

***Out of the Shadow of War:
The German Connection with New Zealand in the
Twentieth Century***

Reviewed by A.J. Coleman

Out of the Shadow of War: The German Connection with New Zealand in the Twentieth Century.

Ed. James N. Bade.

Oxford University Press, 1998.

This is a much more ambitious work than *Long Journey for Sevenpence*, reviewed above. By means of thoughtful introductions to each of its five sections Mr Bade keeps a firm hand on its disparate contents. He divides his material into five parts: war, anti-German sentiment, and war heroes; the arts, famous academics, business- and professional men; and present ties to Germany in terms of political and economic links, the current politics of immigration from Germany, and the study of German as a foreign language.

The contributors are usually experts in their field, being academics or those who write for their living. Their different 'registers', from the wondrously economical survey of *Germany and New Zealand at War* by Ian McGibbon to Lauren Jackson's relatively spacious treatment of the extraordinary and mutually affectionate relationship between New Zealand and German film-makers in her chapter called *The Film Connection*, add interest to the book.

For those whose interest is in literature, James Braund's chapter, *Literary Points of Contact*, makes absorbing reading. He explains how Katherine Mansfield came under the spell of German romanticism; that D H Lawrence 'penned the earliest known English-language review of Thomas Mann's classic novella, *Death in Venice (1912)*'; and that the German writer Gerhard Köpf and Maurice Shadbolt were great friends.

Ann Beaglehole, herself a refugee from the 1956 uprising in Hungary, has written a fascinating chapter called *Refugees from Nazi Germany and Austria 1933-45*. The refugees with whom this book is concerned had never done housekeeping or cooking before they arrived in New Zealand. New Zealand men will smile when they read:

The New Zealand wife of [a refugee] observed that one of the differences between a Central European husband and a New Zealand one was that if, for example, a fuse needed fixing, the

Central European was inclined to say immediately: 'There are men who do those things'.

Note the mention, as in *Long Journey*, of resentment expressed by New Zealanders towards immigrants who were working harder and longer than themselves.

Ms Beagehole also looses a shaft at the British Medical Association when she writes: 'At every step, from entering New Zealand to gaining full professional acceptance, the doctors who came as refugees were opposed by the BMA'. One is tempted to ask, What has changed?

A constant, dreadful theme throughout the book - like a muffled drum beat - is that of persecution. In 1933, for example, Jewish doctors were dismissed from their hospital positions in Germany. In the mid-1930s the Nuremberg Laws excluding Jews from all other occupations took effect. It became strictly forbidden for an 'Aryan' man to associate with a 'non-Aryan' woman. It did not matter that your family were non-practising Jews. Just to be of Jewish descent was sufficient. It is no wonder that the distinguished linguist Gerda Bell (Eichbaum), the subject of a chapter by Renate Koch, felt obliged to leave Germany. She had been called a '*dreckiges Judemädchen*' ('filthy Jewish girl'). Paul Hoffmann (Hansgerd Delbrück) had been called a '*Mischling ersten Grades*' ('first grade [Jewish] half-caste'). Sir Thomas Eichelbaum (Bill Sewell) 'was one day pelted with snowballs by a group of schoolchildren, before being attacked with fists. An adult came to his rescue but ... abused the young Eichelbaum by calling him 'a bloody Jew' '.

But New Zealand was not immune from extreme nationalism. Nelson Wattie, writing of the distinguished scholar von Zedlitz, holder of the first chair of Modern Languages at Victoria University College, astonishes us by pointing out that anti-German feeling was so intense at the outbreak of World War I that when the College would not dismiss von Zedlitz the government passed a special act of parliament to remove him! Again, just after the commencement of World War II, Gerda Bell was dismissed from the staff of Woodford House, Havelock North.

Whereas the assisted immigrants in *Long Journey* were ordinary people, the Germans whose short biographies we share were anything but. Take this, about the great singer and producer Maria Dronke (Peter Vere-Jones):

During Maria's teenage years ... she regularly attended the Beethoven-Saal and the Berlin Philharmonic, where she met the ... violinist Fritz Kreisler ... and the conductors Bruno Walter and Arthur Nikisch. Privately, she was acquainted with Einstein, discoursed with the theologian Paul Tillich, and listened to Bertolt Brecht singing his own songs ...

Then there is the prodigiously learned poet, Karl Wolfskehl (Friedrich Voit), very much a square peg in a round hole in New Zealand; the brilliant Sir Karl Popper (Nelson Wattie); the economist Wolfgang Rosenberg (Gerhard Träbing) who, with retirement from Canterbury University approaching, sat and passed his law exams and proposed that he go into partnership with his son George in Wellington, the firm to be styled George Rosenberg & Father! And what will readers make of the panegyric to the highly controversial Doctor Erich Geiringer (Bevan Burgess)?

It will be evident, therefore, that *Out of the Shadow* bulges with human interest, effort, and achievement. There will be no one to whom it does not speak, perhaps through having served their country in either of the two World Wars, or because of having been young adults in the 1930s, or because of having met or in some way been touched by the gifted individuals described. It is probable that once the reader has dipped into the book he or she will read backwards and forwards until it has all been read. This will doubtless include the biographical notes on the contributors, which round out a meticulously presented publication by the Oxford University Press.

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