

**GERMANS IN THE ANTARCTIC.** Cornelia Lüdecke. 2021. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland AG. 284 p, illustrated, hardcover. 978-3-030-40923-4. 978-3-030-40924-1 (eBook). Translated by Bernard Oelkers from the German language edition *DEUTSCHE IN DER ANTARKTIS. EXPEDITIONEN UND FORSCHUNGEN VOM KAISERREICH BIS HEUTE*. 2015. Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag.

Early Antarctic exploration literature is dominated by tales of nineteenth and early twentieth-century expeditions launched by the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Norway, Belgium and the United States of America. Familiar names include James Clark Ross, Jules Dumont d'Urville, Fabian von Bellingshausen, Carsten Borchgrevink, Adrien de Gerlache de Gomery and Charles Wilkes. Germany's interest in the southernmost continent can be traced back at least as early as 1865 when explorer and hydrographer Georg von Neumayer proposed a German South Polar expedition. But the political climate in Germany and the priorities of the scientific community did not yet match Neumayer's enthusiasm. In 1873–1874, sponsored by the shipping company Deutsche Polarschiffahrts-Gesellschaft and travelling on the whaling vessel *Grönland*, Eduard Dallmann sailed to the South Shetland Islands. His voyage was focused on commercial gain, but geographic discoveries were made as a result of exploring and charting the coasts of Anvers, Brabant and Liege Islands and included the existence of the Bismarck Strait and lesser channels within what is now known as the Palmer Archipelago. Due to speculation about the transit of Venus, Neumayer managed to organise a trip to the Îles Kerguelen in 1874 so this phenomenon could be observed and recorded. Significant support for German expeditionary work in Antarctica wasn't realised until the founding of the Deutsche Kommission für Südpolarforschung (German Commission for South Polar Research) in 1895.

In 1898, geographer and geophysicist Erich von Drygalski was appointed as head of the *Deutsche Südpolar-Expedition 1901–1903* (German South Polar Expedition). Sailing to Antarctica on the wooden research vessel *Gauss*, the team discovered what they later named Kaiser Wilhelm II Land as well as the extinct volcano Gaussberg. They also collected extensive data and geological and biological specimens. Yet circumstances, including the British *Discovery Expedition* reaching the Farthest South during the same time period, overshadowed Drygalski's considerable achievements. Similarly, the results of Germany's second and third expeditions to Antarctica have been underrated.

Lead by Wilhelm Filchner on the *Deutschland, Die Zweite Deutsche Südpolaren-Expedition 1911–1913* (Second German South Polar Expedition) conducted much of its exploratory work in the Weddell Sea region and discovered new territory later named Prinzregent Luipold Land. As with the first German expedition, Filchner's accomplishments were undermined by discord amongst the team and the widely broadcast news of Roald Amundsen's success and Robert Falcon Scott's tragedy.

*Die Deutsche Antarktische Expedition 1938–1939* (German Antarctic Expedition) was designed as a secret mission by Hermann Göring. Lead by Alfred Ritscher on the *Schwabenland*, this expedition focused on commercial gain and territorial expansion. Information about surveying, cartographic and oceanographic data gathered during this expedition was not released until the 1950s. This delay contributed to the development of sensational conspiracy theories that continue to be perpetuated. Recent work by Summerhayes and Beeching (2007) and Lüdecke and Summerhayes (2012) thoroughly debunk these baseless theories and highlight the expedition's successes.

In the post-war period and following the division of Germany, formal involvement in Antarctic exploration diminished. Neither East nor West Germany engaged in the International Geophysical Year (1957–1958) and neither country was amongst the original signatories to the Antarctic Treaty (East Germany ratified the Treaty on 19 November 1974 and West Germany did the same on 4 February 1979). Modern German south polar research was reinvigorated following the establishment of the Alfred Wegener Institut für Polar und Meeresforschung (Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research or AWI) in 1980; the construction of Antarctic research stations including the all-year Georg von Neumayer on the Ekström Ice Shelf along the Princess Martha Coast in 1981; and the commissioning of the icebreaker *RV Polarstern* in 1982. Further developments occurred after the reunification of Germany in 1990 including the first Antarctic overwintering by an all-female

scientific team lead by Monika Puskeppeleit in 1990; the purchase of advanced aircraft and icebreakers, and increased participation in international organisations including the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research.

Author Cornelia Lüdecke is the leading authority on German polar research and her decades-long commitment to this field of study is reflected in her earlier publications and in her latest book (Lüdecke, 1995; 2003; 2012). Few English-language books about this fascinating branch of exploration history have been written with *German Exploration of the Polar World: A History, 1870–1940* by David Thomas Murphy and *Antarctic Policymaking and Science in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany (1957–1990)* by Peter Abbink (2009), being notable exceptions. Two earlier important volumes about German polar history in German include *Die Gründungsphase deutscher Polarforschung 1865–1875* by Krause and *Aufbruch in die weisse Wildnis Die Geschichte der deutschen Polarforschung* by Reinke-Kunze. Lüdecke's *Germans in the Antarctic* is a fine volume scrupulously researched and well documented with an excellent bibliography and chronology of the history of German Antarctic research. Two separate indices are helpful. Of interest to the Antarctic polar specialist as well as to a more general reader with an interest in world history, the book is a delight to read with an extensive collection of never-before-published illustrations and photographs that complement the text. The wide selection of historic maps is most interesting, but clearly drawn and reproduced contemporary maps depicting the routes of the three early German South Polar expeditions as well as the location of German research stations, which would have been a welcome addition.

The chapters on the first three expeditions cannot be faulted for their thoroughness and accuracy. The author conveys salient information about each expedition and her portraits of German Antarctic pioneers Neumayer, Drygalski, Filchner and Ritscher are skillfully drawn. The reader would have benefited from

learning more about how early and contemporary German Antarctic work relates to research conducted by its Western and Eastern European neighbours. A lengthier analysis about the merging of East and West German polar priorities following German reunification and the role taken by the Alfred Wegener Institute in directing polar objectives would have strengthened the chapter on German polar research post 1980. An unanswered question remains. Despite Lüdecke's efforts, why is German Antarctic work, both historic and contemporary, often overlooked? (Joanna Kafarowski, 205-365 Waterfront Crescent, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada ([joannakafarowski@gmail.com](mailto:joannakafarowski@gmail.com))).

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DOI: [10.1017/S0032247421000206](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247421000206)