

Reviews

Die Entwicklung der meteorologischen Dienste in Deutschland (The development of Meteorological Services in Germany)

By Klaus Wege. Selbstverlag des Deutschen Wetterdienstes (2002). 366 pages. ISBN 3-88148-381-0. Price: 45 euros. Deutscher Wetterdienst, Bibliothek, Frankfurter Strasse 135, D-63067 Offenbach am Main, Germany.

Several National Meteorological Services and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) (formerly IMO) are well advanced in the second century of their existence. Interest is naturally growing, therefore, concerning the development of these institutions with the evolution of meteorology as a science and the increasing importance of its numerous applications. In Germany, the history of meteorological institutions is long (more than 200 years), multi-faceted and intrinsically linked with the complex political history beginning in the late 18th century.

Klaus Wege, former head of the Deutscher Wetterdienst's (DWD) mountain observatory Hohenpeißenberg, tackled the ambitious task of documenting all the different threads that were eventually woven into the single National Meteorological Service of today—the DWD. The result is a remarkable and most informative monograph of 366 pages, the fifth of a series entitled “Geschichte der Meteorologie in Deutschland” (History of Meteorology in Germany). It concludes a project lasting more than 20 years that aimed at authoritative documentation recording the development of German meteorological institutions.

The body of the text is structured in 14 sections, preceded by an introduction and followed by a concise overview and several appendices. The underlying intention of the entire exercise is contained in a quote from an address to students by the renowned 19th century historian Adolf von Harnack:

Whatever the subject of your study may be, do not neglect history, that is general history and the history of your discipline. Never think that you can collect knowledge without truly touching upon the personalities, who assembled it, and without learning about the paths, along which it was collected.

Sections 2-6 give concise summaries about the development of meteorology from ancient times to the 19th century, the early observational network of Soci-

etas Meteorologica Palatina (1780-1795), the development of meteorology in Austria, the tasks of meteorological services in general, and the Deutsche Seewarte (German Marine Observatory) until 1946.

Section 7 traces, in 10 chapters, the different state services (e.g. Prussia, Bavaria, Saxonia) until 1934. The period of the unified Reichswetterdienst (1934-1945) is described in Section 8 with considerable detail regarding organizational matters and technological developments (e.g. statistics, instruments, training, services for the military). Sections 9 and 10 chronicle the various state services in East Germany (1945-1949) and the development of the Meteorological Service of the German Democratic Republic (1950-1990), while Sections 11 and 12 address their western counterparts till 1952 and the evolution of the Deutscher Wetterdienst of the Federal Republic of Germany (1952-1990). A short Section 13 reviews the situation in West Berlin, where an institute of the Free University undertook a considerable number of operational services (1949-1993). Section 14 addresses the separate military meteorological service (1956-present), while the final section treats the Deutscher Wetterdienst of united Germany (1990 until the end of the 20th century).

A wealth of additional material can be found in the appendices: more than 450 references; dates of all the various services; a most informative extract from the guest books of DWD (e.g. with signatures of C.-G. Rossby and G.O.P. Obasi); and source material referring to the text sections (e.g. the foundation document of the Societas Meteorologica Palatina and various organigrams).

Klaus Wege's treatise fulfils the quotation by Harnack in quite a unique fashion. The superbly edited, two-column text in A4 format combines a well-balanced, highly readable text with a wealth of carefully researched source material. The latter includes more than 300 photographs (some in colour) of persons, buildings, instruments, charts and diagrams—ranging from the Tower of Winds in Athens to early stratospheric weather charts (1942) to a recent case of supercell thunderstorm tracking by radar. The author combines his personal experiences during a career within DWD of several decades with a special skill of obtaining recollections from colleagues and non-standard printed material.

The volume can be truly recommended to everybody who is interested in the entire institutional devel-

opment of meteorology in Germany, as well as to those who seek information for specific aspects. From an international perspective, the only disadvantage lies in the use of the German language. International agencies, such as WMO, UNESCO, ESA or ECMWF are invited to consider a translation into English of this exemplary work for the benefit of the entire international meteorological community

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Meteorology (<http://www.meteohistory.org>)*