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Memories are History: Emigration in the Thirties (2)

Were you wondering too how the family fared in Ecuador, and how they managed to survive? Here is the end of the account.

Santo Domingo was 105 km away. Its climate is very tropical. The local Indians used to go there to get rubbermilk and gin. The gin was made from sugar cane. It would be transported by teams of mules, twenty to thirty of them. They used to graze the mules on our farm, and we would either receive money for the grazing or sometimes we would get oranges, bananas and other tropical fruit, which helped a lot. On the farm we had a few cows. We also planted potatoes and other vegetables, but during the winter months we had frosts that would ruin the crops. I don't know how we survived.

With the help from the Swiss consul, mum managed to sell the farm and make a living. We all had to help. We found employment. I started working in a fashion shop owned by a Jewish couple from Germany. They were extremely good to me. This is where I learnt to sew. My brothers started work in the local flour mill. They later went on to work on local farms. My older sister got married and had a daughter. Sadly, her husband died when their baby was six months old, so my sister had to find work, too.

In 1947, mum decided to go back to Switzerland with the four youngest children. In this same year my father died. In 1948 my sister, her daughter and I returned to Switzerland. My three brothers remained in Ecuador.

After four years in Switzerland, my two sisters and I left Switzerland, bound for new adventures in New Zealand. Three years after I arrived in New Zealand, I got married, and we started farming. We had three sons.

After 33 years in New Zealand I visited Ecuador to see my brothers. Whilst there I went to see the old farm, Los Alpes. To my surprise the property was owned by a Swiss.

Even today I don't know why my father bought the place. I think it was the biggest mistake he ever made.

We made two more trips to Ecuador and travelled through most of the country. Even though I had lived there for eleven years there was so much of the country I hadn't seen or known about. Ecuador is a very interesting country, with a climate you can only wish for: tropical midlands and the high Andes. Ecuador has plenty of mountains, Chimborazo, Cotopaxi, to name just two. The country is very beautiful to look at. However, its internal political structure is corrupt, and I am informed this is still the situation today. Today it is a modern country. It has big shopping centres and motorways from end to end – vastly different from when we first arrived there, all those years ago.

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 * Dank dir Mutter für mein Leben, *
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