

ALEXANDER BERGHOLD, PIONEER PRIEST AND PRAIRIE POET

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The story of the German-language newspapers and periodicals in the United States has been eloquently told by Carl Wittke and indexed by Karl J. R. Arndt and May Olsen.¹ The story of German-American belles-lettres needs to be rescued from oblivion.² Before launching into specifics of one German-language author in the United States, therefore, let me make a few observations about the general status of German-American literature.

First of all, German-American belles-lettres were copious, voluminous, and extremely varied. Although literature in the German language began in our country in colonial times, most of the pre-Revolutionary War products were religious in tone. There were many hymns, inspirational tracts, and some secular poetry and prose. There were also letters and travelogues that qualify under the heading of German-American literature. However, the bulk of German-American productivity came after the Napoleonic era when writers could travel to the newly established United States free of political strictures though still restrained by natural hazards. From the 1820's through 1914, therefore, a plethora of all kinds of writing issued from the pens of Americans writing in the German language. The first pieces of literature were the travel accounts and descriptions in the vein of the well-known Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville. There were also novels, autobiographies, reminiscences, plenty of poetry, and many anecdotes from pioneer life. In a special category are the letters, many of which have not yet been categorized as to their relevance for literature, history, or biography. Some items fall into the realms of politics or polemic and many literary pieces in all categories were written to laud the new democracy, to denounce social evils of the day, or otherwise to comment on the new homeland.

Although blanket statements are dangerous, it is perhaps safe to say that no American of German birth or descent achieved a distinguishing international reputation for work written in the United States. Several of the individuals who have acquired fame, such as Thomas Mann, Bertolt Brecht and Carl Zuckmayer, did so with the German audiences in Europe in spite of being in the United States rather than because of it. For, only in circuitous ways did the emigré authors deal with German-American themes.

Undoubtedly the best German literary works that depict the American setting for its own sake are the ethnographical novels of Charles Sealsfield, the pen name of Karl Postl. Born in Prague in 1793, Postl was ordained a priest in Bohemia before he took refuge in America between 1822 and 1832. He visited this country many times thereafter until his death in 1864.³ Likewise, every student of German literature is familiar with Nikolaus Franz Niemsch who published his poetry of *Weitschmerz*

about Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York under the assumed name of Nikolaus Lenau.⁴ The most popular German-language writer who used the American setting for his works and published for the European audience was Karl May. But Karl May never visited the United States until his magnum opus had been completed, and therefore, he would hardly qualify as a German-American writer, even if the literary quality of his contribution were higher.⁵

Mention should also be made of a few German writers who compiled handbooks, guides, travelers' tips and novelettes about the German immigrants and living conditions in the United States. Paramount in this category is Gottfried Duden whose famous book *Bericht über eine Reise nach den westlichen Staaen Nordamerikas* was published in 1829. Duden's report mingled fact and fiction, interwove experience and imagination, and pictured the freedom of the forest, like that of America's democratic institutions, in contrast to the social restrictions and political encumbrances of Europe.⁶ As it passed through three editions, more and more Germans pondered its contents, made up their minds and crossed the ocean.

Though still shrouded in mystery as regards their literary value, the works of Duden may be credited at least in part with enticing prominent Germans (Latin Farmers) to take up residence in Missouri during the 1830's and with preparing the soil for the great wave of German intellectuals (the Forty-eighters) who immigrated to America shortly after the failure of the German revolutions in 1848. The latter, the Forty-eighters, were indeed the Germans who contributed the bulk of German language literature to American and European audiences. The heyday of German literature in the United States, then, should be understood as the period from 1850 to 1900, an epoch in American literary history when the Forty-eighters published their newspapers, wrote their books, and lectured about them to contemporary audiences.

As the nineteenth century wore to a close, the German-American writers could be classified in two camps. One was the liberal camp, strongly infiltrated by Forty-eighters, whose members dwelt in the urban centers. Within the urban setting many of them agitated for social reforms but as often as not they were themselves transformed into the typical Anglo-American so that sooner or later their writings were actually quite American in tone even if they were composed in the German language. The other camp was largely rural, devoid of Forty-eighters and nearly always religious in nature. It incorporated city dwellers, but only if the latter lived in tightly-knit German-speaking wards and precincts within the larger cities.⁷ The rural-religious writers enjoyed more homogeneous audiences because ethnic identity was more easily retained in the isolation of the country. In particular, these German-speaking writers were blessed with greater linguistic solidarity—a key factor in the generation of literature. It bears noting that, to a significant degree, it was the German immigrant church in America that maintained these homogeneous ethnic communities, be they rural or urban. Therefore, indirectly, it was the church more than any other factor in immigrant life which provided us with a strong body of German-American literature.

All too frequently, we must acknowledge, the German religious immigrants—Catholic, Lutheran and other protestants—composed a literature that was rather too didactic in nature. Models of Christian virtue and stoic martyr types were given prominent exposure since the ultimate objective was always that of preservation of the faith, not depiction of

the human condition as such. Given these prerequisites, the literary quality of a man's opus was at times tarnished. Although I would not place the label of *didactic* on Alexander Berghold, he was clearly a member of the rural-religious camp of writers.

Berghold was born in Dirnrieth, parish of St. Margarethen, in the state of Steiermark, Austria on October 14, 1838.⁸ His father, Philip and mother, nee Josepha Kloescher, moved with the family in 1844 to Petersdorf, parish of St. Marien on the Pickelbach River where they operated a large estate and from where Alexander attended the school of St. Marien during twenty months of 1847 and 1848. In the fall of 1851 Alexander left home to attend the normal school at Graz. After passing his final examinations at the latter institution, he entered the theological department of the Royal Franzend University in 1862. Two years later in 1864 Alexander Berghold was recruited by the most famous Minnesota missionary of all, Father Francis Pierz,⁹ to come to Minnesota and work in the German immigrant missionary field.

Francis Pierz, who had been born in Carniola, Austria, was later ordained a priest by the Bishop of Laibach in whose Slovenian diocese Pierz labored until his departure for the United States in 1835. Father Pierz was a staunch protector of Indian rights and consequently he was opposed to the advent of white settlers. But once he realized that the tide was irreversible, Pierz worked zealously to bring German Catholics to Minnesota as well as German-speaking clergymen to minister to them. It is owed almost single-handedly to Father Pierz that to this day Stearns County and the St. Cloud area of Minnesota are largely German and staunchly Catholic, and that the Benedictine Abbey of St. John's in Collegeville came to the frontier to administer to the German-speaking Catholic faithful in the St. Cloud area. A poet and prose writer in his own right, Pierz saw to it that German-speaking priests were available in other German Catholic areas of the state as well, one of which was the Minnesota River Valley, the German nucleus of which was New Ulm.

Alexander Berghold was not alone in answering the call of Francis Pierz. Accompanying him when he arrived after a forty-two day sea journey in New York on May 1, 1864 were fourteen other theological students, one of whom later became the archbishop of Milwaukee, Frederick Francis Katzer, and another who became Bishop James Trobec of St. Cloud, Minnesota.¹⁰ From New York to St. Paul the students were offered from 600 to 1,000 dollars each as inducement to becoming substitutes for men who had been drafted for military service during the American Civil War.

After studying English and theology over the summer, Berghold was ordained a priest on October 26, 1864, by Bishop Thomas L. Grace, and said his first mass on November 1 at St. Mary's church in St. Paul. Within a few days he was appointed a priest for the mission churches of Belle Plaine, Jordan, and St. Joseph in Scott county and for St. John and St. Scholastica in Le Sueur county. Later he also ministered to the parishes of St. Thomas in Le Sueur county and St. John in Carver county. At most parishes which he served Berghold erected churches.

During 1868 Father Berghold returned to Austria to visit his family and upon his return was sent to New Ulm, Minnesota where he arrived on December 26, 1868.

Immediately Father Berghold set himself to the task of founding the new Holy Trinity parish, though not without resistance from the Turner atheists and anti-Catholic Forty-eighters who dominated New Ulm from its founding in 1854 to the early 1900's.¹¹ Beginning on January 10, 1869

and continuing until the new brick church was completed in September, 1870, mass was celebrated in Carl's Brewery on South Minnesota Street. As in the Belle Plaine and Jordan areas, Berghold served New Ulm's neighboring communities and built churches at Leavenworth, Sleepy Eye and Springfield. He also conducted worship periodically at West Newton, Fort Ridgely, Birch Coolie, Beaver Falls, Sacred Heart and Redwood Falls. After the railroad pushed westward, he occasionally said mass in Lamberton, Walnut Grove, Fairfax, Marshall, Lake Benton, Kranzberg in the Dakotas and other Catholic settlements. In most communities he designed and initiated the building of churches.

Church buildings were by no means the extent of Father Berghold's enterprising drive. In 1872 he successfully persuaded the Sisters of Christian Charity to aid him in founding St. Michael's Academy in New Ulm. Expelled from Germany by Bismarck, the nuns arrived from Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania in time for the dedication of the 40' X 90' three-story structure on June 2, 1873. A boarding school which also accepted local day students, the institution fully reflected Father Berghold's ecumenical goals for the education of his pioneer German community. This concern for *all* of his people was reflected in the local non-Catholic press which reported that the school would open on June 5th and "will be open to all denominations. Only those who desire it will receive religious instruction."

Erecting the large school, however, was no easy task, for the local parish was unable to foot the total bill. During 1871, therefore, Berghold journeyed through the eastern United States soliciting funds. In desperation, like many other Catholic pastors, Berghold appealed to the Vienna-based *Leopoldinen Stiftung* for financial assistance.¹³

Founded in 1828 through the initiative of Father Frederick Résé of the diocese of Cincinnati, the *Leopoldinen Stiftung* solicited funds from pious Austrians, and distributed them to needy Catholic organizations in the United States. Nearly a century after its establishment the foundation ceased its activities in 1921, having supplied American Catholics with more than 709,114 dollars. In addition to financial assistance, the society helped recruit priests who later made the appeals, among them Father Francis Pierz and, it would appear, also Father Alexander Berghold.

Ever concerned about the total welfare of the immigrant people in his charge, Father Berghold not only erected schools in as many of his mission parishes as possible but, again in a remarkably modern spirit of ecumenism, was concerned about providing hospital care for the citizens of New Ulm. The impetus to his ultimate success in this venture came on what has since been known in New Ulm as *Schwarzer Freitag*. On July 15, 1881 between 4:30 and 5:00 p.m. a vicious tornado ripped through the city wreaking 250,000 dollars damage and destroying 100 homes and many businesses. Father Berghold's Catholic church, the Methodist church, Hauenstein's Brewery, the German Turnhalle, St. Michael's school, and many other buildings were destroyed. Remarkably only three from within the city were killed outright plus a dozen more from the surrounding countryside. But there were fifty-three seriously injured.¹⁴

Immediately the St. Paul *Volkszeitung* established a fund for the stricken city and solicited money nationally. From all over the United States gifts arrived, including one in the form of a 1,500 dollar telegram from the German-born entrepreneur, Henry Villard (born Hilgard), who was at the time engaged in completing the Northern Pacific Railroad from St. Paul to Portland/Seattle.¹⁵ In all, over 40,000 dollars were received and

distributed by the New Ulm Citizen's Relief Committee, whose secretary was Father Berghold.

The evening the tornado struck, Father Berghold, at the request of Mayor John Rudolph, converted St. Michael's Convent into an emergency hospital, prevailing upon his Sisters of Christian Charity to care for the injured. On August 5, 1881 the local newspaper was optimistic about the wounded being "In the best of care in the hospital which has been improvised here in a convent."

Because St. Michael's was inadequate as a hospital for the city's population of some 2,500 Father Berghold issued an appeal on July 31, 1883 for funds to construct a regular hospital. With his usual success, Berghold was able to announce in the local paper on October 19, 1883 that the new institution, to be known as St. Alexander Hospital, would begin receiving patients on November 1 of that year. The new building was attached by a corridor to the main domicile of the Sisters of Christian Charity who took charge of the hospital. At dedication ceremonies that November, Father Berghold continued his ecumenical approach to caring for the total personality of the immigrant: Reverend C. F. Mowery of the First Congregational church and Frank Randal spoke in English while Father Berghold and Colonel William Pfaender, the city's founder, spoke in German.¹⁶ One year later in October 1884, Father Berghold persuaded the Order of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ of Chicago and Fort Wayne to take over the hospital on a permanent basis. Later, in 1911, a new hospital building was constructed and named Loretto Hospital and the former edifice was converted into St. Alexander Home for the Aged.

Prematurely, Father Alexander Berghold departed from his beloved city of New Ulm. When he did so on December 4, 1890 the trustees and parishioners published a resolution of appreciation which thanked Berghold "for his energetic efforts to conserve the German language. We regret sincerely that the Reverend Pastor has to leave us." Always anxious to avoid controversy, Father Berghold left few details about the reasons for his departure. Our best source of information about the incident is Albert W. Bogen, the editor of the *New Ulm Post*, who alluded to the difficulties in his column.¹⁷

Apparently Father Alexander Berghold was not simply transferred but actually resigned from the diocese because of strong pressure from the St. Paul archdiocesan prelate, John Ireland. Since the mid 1880's Archbishop Ireland had become not only a strong temperance proponent who irked all the German immigrants, Catholic and Protestant alike, but also a champion of Americanization of the immigrant. In the main, his action took the form of speeches and writings in opposition to the German Catholic newspapermen, the German American Priests' Society, and in a special way, opposition to the Catholic parochial schools because these were considered the singular means by which Catholic *Deutschtum* would be perpetuated indefinitely.

In his defense of Berghold, editor Bogen propounded that the German pastor was not baiting the Irish-American hierarchy: "He was a cosmopolitan man, which is proven by the fact that he also used the English language on a continuous basis for the benefit of about four Irish families in his parish. In that respect, however, it was not a matter of his nationality for he was a genuine supporter of German culture in Minnesota."

Bogen continued, pointing out that Berghold had supported the notion of parochial schools as a means not of halting Americanization but only of preserving the faith as well as the culture of the German people. Ireland,

he noted, was opposed to the parochial schools not as such, but inasmuch as they were largely German-speaking schools. Bogen cited as evidence of Ireland's "hatred" of things German the fact that he denied requests from parishes in Springfield and St. Peter, Minnesota for permission to build German Catholic schools.

Although the original correspondence has not been found, Bogen reports that Berghold exchanged letters with Archbishop Ireland between September and the resignation in December. Obviously others had denounced Berghold as a vicious proponent of the German language and culture. The words of Bogen alluded to the use of stool pigeons: "Malicious letters of zealots which were sent to the Archbishop behind Berghold's back by the latter's secret enemies, may have contributed to hastening this pitiable end. . . . It is a very bad sign that such a high-placed religious leader as Archbishop Ireland resorts to tyrannical espionage to run his diocese."

Editor Bogen continued: "We have read these letters and have discovered such uncouth expressions that we were compelled to ask how in the world the writer of the same could be an archbishop. Judging on the basis of these letters, we consider Mr. Ireland to be totally unworthy of his high clerical office." In his closing remarks Bogen commented that Alexander Berghold had always been extremely tolerant of all groups, religious beliefs and cultures—as indeed his record in New Ulm seems to bear out. Bidding Father Berghold goodbye, Bogen expressed the hope that, should Archbishop Ireland ever be called to Rome as a Cardinal, may he leave behind as much love and popularity in St. Paul as Berghold has left behind New Ulm.¹⁹ On December 3, 1890, Father Berghold departed for Mt. Angel Benedictine Abbey in Marion County, Oregon.

Following a rest in Oregon and travels to California and Mexico, Father Berghold was called in 1895 by Bishop Winand Michael Wigger of Newark to establish the Maria Hilf (Mary Help of Christians) parish and school at West New York on the Hudson, opposite 66th St.²⁰ By 1899 Father Berghold was back in Minnesota, assigned now as pastor to the Church of St. Nicholas in New Market, Dakota County, where he remained until 1906. Here too he added a chapel and erected an outdoor Way of the Cross. After leaving New Market, he served for one year as chaplain of St. Joseph's German Catholic orphanage in St. Paul.²¹ In the fall of 1907, Father Alexander Berghold opted for retirement to his old homeland where he lived in Mooskirchen, in the Austrian state of Steiermark, until his death at the age of 80 on November 20, 1918.²²

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Seldom has it been possible for the world's activists, whether clerical leaders or civic officials, hourly wage earners or housewives, to be genuinely good writers and poets. Nor would any one claim that Alexander Berghold combined the talents of an administrator with those of poetic genius in the way that, for example, Goethe was able to do. Nevertheless, Berghold's contribution as a lecturer, preacher, builder, pastor and as a writer is impressive. Specific recognition of his many talents came during the last session of the Minnesota Legislature in 1876 when legislative members together with Governor John S. Pillsbury gave him a vote of thanks for the services Berghold rendered to the State of Minnesota by delivering addresses in different parts of the United States as a result of which many new settlers decided to locate in Minnesota. In this respect, Father Berghold was a replica of his recruiter, Father Francis Pierz.

Among Berghold's published books are the following titles:

1) *Führer für Einwanderer Deutscher Zunge nach Minnesota*, 1876. Some 7,000 copies of this volume were distributed in the harbor terminals of Hamburg, Bremen and Le Havre by the Catholic Immigration Society, the same organization for which Berghold had lectured in the larger cities of the United States, and for the remarkable success of which he received Minnesota's official commendation.²³

2) *Prärie-Rosen. Gedichte und Prosa* (New Ulm, 1880—Druck der *Volkszeitung*, St. Paul) 352 pp. This is Berghold's most significant literary contribution and I shall return to it momentarily.

3) *Land und Leute, Reisebilder und Skizzen* (St. Paul: Druckerei des *Wanderers*, 1891). Basically this volume combines several genres in which Berghold describes his travels on four continents, beginning with the year 1885 and ending in 1891, the publication date. Up to that time, many of the entries had already appeared in a variety of newspapers.²⁴ On his travels within the United States he describes Yellowstone Park, the Pacific Northwest, Salt Lake City and several places in California. From abroad, there are sketches from Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, the Holy Land, and Egypt. Interspersed in the travelogue material is a philosophical, pedagogical, and deeply religious concern. Berghold lauds motherhood, offers advice for the family man, for children, for women and especially for prospective emigrants. For example,

"Elderly people who are accustomed to drinking their drop—be it wine, beer or good schnaps—and enjoying life as it comes would do well to remain where they are; the same holds true for those who despair easily and become morose or get discouraged, those who are ill or weak of health, those who have very little or no money but have a lot of children and older people in their charge. . . . Any one who has the urge to emigrate, should, before he does so, ponder the following motto at least a hundreds time and for a hundred days, "A man remains what he is the world over, no matter where he goes; a change in place does not produce a change in the man." (p. 360)

Always Berghold advises the German immigrant not to be too quick to abandon his German language and culture:

"In the case of Germans, that is to say, inasmuch as they remain Germans with respect to language and tradition, the more German the better; in this there is a great advantage, everywhere and in all respects. How often I have heard the comment among older stock Americans and Irish: "If only we had more Germans among us! This is the superior type of people we need." Take note of this you hairbrained proponents of Americanization! In the fields of agriculture and gardening, in areas that concern the good life and in well-matched marriage relationships, the German is a model for all other nationalities." (pp. 360-1)

4) *Indianer Rache Oder Schreckenstage von New Ulm im Jahre 1862* (New Ulm: Selbstverlag des Verfassers, 1876), 112 pp. In March, 1912, Berghold wrote from retirement in Mooskirchen, Steiermark shedding some light on this, his most successful publication. While a student of theology at Graz in the fall of 1862, he picked up a copy of the illustrated *Gartenlaube* published at Leipzig which reported extensively about the Indian

uprising in Minnesota in August of the same year. At the time he was working on a preliminary draft of a *Novelle* whose setting was to be pioneer life on the eastern steppes of Russia. Upon reading the Leipzig *Illustrierte*, he immediately abandoned the Russian *Novelle* and sketched out a novel that would have New Ulm as its setting. Like many other Europeans at the time, however, Berghold proposed a romantic, improbable narrative about a runaway slave along the model of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Accordingly, a black slave would run away from his southern master and find happiness with his sweet young wife in an existence of comparative exile on the pioneer plains of Minnesota. After serious thought, Berghold decided to abandon these plans, because as he put it, he had always considered lying to be sinful and, after all, his proposed piece of fiction would be just another forum for deception.²⁵

Berghold's intention in composing his narrative about the uprising was to protest against those who were filling their pockets with lurid descriptions about "Indian Horrors, Indian Massacres and Indian Cruelties". His book was written to present the facts, specifying "time, places, persons, and all the circumstances in connection with the awful deeds described therein. They are facts, not fancy. Historical facts are ample enough without drawing upon the imagination in describing the awful bloodshed and terrible catastrophes here recorded."²⁶

As Karl May and many others in the literary world as well as in Hollywood have amply proved, stories about American Indians have always been popular with German audiences. Thus Berghold's *Indianer Rache* was a great success in the German language. In 1891, therefore, Berghold issued an English version which he translated himself and amplified from the original. No longer was the author required to publish his works privately. The San Francisco printer, P. J. Thomas was more than delighted to produce an English-language version of *The Indian's Revenge*. One year later Berghold published a revised German version with the title now expanded to *Indianer Rache oder Die Schreckenstage von New Ulm, zweite verbesserte und vermehrte Auflage mit 7 Abbildungen und einer Kartenskizze*, which was issued in Graz by the Verlags-Buchhandlung Styria, 1892. By 1890 the English-language audience had become so enthusiastic about the work that the book was published again, this time under a new title, *A Thrilling Narrative of the Minnesota Massacre and the Sioux War of 1862-63* by A. P. Connolly of Chicago, 1896. Interest continued but no new editions were necessary until 1976 when Elroy E. Ubl of New Ulm issued a facsimile edition of the 1891 San Francisco printing by P. J. Thomas.

5) In 1912 Berghold reported that he was completing a large manuscript entitled *Dornen und Rosen* which was due shortly at the printer. It was described as a biographical statement about the author's missionary work over a forty-year period with emphasis on his Minnesota experience. To date I have been unable to determine whether this manuscript was ever published.

Alexander Berghold did write other items, especially for newspapers many of which were intended to attract German-speaking Catholic immigrants to Minnesota. He is also credited in his obituary with a knowledge of eight languages and an indefatigable talent for founding new parishes as well as planning and executing his designs for new churches and Catholic schools.

Let us return now to a discussion of *Prärie Rosen*, which will be followed by a short evaluation of *Indianer Rache*, Berghold's two major literary contributions.

Prairie Rosen contains nine chapters as follows: Prärie Lieder, Balladen, Religiöse Gedichte, Lyrische Gedichte, Lehrgedichte und Satire, Legenden, Zeitgedichte, Scherzhafte, und Vermischte Gedichte. The book concludes with a prose piece entitled *Schrecken der Prärie, Ein Bild aus der Wirklichkeit aus dem Nordwestern der grossen nordamerikanischen Prärie*, which amounts to a memoir of the author's more sensational personal experiences on the Minnesota landscape.

In his preface to *Prärie Rosen*, Berghold states that he wants to bring the muse to Germany's children across the sea, "in order that in the largest and most powerful republic of the world, the grandchildren of the great Cherusian general may serve as concerned overseers of their national traditions and language as their mighty nation grows to maturity." He laments that in the American pursuit of materialism, the poetic muse too often enjoys as little respect as a step mother. Cut off from German-language literature and from native surroundings, Berghold felt, the sons and daughters of the German pioneers would lose their ethnic solidarity and eventually their identity.

But perhaps the best of his Prärie Lieder is "Präriebrand":

Flackernd stirbt der Sonne letztes Schimmern
Auf dem ungeheuren Wiesenplan;
Rings umher ein zuckend, röthlich Glimmern,
Zeigt ein Nah'n des Prairiefuers an.
Ferne Reiter werfen Riesenschatten,
Flüchtend über hellen Feuerschein;
Und die herbstgefärbten dürrn Malten,
Hüllt ein neblicht dunkles Qualmen ein.
Scheue Antilopen flüchten, rennen,
Aufgescheucht im brandbedrohten Rohr;
Bangend weigt mein Pferd die Schlanke Mähnen,
Thurmhoch peitscht der Sturm die Loh' empor.
Zischelnd haucht die glüh'nde Riesenschlange
Ihren heißen Brodem her zu mir;
Roß und Reiter wird es angst und bange
Rings bedroht im brennenden Revier.
Muth und Kühnheit können mich nur retten,
Zaum und Sporen zwingt das edle Roß,
Hoch im Sprunge über Flammenketten
Hinzusetzen in das rauchend Moos.

Among Berghold's ballads, I like his "Chicago's Brand" best. A couple of sample stanzas follow:

Ha! wie wächst die rothe Feuerschlange!
Schrecklich schwillt ihr qualmend Leib;
Dehnt ihn meilenbreit, und streckt ihn lange,
Zischend wie zum Zeitvertreib.
Hilflos ist an sichern Tod gebunden
Alles, was den heißen Hauch empfunden.

Wehe! keine Rettung ist zu hoffen,
Meilenweit nur eine Gluth!
Hat der Stadt zu tief in's Herz getroffen
Jene gier'ge Feuerswuth.
Rette nur, wer kann, das nackte Leben,
Wem noch Möglichkeit zur Flucht gegeben!

Berghold's ballad "An die schöne Steiermark" is touching and filled with self-accusations for leaving the land of his beautiful mother tongue. There were ballads to the victorious Germans in the Franco-German War of 1870-71, ballads to German war widows, and more ballads about the author's idyllic homeland of Steiermark.

There were ballads too of the heart-rendng departures experienced by the emigrants:

Nur ein Pietschenknall; die Wagen knarren
Von der großen Kisten schweren Last. —
An den Wegen heut' viel Freunde harren,
Und zu oft hält heut' der Fuhrmann Rast.
Und dort, am Kreuzweg, wo die Linden stehen,
Hält der Zug noch einmal schluchzend an.
Jeder will die Heimat nochmals sehen,
Und, um's grübte Leid ist es gethan.

In his chapter of religious poems, the expected Catholic themes appear. There is one to the festival of Corpus Christi, and several about Christmas; poems about the virtues, the church, thanksgiving, the ship of life; a poem titled "Ave Maria", songs of tears and of death, poems in the German tradition of the *Abendgebet*.

In his lyrical poetry there are songs of love, of the stars, about evening, peaceful winter scenes, springtime, about the poet's homeland, his mother, and his feelings about being an exile in a strange land. The second stanza of "Des Verbannten Lied" reads:

Könnt ich die Hügel doch erblicken,
Den Staub an meine Lippen drücken,
Wo Jene längst entschlafen sind,
Die mich geliebt, gewiegt als Kind!

With a touch of German Romanticism, Berghold penned poems to "Der Postillion," a la Eichendorff, and about "Grabesruhe" a la Novalis. Always there was the motif of longing, i. e. of *Sehnsucht* in his numerous poems "An die Heimat". The sixth and seventh stanzas of one such Heimatlied read:

Wann kann ich sehen dich, mein Heimatshaus,
Und ruhen in der trauten Laube aus?
Wie lang müsst' ihr noch meiner Ankunft warten,
Ihr Blümlein in dem kleinen Heimatsgarten?
Dann find' ich wieder die gewohnte Ruh'
Kehrt sich mein Schritt der lieben Heimat zu.
Ich hoff' ich seh' und grüße dich bald wieder;
Für diesmal send' ich dir nur meine Lieder.

True to the preconditions for a Romantic, there was also a poem to "Die Nachtigall."

The didactic and satirical poems are addressed to the issues of tolerance and intolerance in the United States, and to less specific human folly, be it manifested primarily in the United States or elsewhere on the globe. Berghold questioned the power of reason alone, of the law unto itself, of the seemingly absolute rights of the powerful to exploit America's natural resources. The final stanza of "Ein lauter Seufzer eines Grünhorns" like all of the nine stanzas, begins and ends with a refrain:

Wo bleibt dann das Gewissen?
Es lacht der reiche Spekulant,
Die Taschen voll der Fabrikant;
Es füttern sie der Armen Hände. —
Gebt Acht! dass sich das Blatt nicht wende!
Wo bleibt dann das Gewissen?

Berghold's legends have a typically distant ring, dealing as they do with St. Francis in Italy, St. Joseph in the desert, and the peaceful princes of the Middle Ages.

More direct are his poems called "contemporary", for instance, the one "An Deutschland im Jahre 1876" which contains these stanzas:

Du hast die schönsten der Städte
Du hast ein stattliches Heer,
Du hast die besten der Völker,
Lieb' Deutschland, was willst du noch mehr?
Mit deinen Maiengesetzen,
Hast Manchen geplaget gar sehr;
Du hast ja Bismarck und Falke,
Lieb' Deutschland, was willst du noch mehr?

In another poem "An Deutschland" Berghold decries Germany's banning of the Jesuits and her treatment of priests and nuns concluding with the stanza:

Verstand, Vernunft ist in den Koth getreten,
Gerechtigkeit ward eine Gassendirne,
Und ach! Dafür ist keine Hilfe, kein Erretten;
Geschichte schreibt dem Zeitgeist auf die Stirne:
Von diesem Schandfleck und von diesem Fluch
Befreit kein Schwert und auch kein Heldenbuch,
Die Siegespalme brach,
O Deutschland, welche Schmach!

In yet another poem Berghold asks "Wer wird Germania's Erlöser sein?" and calls for a return to the kind of faith exemplified by former inhabitants of the German lands.

In a contemporary vein, Berghold wrote about his visit to the United States centennial celebration and titled his poem "Grünhorns Erfahrungen bei der Weltausstellung zu Philadelphia 1876." (Experiences of a Green Horn at the World's Fair in Philadelphia 1876). After being cheated by hotel keepers and bantered back and forth at the exposition, he concludes:

So ging's im Nest der Bruderlieb'.
Mir brannt' die Erde unter'n Sohlen,
Und wenn ich länger noch verblieb'.
Da sollt' mich doch der Kuckuck holen.

One hundred years later in 1976, the poem may well have been relived.

No less up-to-date is Berghold's view of the American Indian. In the early chapters of the *Indian's Revenge* he points out forcefully that the native Americans had been dealt with most unfairly by the white man. Yet he indicates time and again, it was not really the U.S. Government that dealt treacherously with the Indians, rather it was the hordes of unscrupulous whites who repeatedly deceived the red man for personal gain. Too often, one must conclude, the local Indian agents and fly-by-night tricksters were to blame for inciting the uprising of 1862.²⁷

True to his cultural heritage, Berghold introduces us to the Indian tribes of his book with the words: "It is the same tribe mentioned in Schiller's *Nadowessiche Totenklage*, for Nadowessies and Dakota Indians are the same. They are divided into four great tribes: Medawakonton, Wahpekuta, Wahpeton and Sisseton, who occupy a large territory west of the Mississippi; and stretching far into Dakota. They are, like most of the Minnesota, and stretching far into Dakota. They are, like most of the Indian tribes, of great bodily strength, a slim and pleasing stature, and remarkable for their shrewdness and deceit."²⁸

In the narrative Berghold credits a man named Anton Manderfeld for supplying him with much of the information he presents about the Sioux uprising. Anton had been born in the village of Manderfeld, Germany, near Cologne. Having resided at the Sioux Indian Agency, Manderfeld not only had a good knowledge of the Indian mentality, but knew the Indian language well. He was also a first hand witness to the betrayals of the red man at the hands of Indian agents and their employees. (pp. 97 ff.)

When describing the actual battles that occurred during the Sioux uprising of 1862, Berghold again demonstrates his classical European education. The besieged defenders of New Ulm "defended themselves like the valiant Greeks at the Pass of Thermopylae. They had the courage of lions, and met with better success than their Spartan prototypes." (p. 133) Epic proportions are claimed when the author, narrating the terrible fate of women and children, compares the situation to the descriptions offered by the German poet: "Körner has honored and immortalized a similar action and his 'Count Zrini, or the Capture of Szygeth' where his wife and daughter had chosen a similar fate rather than fall into the hands of the Moslems." (p. 134) When the beleaguered New Ulmers set up a stovepipe contraption as a decoy to lead the Indians to believe that heavy cannon had been brought into the city during the night, Berghold notes "This reminds us of the fatal horse of Troy. It was there that strategy conquered the old city, and here the young city was saved by the same means." (p. 139)

Concluding his description of the battles, Berghold is rather generous to the German element. "German perseverance, industry and manners have established beyond the Mississippi a cradle of culture; and its steady and rapid progress is due to the untiring hands of Germania's sons. New Ulm is an almost exclusively German town. . . . Every German province from the shores of the North Sea to the southern borders of Austria, and from the banks of the Moselle to the Neva, has sent her representatives; and still there is room for many thousands more." (p. 140-41)

In reporting about the punishment of the Indians, Berghold laments loudly the fact that white agents who had defrauded the Indians were the ones who ought to have gone on trial for their misdeeds. "Many of them are enjoying life in mansions erected by the money that they stole from the poor Indians, and the cement of those buildings is the innocent blood of

hundreds of the unfortunate settlers." (p. 142) Some consolation was taken by Berghold in the fact that of the over 300 Indians initially condemned to death, all but thirty-eight had their sentences commuted by President Lincoln, and of the latter who were hanged, thirty-six became Catholics.

Yet, from all the suffering and death, Berghold comments, nothing has been learned. "The Indian outbreak of 1862 should have been the means of inducing the Indian departments to treat the redskins with more justice but thus far there has been no change. So long as the principal officers and leaders are guided by the spirit of a narrow-minded and intolerant Puritanism, there is no hope for the Indians." (p. 187)

By way of conclusion, we should make several remarks about Berghold's contribution. About his contribution to building the Catholic Church on the Minnesota frontier—sometimes physically erecting churches—there can be no question. Much of what he wrote falls into the broad area of entertainment. Couched in his material in subtle corners, however, is a great deal of instructional material. There is gentle satire, straightforward advice, ethnic consciousness, and at times, ethnic pride. Politics as such were strenuously avoided by the prairie poet and pastor, but the art of being politic in dealing with one's fellow man, especially with the Red Man, as well as with the non-Catholic, was always paramount. Many stories and anecdotes about his ability to work with the Protestants and Freethinkers of New Ulm are still being told in that city about their pioneer priest and prairie poet. Sometimes, this pastor furnished his people with the physical necessities of life. Always he supplied his flock with spiritual food, which is equally as important for human life as bread. Sometimes the latter food was the sacrament. At other times, the spiritual bread amounted to German-language prose and German poetry which was just as necessary to nourish the immigrant minds in Berghold's charge.

¹ Carl Wittke, *The German-Language Press in America* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957) and Karl J. R. Arndt and May E. Olson, *German-American Newspapers and Periodicals 1732-1955* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1961) and its sequel, idem, *The German Language Press of the Americas 1732-1968* (Munich: Verlag Dokumentation, 1973).

² See Chapter 12, "German-Language Newspapers and Belles-lettres in the United States" in La Vern J. Rippley, *The German-Americans* (Boston: Twayne, 1976), 161-171.

³ The *Sämtliche Werke* of Charles Sealsfield (1793-1864) are currently being republished by Olms Press in Hildesheim, Germany under the general editorship of Karl J. R. Arndt.

⁴ For a quick overview see Hugo Schmidt, *Nikolaus Lenau* (Boston: Twayne, 1971).

⁵ See Arno Schmidt, *Sitara und der Weg dorthin, eine Studie über Wesen, Werk und Wirkung Karl Mays* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1969).

⁶ See William G. Bek, "Gottfried Duden's Report, 1824-1927," *The Missouri Historical Review*, XII (1917), 1-181, XIII (1918) 251-281, and XIV (1919-1920), 29-73.

⁷ Heinz Kloss, "Deutschamerikanisches Schrifttum in USA," *Dichtung und Volkstum*, XXXV (1934) 399-403. See also in general John Ernest Rothensteiner, *Die literarische Wirksamkeit der deutsch-amerikanischen Katholiken, eine literarhistorische Skizze*, (St. Louis: Amerika, 1922), 558 pp.

⁸ My bibliographical information comes from an obituary in the *New Ulm Journal* (Minnesota) July 5, 1919. See also Louis A. Fritsche, *History of Brown County, Minnesota* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1916), I, 380 ff. and 497-498, the brief historical sketch in the *New Ulm Herald*, 4 (28 April 1976), back page, and Franz Brummer, *Lexikon der deutschen Dichter und Prosaisten vom Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zur Gegenwart*, 1975 Kraus Reprint (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1913). See also Rev. Patrick H. Ahern, *Catholic Dakota* (St. Paul: Archdiocese, 1964), *Heritage in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota* (St. Paul: Archdiocese, 1964), 131-133.

⁹ See Sister Grace McDonald, "Father Francis Pierz, Missionary," *Minnesota History*, X (1919), 107-125 and John Seliskar, "The Reverend Francis Pierz, Indian Missionary," *Acta et Dicta*, III (July 1911), 66-90.

¹⁰ See "Frederick Francis Xavier Katzer," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, VIII (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 135. Born in Gmunden Austria in 1844, Katzer was solicited by Pierz for the Minnesota missions but later joined the church in the neighboring state of Wisconsin where he served as archbishop of Milwaukee from 1891-1903. See also "St. Cloud Diocese," Vol. XII, 874.

¹¹ See Noel Iverson, *Germania, U. S. A.: Social Change in New Ulm, Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), 67.

¹² *New Ulm Herald*, 30 May 1873.

¹³ The society published annual reports entitled *Berichte der Leopoldinen Stiftung im Kaisertume Österreichs*. See the letter from Father Berghold in *Berichte*, XLV (1875), 48-50. See also in general Benjamin J. Blied, *Austrian Aid to American Catholics 1830-1860*, (Milwaukee, 1944). It appears likely

that the recently canonized Bishop Neumann of Philadelphia, Bishop Frederic Baraga, the great missionary to the Indians and historian, Father Joseph Salzmann, the founder of the German Catholic St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee, Father John Stephen Raffener of New York and many others came to the United States as recruits of the *Leopoldinen Stiftung*.

¹⁴ The tornado is described best in the *New Ulm Post*, 22 July 1881 p. 2 and subsequently in the issues of 29 July, 5 August, 12 August 1881.

¹⁵ *New Ulm Post*, 15 July 1881. The telegram was sent from Altona, Pennsylvania. See also Nicolaus Mohr, *Excursion Through America*, tr. La Vern J. Rippley (Chicago: R.R. Donnelly, 1973).

¹⁶ A summary of the founding of St. Alexander Hospital appears in the *New Ulm Journal*, 6 July 1934.

¹⁷ *New Ulm Post*, 5 Dec. 1890, back page.

¹⁸ The Ireland plan for converting the Catholic schools is well known as the Faribault Plan or the Stillwater Plan. For an overview of the Ireland struggle with the German clergy see Colman J. Barry, *The Catholic Church and the German Americana* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1953), 117 ff. and 187 ff. See also "The German-American schools" in La Vern J. Rippley, *The German-Americans* (Boston: Twayne, 1976), 121 ff.

¹⁸ It is generally recognized that Archbishop Ireland was opposed to nationality churches in his archdiocese. The Germans, comprising the greatest threat, attracted his greatest wrath. In his semi-official history of the diocese, James Michael Reardon, *The Catholic Church in the Diocese of St. Paul*, (St. Paul: North Central Publishing, 1952) 260 writes as follows "In later years Archbishop Ireland had difficulties with the German priests of his diocese and he tried to solve the problem by placing German congregations in charge of Slovenian priests who spoke German. [Fathers Berghold, Pierz, Trobec fit loosely under this designation.] He was destined to play a most important role in opposing the efforts to segregate the German people in parishes, schools and dioceses under the administration of German pastors and bishops in the later decades of the nineteenth century. Hfl became in fact the central figure in a struggle to prevent the Church in America and the Republic itself becoming a loosely-knit aggregation of nationalities each preserving its racial characteristics and mother tongue." Archbishop Ireland unmasked his opposition to the German language schools at the annual convention of the German-speaking societies of Minnesota when they met on October 16, 1888 in Chaska. The full text of his address delivered during the high mass was reprinted in the *North-Western Chronicle* 26 Oct. 1888, page 1, col. 1 and 2. "... Were I to say—give chief attention in the education of your children to the German language, let the English come as it may, I would in fact be telling you—push back your children in the race of life; keep them out of the higher professions, close to them legislative halls, narrow down their business prospects, for the sake of a land they have never seen and will never see. Your duty, it seems to me, is plain; your schools must give your children an English education as good, as complete as is given in the land, and teachers not capable of imparting this education should not be placed in your schools. It is too true that so far in America our Catholics of German origin or descent have not made in public life the mark which their energy and the high order of their natural talents call for, and the reason, you will agree with me yourselves, has been their imperfect knowledge of the language of the country. It is time that plain facts be brought to your notice, in order that better things be done in the future."

²⁰ It is obvious that Berghold knew Bishop Wigger as the great protector of the German immigrant. Himself the son of German immigrants from Westphalia, Bishop Wigger became the first president of the St. Raphael Society, which cared for German immigrants, and founded the Leo House as an immigrant way station for Germans arriving in New York City. Wigger tried unsuccessfully to pass a state school aid bill for the benefit of parochial schools in the New Jersey Legislature during its 1892-93 session, endearing him obviously to men like Father Berghold. Wigger was also active in the Cahensly controversy with the American Catholic Church. See *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, XIV (1967), 905, and Barry, *The Catholic Church and German Americans*, 41, 86 ff., and 104 ff.

²¹ Letter to the author from Rev. John M. Siebenaler, pastor of Church of St. Nicholas in New Market, who quoted from the parish centennial booklet compiled by Francis J. Roehl.

²² Only months later was the news reported to Father Robert Schlinkert in New Ulm at which time a requiem mass was said and announcement made in the press. See *New Ulm Journal*, 5 July 1919

²³ Alexander Berghold and Rev. Robert Schlinkert, *Geschichte der Hl. Dreifaltigkeits-Gemeinde in New Ulm, Minnesota* (New Ulm, 1919), p. 79. Although this book and the obituaries make mention of the resolution of thanks from the Minnesota Legislature in 1976, the *Journals of the Minnesota Legislature* for 1876 do not record the action officially, nor have I been able to find reference to it in the New Ulm newspapers. The first half of the volume, *Geschichte*, provides many details about Father Berghold's biography. See also Berghold's "Die Geschichte von New Ulm, Minnesota," in *Der deutsche Pionier*, VIII (1876), 378-388 and IX (1877), 30 ff. and 225 ff.

²⁴ For example, his poetry appeared in *Der deutsche Pionier*, XII (1880).

²⁵ Berghold, *Geschichte der Hl. Dreifaltigkeits-Gemeinde*, 24.

²⁶ Alexander Berghold, *The Indian's Revenge or Days of Horror. Some Appalling Events in the History of the Sioux* (San Francisco: P. J. Thomas, 1891), 3.

²⁷ The best survey about the Minnesota Indian Wars of 1862 is, Kenneth Carley, *The Sioux Uprising of 1862*, rev. ed. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1876). In his bibliography, Carley makes no mention of Berghold's work. See also the entire issue of *Minnesota History*, XLV (Fall, 1976) which is dedicated to the Sioux uprising.

²⁸ *Indian's Revenge*, 52-53. Further references to this book in the text.