

BOOK REVIEWS

Henry Faulk. *Group Captives. The Re-education of German prisoners of War in Britain 1945-1948.* London: Chatto & Windus. 1977. Pp. 233.

Judith M. Gansberg. *Stalag: U.S.A.: The Remarkable Story of German POWs in America.* New York: Thomas Y. Crowell. 1977. Pp. ix, 233.

John Hammond Moore. *The Faustball Tunnel. German POWs in America and their Great Escape.* New York: Random House. 1978. Pp. xv, 268.

There was something religious and Pharaonic about the Anglo-American program of reeducating the big, bad Nazis after the Second World War. In a sense it was the English equivalent of the German "Am deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen" — "German character will lead the world to recovery", but American reeducation, especially if we reread the for German POWs epoch-making address of Provost Marshal Lerch (See Arndt and Olson: *The German Language Press of the Americas*, page 468) consciously or unconsciously was inspired by the Gospel According to St. Luke, 15,7: "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." Looking back over our brief span of history, see them coming up the center aisle at the call of Brigham Young, Mary Baker Eddy, Billy Sunday, Aimie Semple McPherson, Billy Graham, etc.! Confession and repentance are good for the soul, especially if they bring better food rations, as the Buchmanites or Oxford Movement and even Father Divine's disciples in postwar Germany discovered, but at the time of "Reeducation" the ninety-nine ivory pure just persons who needed no repentance were the Americans and the British, the Cross-of-Lorraine Frenchmen and "good old Joe Stalin's Russians," and the joy in heaven was for those big bad "Nazis" who did repent, especially after General Lerch's threatening address to the German POWs with subsequent diminished food rationing. Verily, there was joy in the American heaven over their repentance, and joy in their hearts to get back home, until they reached Germany and saw the broken promises of the great program of reeducation.

The Archbishop of Freiburg in Breisgau, a beloved shepherd of his people, and many other leaders of the German church at that time expressed the agony of the German people then divided into four zones of reeducation: British, French, American, and Russian. He pleaded with the victors to come to an agreement on at least one way instead of four to reeducate the German people who had made great contributions to the science and culture of the world and who did have a very sound educational system which, where necessary, would and could be reformed from within on the

basis of its own great achievements and traditions. He never did receive an answer because the victorious powers had none.

These introductory remarks are necessary in order to provide some of the background for the essential corners of the three books which we have listed above. Of the three studies Henry Faulk's is the most scholarly and best documented, and the only one that pays sufficient attention to the *Lagerzeitungen* or Camp Papers of the various prisoners camps. The title of his book *Group Captives* delineates his approach to the subject, and he documents this on page 198 by a quotation from a German psychiatrist, but how do you get around the "problem" of "group" captives when your captives actually constitute a well-educated group of patriotic Germans who had been prepared well even for the possibility of being captured? The quotation from the German psychiatrist concludes: "It is, of course, true, that the group tone is sometimes decisively influenced by an individual." An examination of the secret records of the US Provost Marshal's POW files convinced this reviewer that the Americans under their "factory" direction quickly arranged to transfer individuals who seemed to be influencing German prisoners in a manner displeasing to the "reeducation" program, but such outside interference with the "group" usually led to deterioration of camp morale and encouraged the kind of collaboration which we later condemned in the American prisoners held by the Vietcong.

Faulk's study frankly calls the British program "Re-education," and he takes up his subject in great detail devoting special chapters to such subjects as prisoner attitudes, environment, aims of Re-education, its process and methods, screening, training, youth camps, publications, libraries and the media, camp magazines, the arts and religion, and contacts with the civilian population. There is no bibliography but good documentation chapter by chapter and a practical index. From the point of view of this reviewer Faulk's study suffers from his overemphasis of and his too strong faith in that pseudo-science called psychology.

Judith Gansberg's *Stalag: U.S.A.* suffers from a misleading title, patterned after the one-time well-publicized and successful comedy melodrama *STALAG 17* by Donald Bevan and Edmund Trzcinski. Giving her book such a title was probably the work of her publisher's promotion manager, but it was a mistake and without the subtitle "The Remarkable Story of German POWs in America" we would not even guess that this was a serious study and meant to be a real contribution to history because of its melodramatic connotation.

Gansberg's book is well organized in nine chapters: Welcome to America, The Camp Scene, The Cause, The "Factory," Intellectual Diversion Program, Special Projects, Fort Eustis, Evaluating the Program, and The War is Over. There are notes, a list of sources consulted, and an index.

On the second page of her introduction the author states: "The re-education program, adopted at the urging of Eleanor Roosevelt, was undoubtedly a violation of the spirit of the Geneva Convention's provisions against denationalization." It was also a violation of the *Treaty of Amity*

*and Commerce of 1785 between His Majesty the King of Prussia and the United States of America*, which George Washington celebrated in these words: "It is the most liberal treaty which has ever been entered into between independent Powers; and should its principles be considered hereafter as the basis of connection between nations, it will operate more fully to produce a general pacification than any measure hitherto attempted amongs mankind."

Since Gansberg feels the guilt of the US violation of the Geneva Convention, a large part of her book is devoted to an attempt to justify this violation, particularly in the first three chapters. Her thinking has been Americanized: it was a violation, but it was an AMERICAN violation, and here we refer back to our introductory quotation of the Gospel according to St. Luke. If anyone doubt this Pharaasaic religious zeal of that time, let him recall the meetings of Roosevelt and Churchill on the battle ships *Augusta* and *Prince of Wales* when the "Four Freedoms" were declared followed by the singing of "Onward Christian Soldiers."

Judith Gansberg has based her study on some of the best sources available as far as the internal operation of the reeducation program is concerned. She interviewed many of those who taught in the project and obtained papers of those who wanted to report on the project but died before they got to publication. She also interviewed some of the graduates of the reeducation program, but the very extent of her labor causes this reviewer to wonder how she could leave such glaring gaps in her otherwise careful, even if prejudiced study. She devotes a great deal of space to the publication "Der Ruf," which was a glaring example of an American violation of the Geneva Convention, but she neglects to report that the "reeducated" POW publishers of "Der Ruf" after being repatriated in Germany published a continuation of "Der Ruf" in which the principles of the four freedoms and reeducation were applied, pointing out the imperialistic designs of "Good Old Joe Stalin's Russians" for Europe and the world. That "applied reeducation" caused US Military Government of Bavaria under Russian pressure to revoke the publishing license of the "reeducated" German graduates of the project so carefully studied by Gansberg. The result was that the "reeducated" graduates of the American Way of Life took to the hills of Bavaria and there established "Gruppe '47", which then set the tone for all postwar German literature. Nobody could make the top in German letters after the war who did not have the blessings of Gruppe '47, and Gansberg fails to point out that this movement began in Camp Ellis, Illinois, under Hans Werner Richter, long before "Reeducation" began. This reviewer published all these documents in Arndt and Olson *The German Language Press of the Americas* in 1973, where he sketched all the eighty some German Camp Papers published by German POWs in America before "Reeducation" began, and likewise the significant documents of the entire Reeducation Program with the grades given the Camp Papers in the Secret Files of the Provost Marshal's Office in Washington. Not only that, but the complete collection of some 80 German POW camp papers was published in microfilm by Library of Congress at the suggestion of and under the editor-

ship of this reviewer. This was accompanied by a microfilm guide in 1965, all of which was a matter of international interest at that time. How Judith Gansberg could overlook such weighty evidence of a widely publicized project both in book form and documented by fifteen reels of microfilm available in all the principal libraries of the Western World is very difficult to comprehend. Perhaps the explanation is to be found in her introductory comment about the very special cat, Louis, her constant companion and comfort during her research. Gansberg is surely overstating the case in her "Author's note" that she discovered "a top-secret program unknown to the American public to this day." The essential documents have been published since 1965.

John Hammond Moore's *The Faustball Tunnel* is the most readable and yet not unscholarly book on the reeducation project. His study shows extensive and intensive research in libraries, archives, and in the field of human relationships. Moore has waded through a mass of documents without being "brain-washed," so he writes with a clear head about the hypocrisy of it all, and he does not fail to call attention to the unjust decision of the United States to turn over 1.3 million POWs to the French.

To illustrate how reeducation or democratization was speeded under the heading of "intellectual diversion," we quote two passages from Moore's study: "American vengeance—on hearing of Germany's concentration camps—took several forms. The POW diet was cut even more drastically. No Germans starved, but nearly all of them lost weight. An 'intellectual diversion' program—the Geneva Convention specifically required combatants to stimulate the intellectual life of POWs—became a high-gear cram course in democracy. And the United States began loaning millions of prisoners to France, Britain, Holland, Belgium, and other war-ravaged countries so they could rebuild after five and a half years of bombing and devastation."

After pointing out that the reeducation propaganda paper *Der Ruf* was not a best seller in Papago Park, Moore continues: "But on July 4, 1945, opposition suddenly ceased. In a stern front-page statement Provost Marshal General Lerch bluntly told readers that if they did not discard their Nazi ideology and became more cooperative, it might be months or even years before they saw their homeland again. This threat was contrary to the Geneva Convention, which stipulates that prisoners are to be returned to their home as soon as possible after the cessation of hostilities." And it was contrary to the *Treaty of Amity and Commerce of 1785* which George Washington had praised so highly and to which we have referred earlier, but it quickly changed Nazis into peace-loving Democrats. Be it ever so humble, there is no place like home—even in bombed-out Germany.

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