

Victor W. von Hagen. *Der Ruf der neuen Welt: Deutsche bauen Amerika.* Droemer Verlag (Munich, 1970), 368 pp.

This book presents some history, some compilations about German emigrants, and some tidbits about Germans in the United States. Its downfall is that the author tries to do too much. Two entire continents of North and South America as a New World that received German emigres for 500 years is too big an order for one book. General impressions can be made, of course, and the reader does gain an appreciation for the range of German influences on the New World. For instance, Germans accompanied the Norsemen to our shores and we know that a descendant of Germans was among the first to walk on the moon. Ideas and culture follow individuals, to be sure, and we can agree with the author who notes in his preface that a people which has been recently burdened with so much collective guilt deserves for a change to receive some collective laurels.

The volume is bolstered by a selective bibliography. While there are some in-text references to these sources, there are no footnotes to guide the researcher behind the generalities found in the book. Both a name registry and a subject matter index provide some comfort. Pictures and illustrations, some of them colored, add visual dimension to the text. Otherwise the student of German-Americana is set afloat in an ocean of trivia, some of it interesting but none of it cohesive except in so far as it underscores the fact that Germans contributed to the settlement of the New World.

It is fun to learn that in 1493 ambitious Nürnberg book printers determined to write a chronicle about the entire history of the world and included a letter from Columbus, "Epistola Christoferi Colom," with reference to the newly discovered West Indies. But it is not fun to wade through countless episodes in the early history of South American colonization and to be told that this or that adventurer had a German or two in his entourage and to find out where each was born and where he studied. Furthermore, it is true that the Habsburg family is intimately linked from its roots in Austro-German history through Spain to the New World, especially South America, but that linkage by itself fostered virtually no German-American cultural transfer.

Well-known stories like the Humboldt travels in North and South America receive too much attention while chapters on the Forty-Eighters and the American Civil War rely rather heavily on books by Carl Wittke and Wilhelm Kaufmann. Students of German-Americana will find certain chapters, such as the one on Emperor Maximilian's experience in Mexico out of place in a book of this nature. Likewise, they will be disenchanted with the superficial treatment of German immigration to the United States in the last hundred years. When one considers that the greatest surge of German immigration to our shores occurred after Bismarck came to power, and that Kaiser Wilhelm II, Hitler and two World Wars were decided factors in the assimilation of these Germans into American society, then surely fifteen pages is not adequate space to cover the subject.

Time does not permit the reviewer to double-check all of the author's facts. A few, however, raise the hair of even the most casual reader. For example, on page 310 the author reports about Graf Zeppelin's experiences with balloons in the American Civil War. "Nach Kriegsende stieg er in Saint Paul in Kanada [!] mehrmals in einem Fesselballon auf." The author is wrong not only about Canada but also about the dates, for Zeppelin actually made his first balloon ascension with a Professor Steiner in the City of St. Paul, Minnesota on August 19, 1863 and not after the Civil War. This story was confirmed by Zeppelin's own letters as reported widely by Rhoda Gilman in *Minnesota History*, 40 (Summer 1967).

Nevertheless, for the general German-language reader this book will present a broad overview of praiseworthy German emigrants to two continents. Clearly such a reader will be equally interested in South America as in the North and he will not mind that Canada is barely mentioned.

LaVern Rippley  
St. Olaf College

#### GERMAN-AMERICAN RESEARCH

Prof. Herman Brause (Dept. of German,  
St. John's College, Rochester, N.Y.)  
is seeking and collecting data on the  
German theatre and stage in Rochester,  
New York.