self-sufficient communities which had little need for contact with non-Germans. The Lutheran church played an important role, not only in the maintenance of the

faith but also in the maintenance of the German language, since Lutheran ministers always came from Germany and since the education of the younger generation was carried out in schools run by the church. In 1846, however, a split occurred in the Lutheran Church in south Australia, with one group siding with Pastor Kavel, the organiser of the original immigration, and another group siding with Pastor Daniel Fritzsche. Kavel's group was called the United Evangelical Lutheran Church. Fritzsche's group was called the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Kavel's group continued to look to Germany for its pastors, whereas Fritzsche's group allied itself with the Missouri Synod in the USA. Thus the United Evangelical Lutheran Church continued to get its pastors from Germany, whereas the Evangelical Lutheran Church got its pastors from the USA, so that more and more English was introduced into the life of the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as the 19th century wore on. The Evangelical Lutheran Church was the stronger church in western Victoria, whereas the United Evangelical Lutheran Church was dominant in the Barossa Valley and later in Queensland. (The two Lutheran churches reunited in 1967.)

German settlers in South Australia came under attack during the Boer War (1899 - 1902) between the British and the Dutch settlers of the Orange Free State in South Africa. This came about because the German government expressed moral support for the Boers. The Germans did not actually provide any material support for the Boers, but that was irrelevant. The English-speaking majority of South Australia saw Germany's expression of support as a German attack on the Crown and immediately suspected the German settlers in their midst of disloyalty. This was despite the fact that most of the Germans in South Australia by this time had been born there. The suspicion of the German settlers came about largely because the Germans outside the cities had kept to themselves in closed settlements, with the result that they and their affairs were largely a mystery to the English-speaking Australians. Human nature being what it is, the unknown is viewed with suspicion. With the additional catalyst of Britain being at war and with Australia still being a non-united set of British colonies, the Germans were natural prey. Thus the German settlers, by keeping to themselves for religious reasons, which enabled them to maintain their language, contributed to their own distress.

The next crisis came with the onset of World War I. Under the *War Precautions Act* of 1914, the publication of material in the German language was banned, thus German newspapers were banned. Furthermore, using German as the language of instruction in schools was banned, and in some instances pastors were forbidden to preach in German. In addition many German placenames were changed. Thus the Kaiserstuhl (South Australia) was renamed Mount Kitchener, and Hochkirch (Victoria) was renamed Tarrington, to give just two examples. In some instances the placenames were eventually changed back to the German originals, e.g. Hahndorf and Lobethal, but in most instances they were not. A constant lament heard from the descendants of German settlers who lived through that period is: "Vor dem Krieg war alles Deutsch, und nach dem Krieg war alles Englisch". About 4500 German-born Australians were interned for the duration of the war. The great irony of all of this is, of course, that most of the German immigrants and the descendants of 19th century settlers were not interested in what was happening in Europe - they had come to Australia to get away from Europe.

The attack on the German language which occurred during this period had obvious and predictable consequences. The use of German declined rapidly, especially among the younger generation. Both Lutheran churches, in an attempt to keep younger members, introduced bilingual services. Clyne (1972:64) provides some statistics for Sunday schools, confirmations and services conducted in English and German by the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (the one with the closer ties to Germany) in South Australia and Victoria in the years 1931 and 1937. What they show is English dominance in Victoria, even as early as 1931, with a much greater shift to English by 1937. In South Australia there was more use of German than English in 1931, but English had more or

less caught up with German by 1937. In the other Lutheran church, with no immediate ties to Germany, shift to English was even more advanced.

Post World War II Settlement

The next significant wave of German-speaking immigrants to Australia came after World War II, beginning in 1950, the first year that German and Austrian immigrants were admitted. The immigration of large numbers of German speakers coincided with the immigration of huge numbers of white Europeans to Australia, part of the "populate or perish" policy of post-war Australian governments. The two Lutheran churches hoped to gain the interest of the new immigrants and offered German church services, but to little avail, as the post-war immigrants were markedly less interested in religion than the 19th century German settlers, for whom religious freedom was the major reason for migration. The post-war migrants also tended to settle in cities rather than in rural areas, so that there was and is little contact between the descendants of the settlers and the newer immigrants.

The Australian census of 1976 reported 170,000 regular users of German, of whom 133,000 were born overseas. About 46,000 of these lived in Melbourne and 42,000 in Sydney. According to Clyne (1981:8) the largest numbers of German speakers in Melbourne were in the suburbs of Waverley, Keilor, Caulfield, Knox, St. Kilda, Sunshine and Moorabbin, in that order. Caulfield and St. Kilda have large Jewish populations, many members of which speak German either as a first or second language. Knox and Moorabbin are the areas in which the Templers live, of whom more later. Sunshine and Keilor are areas with large European migrant populations. Waverley is the middle class suburb par excellence.

In the censuses of 1986 and 1991 the question about regular language use was changed somewhat in that respondents were asked what language they spoke at home. In the 1991 census 113,336 people claimed to speak German at home. Of these, 55,132 were born in Germany, 9,745 in Austria, 18 in Luxemburg, 2,992 in Switzerland, 1,482 in Hungary, 2,710 in Poland and 2,961 in Yugoslavia. 22,950 of the 113,336 were born in Australia. New South Wales had the most German speakers with 34,290, of whom 23,376 live in Sydney. Victoria had 32,441, of whom 25,669 lived in Melbourne[1]. Melbourne therefore still has the largest concentration of German speakers in Australia, with Sydney a close second.

Much research has been done by Michael Clyne and his students on German language maintenance and language shift in Australia, and interested readers are referred to their works listed in the bibliography at the end of this volume.

Templers

The Templers represent the one closed German-speaking community of 20th century origin in Australia. The Templers are members of a Swabian protestant sect whose ancestors immigrated from Swabia to Palestine in the 19th century. Palestine came under the British mandate at the end of World War I, and when World War II broke out most Templers in Palestine were interned by the British as enemy aliens and were deported to Australia, where they were interned for the balance of the war in Tatura. Most remained in Australia after the war, since a return to Palestine was not feasible. Some "returned" to Germany, married Germans and then returned to Australia, and some who had been interned on Cyprus and some who had spent the balance of the war in

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[1]These figures were kindly supplied by Michael Clyne and Sandra Kipp.

Germany joined those who had elected to stay in Australia. About 1000 Templers now live in the Melbourne suburbs of Bayswater, Boronia and Bentleigh. Some other Templers settled in Sydney, and some settled in Tanunda in the Barossa Valley, undoubtedly because there were so many others of German descent in that place.

There are at least three clear generations among Melbourne's Templers: 1) those who were born and educated completely in Palestine and who came to Australia as adults and who never worked in Australian society, 2) those who were born in Palestine but came to Australia as children or young adults and who joined the Australian work force after their release, 3) the children of group 2, who were born and educated entirely in Australia.

Group 1 typically speaks little if any English. Most of them are now quite old and in many instances have lost what English they may have had. Group 2 typically speaks German at home but functions well in English as a result of having worked in Australian society. Members of Group 3 are typically more at home in English than in German but can and do function in German, particularly when speaking to members of the other groups.

The Templers have traditionally used Standard German in church services but have used a Swabian dialect in informal situations. The Standard language is thus associated with formal situations, the dialect with informality. In recent years English has begun to replace Standard German as the formal or "high" language, while the Swabian dialect has continued to hold its place as the informal or "low" language. The Templer youth group has officially abandoned German as the language of its meetings.

Language Shift among Post-War German Migrants

The typical pattern for post-war German-speaking immigrant families is that the parents speak German to the children and the children answer in English. The children speak English among themselves. German immigrants are also more assimilatory than immigrants from some other European countries, and their children therefore marry non-Germans to a greater extent than the children of, say, Greek migrants marry non-Greeks. Maintenance of the German language declines as a result, and many German families go over to English completely in the first generation. The 1991 census showed that 42.4 % of German-born immigrants now use English at home. This compares with 3.8 % of Turkish-born, 4.4 % of Greek-born, 11.2 % of Italian-born and 17.2 % of Polish-born. On the other hand, 31 % of Maltese-born and 57 % of Dutch-born used only English. Germans thus occupy, with the Maltese, a position between the Greeks, Italians, Turks and Poles, who do not switch to English in great numbers, and the Dutch, who do.