

send-up, it seemed somehow fitting. But Rapa Nui is not glitter gulch, and the film--if this publication is truly a reflection of that film--may well be the final travesty that brings down a unique culture that has survived centuries of outlandish invasions from myriad sources, bent on cultural genocide.

Part III is short, covering the making of the film. Since behind-the-scene-filmmaking does have an allure, it is too bad that there is so little in explanation of the camera magic and a bit too much on the philosophies of the filmmakers.

All in all, *RAPA NUI: THE EASTER ISLAND LEGEND ON FILM* is easily read, contains excellent color photography, and no doubt will add to the coffers of Warner Brothers and producer Kevin Costner. But be forewarned by Reynold's comment, and be prepared to suspend all of your disbelief; especially when a gigantic iceberg drifts hard by Easter Island [which is located in a sub-tropical area at 27 south latitude] and carries away Grandfather in a preordained and decidedly chilly White Canoe.

"Die Osterinsel"

(Easter Island)

A 30-minute film documentary by the German television channel ARD, written and directed by Gerhard Hofmann, 1994. Broadcast in Germany on Saturday afternoon, 7 August 1994.

*Review by Steven Roger Fischer,
Meersburg, Germany.*

Did you ever sit enthralled in the cockpit of a LanChile jet while winging down to land at the Hangaroa Airport? That's just what you can do at the breathtaking beginning of Gerhard Hofmann's highly entertaining and admirably researched film documentary about Rapanui called "Die Osterinsel." It's only the latest in a whole new flock of American, New Zealand, and European films made on and about OFI (Our Favorite Island). And while you're then disembarking, at the Hangaroa terminal building it's pouring with rain, symbolically preparing you for the storm of revelations to follow in the program.

For Hofmann is brutally honest, calling a *rapa* a *rapa*. And he picks out, in most cases, just the right personalities to tell you, for better or worse, the non-Hollywood story of Rapanui for a change at the end of the 20th century.

First we see personal views of Hangaroa, of the *caleta* with its growling fishermen gutting the day's catch, of frowning street vendors and indifferent passers-by. This is when Hofmann informs us of the Disneyland prices now being charged on the island, for both locals and tourists alike. Historical prints and a map from the Spanish visit in 1770 are shown, followed by quotes from the German visitors Behrens (in 1722) and the two Forsters (in 1774). And then we're tossed straight into the first of three excerpts from the movie "Rapa-Nui": here we learn that the oppressed quarry workers rose up violently against their exploiting masters-in a social revolution perhaps a sickle closer to Gorky Park than Rano

Raraku. Somehow, someone has embarrassingly forgotten to mention that this scenario was sheer Hollywood nonsense. To the music of a lively Rapanui combo we then visit highflying 'Orongo and hear about the Birdman ceremony. Admirably, what is not fully understood in this regard Hofmann poses as a question. The movie's "egg-race"--excerpt number two -- is then footaged in all its bloodcurdling excitement, and one cannot help but wonder whether this program isn't perhaps a clandestine trailer to woo more viewers into your local friendly cinema?

Rapanui's *rongorongo* is mentioned only in passing, with old Leonardo Pakarati (who else?) being interviewed in the Englert Museum as he explains how to "read" the incised inscriptions. This is followed by valuable, if brief, footage of the 1955-56 Norwegian Expedition, always a thrill to behold.

But then Hofmann dares, as perhaps only a German would these days (all other countries appear to bear their own colonial Scarlet Letters in the region), to address the *tapu*: Juan Chavez's demand for new land distribution on Rapanui. A large map is then being spread out over a table out on the patio at Rosita's hotel. Whereupon the viewer is clearly tutored about how much island land the Chilean government has "expropriated" from the Rapanui people. Hofmann openly states that the Rapanui are mad at this injustice by the Santiago government, and that they now wish the return of their ancestral lands. To add insult to injury (or to put the cherry on the cake; it all depends whose side you're on), the lawyer Fernando Dougnac then tells the hilarious story of that cow that had unfortunately wandered into Hangaroa village back in the 1950s: here it was arrested and tried under Chilean naval law by the Chilean naval authorities as a "ship" (it seems that cows do not enjoy existential recognition under Chilean naval penal codes) then sentenced to "30 days bread and water." The poor "ship" died within a fortnight of hunger.

At this juncture Juan Edmunds, who has been mayor of Hangaroa three separate times (he was one of the cow's guards, by the way), now informs the program's viewer how in 1973, as a member of the Chilean Air Force, he had been appointed Military Mayor of Hangaroa under the new Pinochet dictatorship that then ran Rapanui like a military base. He states that he wishes one day a union of all Polynesian islanders under one government, a sort of "United States of Polynesia..." But he feels that this could take a long time. France, America, England, and Chile must all agree first. He then smiles wistfully.

Hofmann immediately follows this up with a fist blow of a picture: "Chile: Territorio y Destino Oceanico," the large Pinochet-era wall map that is today hanging in the Governor's office in Hangaroa. The Oceanic Triangle it defines stretches from Northern Chile to Rapanui to Antartica and claims a substantial chunk of the South Pacific for Chile.

About face ... march: and we suddenly find ourselves among the pious, singing parishioners in their Sunday best in the jam-packed Hangaroa church, with the strident, shrill voice of Kiko Pate unmistakably piping out over all the others. The sermon in Spanish (not Rapanui) censures incest and

quarreling, and later Father Ludwig Riedl (ret.) explains in German the Rapanui penchant for idleness: since everyone on the island today is only after the tourist dollar, everything has "gone to seed". The castigation is followed by the third and last excerpt from the movie "Rapa-Nui", showing naked girls dancing lasciviously around a nighttime bonfire. Here Hofmann cleverly cuts to Rapanui's current parish priest Father Ramiro Estevez, who declares that the Hollywood movie was for the Rapanui young people "like tossing salt into water"; they earned much quickly, then spent it even more quickly on alcohol, he says.

Whereupon we find ourselves in the tiny Hangaroa TV station, where we learn that all broadcasting is in Spanish: only 30 minutes a week is allotted to the Rapanui language, though the population of the island is four-fifths Rapanui and one-fifth Chilean. "The indigenous tongue will soon die out," says Hofmann. There is no local newspaper in Spanish or Rapanui, we are told. There is in fact little public information of any kind. Western-style formation of public opinion is made extremely difficult.

This is followed by a scene showing the preparation of a 'umu (earth oven) and we see tourists strolling through the 'A Kivi complex. 6,000 tourists a year, we are told, visit Rapanui. It is doubtful whether the island will manage the 10,000 a year that is envisaged. The *kumara*, *'uhi*, and *maika* are then shown as the Rapanui women prepare them under a large canopy.

Hofmann tells of the eyes of the *moai* that are now missing, and we see old film footage of Rapanui inserting the eyes into the Tahai statues. "The prior Director of the Museum twice removed, who emigrated to Hawaii, sold the last genuine eyes to the museum there," Hofmann alleges to the millions of Germans watching this program. [Editor's note: this is in error; the famous eye of coral and stone is in the Englert Museum on the island. It appeared in a museum exhibition in Germany a few years ago--the only time it has left the island]

Where upon the Austrian pensioner Helmut Kratochwil is interviewed as he walks about an *ahu* with a divining rod in search of geomantic zones that supposedly emit "special energy." We are told, in perhaps the weakest scene of the program, that the Rapanui found such geomantic zones either with the divining rod or intuitively.

And then all at once we are standing at the summit of Mount Terevaka among swirling clouds, then plummet into the midst of a tourist crowd as the 'umu is finally uncovered and Tahitian ukulele music strikes up a lively rhythm. While the tourists eat, we pan into the "landing of Hotu Matu'a" at the 1994 Tapati, which Hofmann is careful to point out represents only the modern Rapanui reenactment of the island's settlement myth. Youths are also shown flying breakneck down Mt. Ru'i on banana stem sleds in the ancient sport of *hakape'i*--one of the modern warriors tumbles head over heels in stomach-wrenching agony as red dust flies. Then back we slide ourselves to the 'umu feast while the island's most important dance group performs the Tahitian *hura* to loud and gay Tahitian tunes banged on acoustic guitars as the Japanese tourists meticulously disassemble their

fish and *kumara* with bare fingers. Yes, all this is Rapanui 1994, Hofmann is telling us. His message is loud and clear.

At the conclusion of the short program we learn of the overpriced carvings that are hawked even at the Hangaroa Airport, and are told that in the cheaper lodgings on the island you'll be lucky if you have a curtain for a door. Still: "A visit on Easter Island is always lucrative, and not just for the locals."

The LanChile silver bird takes glorious wing as the guitars and singing voices accompany it back to all points foreign. Hofmann has briefly distilled the essence of the island here, its contradictions, its scenic beauty, its archaeological heritage, its human weaknesses and strengths. Despite its own minor weaknesses, "Die Osterinsel" is one of the few modern films that has miraculously managed to return from the island and hand over the fragile egg of the real Rapanui without making a gooey mess of things. Any objections to Gerhard Hofmann as the next Tangata Manu?



Easter Island Foundation Fundación Rapanui

News by William Liller, CEO

The Executive Committee of the EIF held its annual meeting in Los Osos, California in August, President Barbara B. Hinton in the chair. Topics included: hopes and plans for expansion of the Viña del Mar branch of the Mulloy Library now ensconced in somewhat cramped quarters in the Fonck Archaeological Museum; consideration of temporary quarters for the Mulloy Library on Easter Island — temporary until a new building is constructed; and the publication of a Rapanui "phrase book" for Spanish-speaking and English-speaking tourists and other interested *rapanuiphiles*.

Other books in the Foundation's Easter Island Series are enjoying brisk sales and enthusiastic reviews. The financial report showed that the Foundation is healthy but needs additional capital for the anticipated establishment and operation of the Mulloy Library on Rapa Nui next to the Padre Sebastian Englert Museum.

Our Director of Publications, Alan Drake, has had to step down due to the pressure of other projects; he has been replaced by Dr. Frank Bock. Bock is a retired professor of Anthropology who has had wide experience in publishing.

Bock worked on the Easter Island *moai* project as field director and map maker. His wife, AJ Bock, is the Secretary of the Foundation.

Pending publications of the *Foundation* include two Masters theses from the University of Hawai'i which will be combined into one volume. These are by Tricia Allen