

GERMAN AMERICA

UNSER AMERIKA. By *Colin Ross*. Leipzig:
F. A. Brockhaus. 1937.

(Alfons Paquet in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, Berlin)

CAN we believe our eyes? Our America
—and not even in quotation marks?
Does this express a property interest, a
right? Or does it give facts that have been
unknown to the German reader?

In no other case has the relationship of
two peoples and two countries been more
strongly guided by destiny than in the
case of Germany and the United States.

Only a short time ago President Roosevelt publicly declared that the share of the American citizen of German blood in the building of America has been much greater than that of many others—that 'it is a highlight in the history of our people.'

Colin Ross has undertaken nothing less than a new history of the United States in the light of the contribution made by Germans. The time is ripe for this approach, since it has been absent from all previous attempts. This history consists of a new kind of arrangement of known and newly-discovered facts. The German point of view which Colin Ross represents with emphasis frequently creates a picture far different from the official version which is solely guided by an Anglo-Saxon point of view. Judged from this angle the book is purely polemical. To gauge the German share more fairly the author reexamines the history of the United States. At the same time he unrolls the background of German history, which since Luther's time has had a decisive influence on all those Germans who have had to leave their country because of their religious beliefs. With irrevocable determination millions of Germans have devoted themselves to the creation of a new fatherland across the ocean.

Colin Ross himself is a German of Anglo-Saxon extraction. He does not fail to recognize the work of the Anglo-Saxons. But he traces all exaggerated statements and all propagandistic old-school opinions back to the real facts. He declares that the German element represents more than one-fourth of the mixture in the American melting-pot. He describes the strange succession of groups and immigrants who make up the German element. The migration started during the Thirty Years' War, when it became noticeable in the colonies of New England. It won a new religious expression among the Frankish and Rhenish colonists who settled in Pennsylvania. It developed the pioneering spirit among those from the Palatinate who settled in the Hudson valley. Later on it showed up

in the Middle West. It penetrated the Mississippi, expressed itself in romantic adventure with the 'Mainz Guild of Nobles' in Texas and played an important rôle in the shaping of California and Oregon.

Colin Ross realizes the transition that has taken place in America since the World War. New strata replace the puritan strains which formerly predominated. Here one observes the influence of those many incompletely Americanized non-English immigrants who created an Americanism as genuine, passionate and self-sacrificing as that of native Americans. The German share, still recognizable in the English-speaking offspring of German immigrants, is strongest in this stratum. It is stronger even than the share of the Mexicans, the French-Canadians, the Poles and the Italians.

Colin Ross compares the failure, the confusion, the defeat of the German element in America during the World War with the real Versailles. But in America he also predicts a rebirth. He ventures to hope that Americans of German blood will come to regard themselves more clearly as such: not by founding a new organization or a new party, but in the natural community life of all who feel proud both of their German extraction and of their tie to American soil. They are not half-baked Americans; they are real Americans who have added and still are adding their share to America.

In America, too, German sometimes opposed German. Yet it seems that the feeling of a common destiny will smooth out much of the factionalism. The rôle of a great nation in its entirety has always extended beyond its borders. Colin Ross came to America for the first time twenty-five years ago as a young engineer. Since then he has constantly revisited that great country and has included the results of his many studies and his experience in his book. This clear, rich and simple work will in the future serve as one of the cornerstones of German-American literature.