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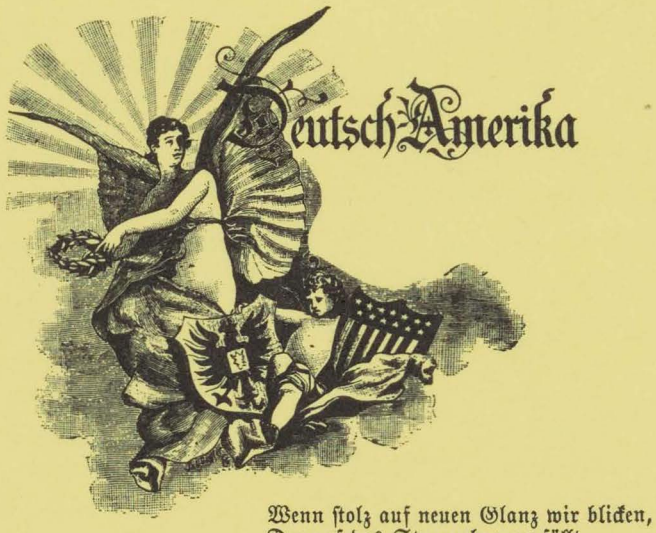

Wenn ſtolz auf neuen Glanz wir blicken,
Der auf das Sternenbanner fällt,
So baut das Herz oft gold'ne Brücken
Hinüber in die alte Welt.

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By
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GERMAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN WYOMING*

By

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INTRODUCTION

In 1942, Julius Algermissen was drafted into the German army. He was a family man, employed in a large appliance factory in Hanover. Shortly after his induction, Mr. Algermissen was assigned to the coast of Normandy. From there he was sent to Russia, where he was wounded on July 26, 1942. After convalescing in various field hospitals, he was moved to Warsaw, Poland. When released from a hospital there, he was declared fit for battle, placed in the infantry and transferred to Sicily. From Sicily he went to Tunisia.

While in northern Africa, Mr. Algermissen was captured by the Americans. He was interned briefly at Oran, Algeria, then at Casablanca, Morocco. After three months at Casablanca, he was shipped to the United States. Julius Algermissen thus became one of more than 300,000 German soldiers who were interned in prison camps in the United States during World War II.

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Of the more than 3,000,000 prisoners captured by allied forces during the war, approximately half a million were sent to this country. Judith M. Gansberg, in her book *Stalag: U.S.A.*, places the total number of German prisoners at nearly 372,000.[1] According to the Associated Press, as of January 1, 1945, there were 361,631 prisoners in 425 camps in the United States. Of these, 307,931 were Germans, 51,071 were Italians, and 2,629 were Japanese.[2] Six months later more than 100,000 additional prisoners had been added.

Regulations prohibited American fraternization with the prisoners, who were kept in guarded, fenced compounds. Aside from those who employed them, few elements of the general populace had contact with the prisoners. Nevertheless, these German "visitors" had enormous emotional, cultural, economic and even deeply personal impact upon Americans. Within individual citizens they aroused curiosity, hatred, envy, disgust, outrage, fear, sympathy, friendship, bestiality and even love. A few stark examples will illustrate this point.

In February, 1944, two German prisoners escaped from Camp Hale, Colorado. Pfc. Dale Maple, a graduate of Harvard University, had planned the escape and fled with the prisoners. When captured in Mexico with the pair, Maple said that he had intended to go to Germany with them and enter the German army. In the ensuing scandal, eight other enlisted men were charged with complicity in the escape plot, and five WACs were court-martialed for writing love letters to the prisoners.

Some civilian women also had amorous involvements with German prisoners. On February 13, 1945, two young Michigan women were sentenced to prison for helping two German prisoners escape. In November, 1945, while on trial for aiding two prisoners to escape from a camp at Geneseo, New York, Alice Fisher informed the court that it was "not uncommon for girls living in the camp vicinity to stroll arm in arm with German war prisoners in Letchworth park."[3]

A more humorous case involved a romance between a prisoner and a lonely middle-aged Girl Scout leader who worked in a cheese factory. When some German prisoners from a camp at Monte Vista, Colorado,were assigned to work

in the cheese factory at Del Norte, Miss Adele Weiler became acquainted with one of them, and a "friendship" developed. Later, Miss Weiler drove to Monte Vista in the evenings, picked up her German lover, who had somehow eluded the military police, and took him home for the night. Each morning the prisoner was back in camp. Although the arrangement was eventually discovered, investigating authorities could never learn how the prisoner left his compound. No charges were ever filed against Miss Weiler.

In many cases supervision of the camps was not especially strict. By February, 1945, 1,301 axis prisoners had escaped from United States camps. Most were soon recaptured, but not all. A major escape occurred at Papago Park, Arizona. On Christmas Eve, 1944, twenty-five prisoners made their way to temporary freedom. All were eventually returned to the camp, but two weeks after the escape, more than half of the prisoners were still at large.

In some compounds prisoners built and operated moonshine factories. At Camp Hale, Colorado, soon after the escape collaboration scandal broke, several stills were found in the walls of the Camp buildings, and fifty gallons of brandy was confiscated. Officials investigating the incident reported that the quality of the liquor was "very good."[4]

Not all incidents involving the German prisoners were as harmless as the love affairs, the brief escapes and the bootlegging. By February, 1945, a number of violent deaths had occurred in the camps. Eight murders and forty-three suicides had been committed. Fifty-six prisoners had been shot while trying to escape. Others had died in various accidents.

One of the most tragic events occurred in Salina, Utah. On July 8, 1945, a tower guard at a side camp there, sprayed a belt of .30 caliber machine gun bullets into a row of tents full of sleeping prisoners. When questioned about this actions, the guard showed no remorse and said that he had planned the mass murder for some time. Six of the Germans were killed outright and two died in the hospital. Twenty others were wounded.

The Salina tragedy was one extreme of American reac-

tion to the prisoners. Other negative responses were bitter but non-violent. Politicians railed against the prisoners. Labor leaders protested that they were taking jobs from American workers. Newspaper editors decried the "soft" treatment that the prisoners were receiving. And when the prisoners were sent home, American soldiers in Europe voiced their disgust "at the sight of former German prisoners of war returning from the United States with luxury items impossible to obtain in Europe."[5]

Happily—perhaps even against the will of the people involved—the experience as a whole was not as negative as the above situations seem to suggest. The presence of German prisoners of war in the United States did have positive results. In humanistic terms, cultural exchange took place, even under the negative circumstances of the war situation. Respect, understanding, even admiration for former enemies developed to an otherwise impossible degree.

Obviously, German prisoners gained insight into American society and culture, both through direct exposure and through systematic re-education. What is truly remarkable, however, is the amount of exposure to German culture that was given Americans through the actions of the prisoners. Among the wretched and bedraggled German soldiers who were brought to the United States, there were many artists, musicians, actors, writers and artisans. One camp even housed the entire 47th Grenadier military band for a time. These prisoners gave much of themselves to their captors. They played music. They created works of art from scraps and refuse. They made their own tools and used them to make violins, and fix watches, and paint, and carve, and build. Many Americans still treasure paintings, carvings and other mementos that were made and given to them by German prisoner friends.

The mark made by German prisoners of war upon America and its citizens is still visible, not only in the souvenirs, but in statistical records and the last crumbling ruins of abandoned compounds. It exists in lives and memories—of prisoners who immigrated to this country after the war, and of former prisoners who returned to visit the places of their in-

ternments and the people who became their friends. It is present in the face of a woman who spends part of each Memorial Day at the grave of a German uncle who died in Utah and is buried at Ft. Douglas with forty other German soldiers. And it is part of the life of a man who wrote poetry about his prisoner of war experiences in Wyoming.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS IN WYOMING

In January, 1943, plans were announced for the construction of a prisoner of war camp near Douglas, Wyoming. Specifications called for the erection of 180 buildings, including a 150-bed hospital, to provide complete, self-contained accommodations for approximately 3500 men.

Construction was completed in June, 1943, at a cost of more than $1,000,000, and the first group of prisoners, 412 Italians, arrived in Douglas on August 17. By early October, the Italian prisoner population had increased to more than 1900 men.

During the autumn of 1943, Italian prisoners from Douglas were used extensively as laborers in several side camps. Two hundred of them helped with the beet harvest in Worland. Other side camps were established at Pine Bluffs, Veteran and Wheatland, as well as at Greeley and Ft. Lupton, Colorado. Italians from the Douglas camp were also used in the Wyoming timber industry, at Ryan Park near Saratoga.

Employment of prisoners for farm labor rapidly became a viable part of the wartime economic pattern in Wyoming. In the fall of 1943, Douglas prisoners harvested 3,685 acres of sugar beets, 141,400 bushels of potatoes, 15,000 bushels of small grain, 310,000 pounds of beans, and 2,000 tons of hay.

When Italy surrendered, the status of the Italian prisoners changed, and they were moved out of the Douglas camp. It appeared then that the camp would be closed, a fact that distressed local farmers, who had begun to count on the prisoners for labor.

The first German prisoners of war were brought to the Douglas camp in April, 1944. Most members of that initial group, however, were moved to other camps during the spring. By late June, less than 100 German prisoners remained at Douglas, and in July the camp was deactived.

Only six weeks after its deactivation, the camp reopened, but the first new prisoners did not arrive until mid-September. The 471 Germans who arrived on September 19 were soon followed by others. By the first week in October there were again nearly 2,000 captives at Douglas.

Like the Italians, the German prisoners played an important role in the Wyoming economy. In the summer of 1944, Douglas prisoners worked on farms near Wheatland, and others were sent to a lumber camp Southwest of Douglas. The following year the operation was expanded to include side camps at Basin, Clearmont, Deaver, Esterbrook, Lovell, Riverton, Wheatland and Worland.

Not all of the side camps in Wyoming, however, received their laborers from Douglas. Many German prisoners came to Wyoming from large centers outside the state. Prisoners from most eastern Wyoming camps came from a major facility at Scottsbluff, Nebraska. During 1944, almost all side camps in Wyoming operated under Scottsbluff. These included Basin, Deaver, Dubois, Pine Bluffs, Torrington, Veteran, Wheatland and Worland. The following year, Scottsbluff provided the prisoner labor for camps at Clearmont, Dubois, Huntley, Lingle, Veteran and Torrington. All of these camps except Dubois supplied labor for the beet and potato fields and for miscellaneous farm work. Prisoners at Dubois worked in the timber industry.

Like its Douglas counterpart, the Scottsbluff internment camp was built in 1943 and first housed Italian prisoners of war. German prisoners arrived there in May, 1944. From then until June, 1946, they worked on farms near Scottsbluff and in many side camps in Nebraska, Wyoming and Colorado. The peak population of the Scottsbluff camp was approximately 4,700 German prisoners.

The Scottsbluff prisoners were apparently good workers and got along well with their American "hosts." In

an account of her final encounter with German prisoners of war on a Nebraska farm, Mrs. E. B. Fairfield gives some interesting insight into the unique relationship that existed between the prisoners and the farmers. She says:

> The last day the Germans worked on our farm, my husband took his tractor to help another neighbor some distance from our home. So it left me alone, knowing that twenty or more of these men would be in our yard at noon. Their speech was low and gutteral, which made them sound more harsh and frightening, but all went well, even when I had to let two or three come into the kitchen to get drinking water. I enjoyed making jelly and jam, yet had learned that others in the family didn't care for it as I did, and had a lot of the jars on the table, thinking to throw it out. Some were several years old and rather sugary. One P.O.W. noticed them, called it marmalade, made motions in asking for it. I was glad to get rid of it, and every jar was returned, completely cleaned out, even if I hadn't spoons enough. They then gathered in formation with one acting as leader and marched back to work as they had come.[6]

A Camp at Greeley, Colorado also became important for Wyoming. After the Italian prisoners were moved out of Douglas, German timber labor for camps in the Medicine Bow National Forest was supplied from Greeley. During 1944 and 1945, the Greeley camp provided several hundred workers for lumber camps at Ryan Park and Mullen Creek.

The real impact of German prisoners of war upon the Wyoming economy is perhaps revealed in statistics concerning their employment. In July, 1945, the *Wyoming Eagle* gave the following report concerning the use of prisoners in the state during 1944:

> The record shows that prisoners worked 79,815 days in agriculture and 7,117 days in the timber industry, or a total of 86,932 days at all types of work.
>
> Accomplishments in agriculture accounted for the following record: 1,604.59 acres of beets thinned, 1,455.02 acres of beets hoed, 416.90 acres of beets weeded, 78,380.2 tons of beets topped, 2,106.75 acres of beet tops piled, 1,861.45 acres of beans and corn hoed, 642 acres of beans piled, 132,464 hours of miscellaneous labor, 6,745 turkeys picked, 14,486 bushels of potato seed cut, 669,515 bushels of potatoes picked, 1,041 acres of grain shocked, 19,877 bushels of potatoes sorted, 59.6 acres of beet tops siloed, 5,769 bushels of corn picked, 171,219 pounds of green beans picked, and 1,605 bushels of apples and plums picked.

> Lumbering and forestry activities accounted for the following record: 5,003,815 board feet of timber felled, 5,367 snags cut and disposed of, 14,712 hours of mill work and skidding, 400 slabs edged in mill, 695,625 board feet of lumber offbearing, and 45,776 railroad ties offbearing.[7]

Almost all of this work was done by Germans. The Italian prisoners' status changed before they could be used during the 1944 farm season. Only in the timber industry was significant work done by Italians early in the year. Complete figures will not be given here, but a similar production record was made by German prisoners during 1945.

The first German prisoners to be brought to Wyoming —and the last to leave—were interned in none of the aforementioned camps, and had contact with few Americans other than military personnel. These men were placed in a camp at Fort Francis E. Warren, near Cheyenne. The first of them arrived at Ft. Warren on November 13, 1943. From then until late in 1946, several hundred prisoners were housed at the fort. Unlike prisoners in the agricultural camps, this group and its activities were hidden behind the cloak of army censorship. The Germans at Ft. Warren neither left the post, nor were they employed by civilians, either in agricultural or otherwise.

Most Germans interned in Wyoming camps were captured during the African campaign. The story of Julius Algermissen is typical, in that it reflects both the myriad of circumstances which took these men to many battlefronts, and the long road leading eventually to Africa, and finally to Wyoming.[8]

A ship carrying Julius Algermissen and other prisoners landed in Boston in the fall of 1943. From Boston, Mr. Algermissen was sent by train to Colorado Springs, Colorado. There, at what is now Ft. Carson, he cleaned barracks, built facilities for the prisoners, and transplanted trees. Later he worked in the sugar beet fields near Ovid.

In 1944, Mr. Algermissen was transferred to a camp in Michigan, where he remained for a month before being moved to Wisconsin. From a camp near Madison he and other prisoners were sent to work in a canning factory, processing peas, tomatoes and corn.

From Wisconsin, Mr. Algermissen was sent to Scottsbluff, Nebraska. For a few weeks he worked in nearby potato fields. Then he traveled to Wheatland, Wyoming, where he harvested sugar beets. In November, 1944, when the beet harvest ended, he was assigned to the camp at Douglas. He spent the rest of his internment there.

While at the Douglas camp, Algermissen worked on local farms and ranches. For two seasons he harvested potatoes and performed other labor on the Alexander Cross ranch. A positive relationship developed between him and Mr. Cross. Because of their friendship, Mr. Cross sponsored Julius Algermissen's return to the United States after the war. Mr. Algermissen immigrated with his wife and children and settled in Wyoming.

Although this last portion of Julius Algermissen's story is not especially typical,—only a small percentage of the former prisoners returned permanently to the United States—it does reflect the positive nature of the Wyoming prisoner of war experience. Other former prisoners have returned from time to time to visit. Still others have longed to do so. That in itself is a tribute to those Wyoming people who, during difficult times, treated their "enemies" with humanity.

LIFE IN THE MAJOR CAMPS

Cheyenne

The internment center at Ft. Warren recorded the longest continuous service as a detention camp for German prisoners of war in Wyoming. Some captured German soldiers lived in the Cheyenne camp for three full years. The prisoner population during that period varied from an initial 350 to as high as nearly 600 men.

The prisoners' compound was separated from the main post facilities by Crow Creek. Their barracks were surrounded by a high fence topped with barbed wire and guarded by military police. Eventually, dogs from the K-9 Corps training facility at Ft. Robinson, Nebraska were also used to guard them.

In April, 1945, a stable was remodeled to give the prisoners more comfortable living quarters. A steam heating system was installed, along with showers and toilet facilities to accommodate approximately 485 prisoners. Additional windows were also constructed to comply with Geneva Convention regulations concerning light and ventilation.

Like most of Wyoming's captured Germans, Ft. Warren prisoners were members of the famous African Corps. Because of the severity of the African campaign, many were ill or in otherwise poor physical condition. For that reason, a War Patient Detachment was organized at Ft. Warren, a fact that was not made public until 1945.

According to Mr. James Fitzpatrick, who was in charge of the medical laboratory at the post hospital, one common ailment was tapeworms.[9] Many German soldiers had acquired the worms from improperly cooked meat while fighting in Africa. On May 29, 1945, doctors removed from one German prisoner a tapeworm twenty-four feet long.

Able prisoners were employed by the army in various kinds of manual labor. In the hospital laboratory they scrubbed floors, cared for test animals, and did other non-technical work. Others were assigned to the base laundry, set pins in the bowling alley, worked in kitchens and as gardeners. The post engineers used many of the German prisoners in all phases of their building, repair and maintenance responsibilities, including painting, carpentry and metal work.

The German prisoners were also provided with facilities and opportunities for various leisure time activities. They pursued hobbies, participated in a number of sports, attended regular church services, and enjoyed other cultural and educational experiences.

Soon after their arrival at Ft. Warren, the German prisoners set up a camp school. During its first year, the school served only a few of the captives, because of a lack of available space, texts and teachers. In February, 1945, however, the leader of the prisoners issued a proclamation calling on all of them to participate in the school. As a result, 241 men enrolled in formal classes. In November, 1945, more than 150 men were still participating regularly.

With American cooperation, space was made available for the classes and textbooks were obtained. Additional educational materials were provided by the International Red Cross. Under the circumstances, the scope of the camp school program was extraordinary. The curriculum announced in February, 1945, provided for courses in the following areas: German, history, geography, botany, zoology, physics, chemistry, mathematics, English, Latin, general business, political science, drafting, carpentry, masonry, cabinet work, electronics, heavy equipment operation, taxes, credit, economics, commerce, industrial management, construction management, insurance, accounting and statistics.

As part of a formal army re-education program, the German internees were given equipment to publish a camp newspaper. Although the paper was subject to censor approval, the prisoners actually were not greatly restricted in what they could write. It was intended that the newspaper provide news of the outside world, a forum for the discussion of prisoner problems, opportunity for literary expression, information on camp activities, entertainment and educational material.

At Ft. Warren, two periodicals were created. The first, *Der Zaungast,* was a mimeographed newspaper that appeared approximately weekly from April, 1944, until May, 1945. In August, 1945, the prisoners started a mimeographed magazine, *Lagermagazin,* which came out twice a month through January, 1946.

Der Zaungast was primarily a news medium. A typical issue contained articles translated from the *New York Times* and elsewhere, as well as commentary on specific events. Special attention was given to the happenings within Germany.

Input from within the camp itself, however, was usually quite minimal and limited to mention of prisoner birthdays, an occasional poem or essay, and announcements of coming events. Eventually, reports on sports and cultural events were also printed, along with crossword and other puzzles, jokes and anecdotes.

Lagermagazin was somewhat different. It was obvi-

ously oriented more toward realization of army re-education and denazification goals. In addition to news, it featured summaries and treatments of important political documents, literary contributions from prisoners, and open discussion of current political and social problems. The prisoners often examined the challenges facing them upon their return home, and sometimes provided interesting solutions for anticipated difficulties.

A most unique suggestion came from a prisoner who was concerned with the inevitable German housing shortage. Influenced by Wyoming history, the man wrote a lengthy essay, complete with plans and building instructions, dealing with the erection of log cabins. He argued that cabins might well provide easily erected shelter to meet the needs of the homeless masses.

Other magazine features included general educational materials, especially in the sciences. English literary works were also translated and printed along with those of German authors. In addition to sports reports, the magazine also presented instructions and detailed regulations for new sports like softball and basketball.

Sports were an especially important recreational outlet for the men. Regular competitions were held in traditional European team sports, and later in American sports as well. Sports for pairs and singles, like handball and table tennis, were also popular.

Entertainment, in the form of variety shows, plays and concerts, was a common element of prisoner experience in the Cheyenne camp. Musical instruments were provided, and a camp orchestra was formed. A typical live concert featured as many as eighteen musical selections, varying from marches to dance music. The orchestra also provided accompaniment and solo numbers for the variety shows and dramas.

Despite the positive aspects of their internment, German prisoners at Ft. Warren did not live a totally tranquil life. For some, the confinement was a severe personal ordeal. Occasionally, escapes were attempted, although none completely succeeded. On August 10, 1944, an escapee from the Ft. Warren camp was arrested in a Denver theater lobby. In another

instance, three prisoners boarded a freight train as it passed near the compound. They were later found, hungry and cold, returning from the Pole Mountain section of the Medicine Bow Forest.

Three fires in the prisoner compound also interrupted the normal camp routine. One broke out in the prisoners' kitchen, and another in a furnace room. A third fire occurred in a room used to store the prisoners' belongings. Despite the excitement that they caused, all of the fires were quickly controlled without serious damage or injury.

As a result of accidents and from other causes, several prisoners died at Ft. Warren and were buried there. Others from smaller camps in Colorado and Wyoming were also brought there for burial. Included among the deaths were several suicides that occurred after Germany's fall.

Several tensions between German prisoners and post military personnel occurred within the few days surrounding V-E Day. Authorities feared that the German prisoners would riot in the wake of Germany's surrender. Therefore, on May 8, 1945, all army personnel were restricted to base. Leaves and passes were cancelled, and security precautions at all levels were strengthened. Guards were posted at officers' quarters, while machine gun emplacements were set up at key points. And all of this in spite of the fact that the prisoners themselves had been confined to quarters since the first hints of German capitulation.

For the most part, the prisoner reaction was quite different from what had been expected. A newspaper article of May 10, 1945, reported that the Ft. Warren prisoners "were resigned to the defeat of the fatherland and jubilant, for the most part, when informed of the unconditional surrender of Germany."[10] For these men, Germany's defeat meant only that they would soon go home. For some, it was nevertheless another year before that ernest desire could be realized.

Douglas

When German prisoners of war first replaced the Italians at Douglas, in April, 1944, they went relatively un-

noticed for a time. Aside from a brief newspaper article praising their work, there was no immediate mention of their presence in the area. The following month, however, local citizens became vividly aware of the Germans, when activities at the camp were made a matter of public controversy.

On May 19, 1944, the *Wyoming State Tribune* published an editorial claiming that $6,000 worth of meat and gasoline had been wasted at the Douglas camp. The article alleged that seventy-eight quarters of beef and 150 hams had been burned with gasoline because the meat was mouldy.[11]

Camp authorities denied the claims, and an investigation revealed that the accusations were unfounded. Purchase records showed that since the arrival of German prisoners only $748 had been spent on beef and $288 on ham. Furthermore, the entire camp expenditure for gasoline and kerosene since 1943 had been only $3,412. Finally, in an official written response, the camp supply director stated: "Not one ounce of meat received on this post at the cold storage plant of the Quartermaster has been condemned as unfit for human consumption."[12] That was the end of the matter, but Douglas residents were now very much aware of the camp's new tenants.

Arrival of the first new German prisoners in September, after the summer deactivation of the camp, was made known in large front page headlines. During a ten-day period, more than 1600 prisoners were brought to Douglas, ranging in age from fourteen to eighty years. Eventually, that early population nearly doubled, reaching a peak of 3,011 officers and enlisted men in the summer of 1945.

While the prisoners by no means enjoyed "country club" treatment, their situation was not especially negative. Housed in four large compounds, they operated their own tailor shop, barber shop, shoe shop, bakery and carpenter shop. With the nominal amounts that they were paid for their work ($.89/day in most instances) they could purchase luxury items including candy, cigarettes and hobby materials. They could also have earnings credited to an account redeemable in cash at the end of their internment.

Although prisoners were not forced to work, most of them did. The labor assignments outside the camp were

mainly agricultural, but a few prisoners worked in lumber operations and some were assigned other tasks.

The educational program at Douglas appears to have been more limited in scope than the one at Ft. Warren. For one thing, the Douglas school lacked the heavy vocational orientation of the one at Cheyenne. It was limited primarily to the standard army re-education plan, including, among other things, courses in English and democratic government.

An amusing illustration of the program's relative success is found in a local historian's account of a camp experiment in practical democracy. Peg Layton Leonard wrote:

> In this democracy-in-action program, each barrack represented a county, each compound a state, and the entire camp represented a country—all fictional in name. All went well until the election of the first prisoner to the camp presidency. He missed the point completely. He considered his elevation to the office as a mandate for dictatorship of the community. He was promptly impeached. At this stage the majority of the internees wanted no part of a dictatorship—either here or over there.[13]

Sometimes prisoners simply rejected formal attempts to re-educate them, especially when those attempts berated conditions in Germany under the Nazi dictatorship. At the end of the war, for example, all German prisoners were required to view films of the concentration camp horrors. Julius Algermissen recalls that internees from areas where concentration camps were located claimed that what was shown in the films was untrue. Prisoners who refused to accept the films at face value were required to view them again and again.

Re-education endeavors were hampered not only by the Germans' lack of trust of American propaganda, but also by the very composition of the camp population. One of the four compounds contained hard-core SS troops, who refused cooperation and had considerable influence on the other prisoners. Their resistance activities even led to physical violence. Mr. Clinton Baker, who was assistant post engineer, recalls that SS men repeatedly attacked prisoners from other compounds.[14] The fanatics frequently left their own compound at night, cut their way into other compounds and assaulted Africa Corps prisoners. They blamed the Africa Corps for

Rommel's defeat, insisting that his troops had not fought valiantly enough.

As a result of these forays, some prisoners feared for their lives. One young man hid from the SS in a barrack attic for nearly a week. In order to control such problems, a group of guard dogs was brought to Douglas in November, 1944. Double fences were erected around the compounds, and the dogs were placed in runs between them.

The strength of dogmatic Nazi influence in the camp was also visible in the first camp newspaper. On February 17, 1945, the first number of *Ekkehard* appeared. It lasted through one more issue before the censors halted its publication. The content was rabid Nazi in tone, and left little to the imagination in point of intent. Six months passed before publication of a camp periodical was attempted again.

The second newspaper, *Douglas' offene Worte,* was more successful. Twenty issues were published from August, 1945,until Christmas, when the camp was finally closed. Its format was similar to that of the Cheyenne camp's *Lagermagazin,* except for length. A typical issue contained news, prisoner literary efforts, sports, educational materials and other items.

Like the prisoners at Ft. Warren, the Germans at Douglas enjoyed various leisure time activities. Many participated in sports or spent time in the camp library. Others were gifted artisans who practiced their crafts with the materials at hand.

Clinton Baker tells of one prisoner who was a violin maker. In his spare time, he cured native cedar and used it to make beautiful violins which were finished with a special homemade varnish. One of his violins was sold during those years for $275.

According to Julius Algermissen, the performing artists also used their skills to augment their income. When they staged plays and concerts, fellow prisoners, who welcomed the diversion, gladly paid for tickets to the performances. The actors and musicians then used the proceeds to purchase supplies for other productions.

American officials usually cooperated with the

prisoners in such endeavors. When specific items were needed to make scenery or backdrops for stage productions, for example, unofficial efforts were made to get materials that were not readily available. This fact contributed to many positive relationships between prisoners and post personnel.

In one context cooperation was perhaps greater than it should have been. Some of the prisoners earned extra money by setting up and running several stills. Potato peelings and other materials suitable for a mash never went into the garbage, but found their way into the prisoner compounds. The portable stills were never confiscated, even though parts of them were discovered during inspections. American military personnel even supported the project by purchasing some of the product. Informed sources maintain that the liquor was very good, and that it served to boost the morale of the camp.

Unfortunately, relations between the prisoners and camp officials were not always relaxed. Prisoners occasionally attempted to escape, and although most attempts were harmless, one incident did involve the shooting of a young prisoner as he attempted to get away.

The more interesting escapes were extremely embarrassing for camp authorities. On April 9, 1945, for example, two prisoners escaped and were not recaptured until three days later. When discovered in a haystack near Wendover, Wyoming, they were each clad in six pairs of long-handled GI underwear.

Three weeks later, three more prisoners escaped. Because of the cleverness of their preparations, their escapade made headlines in many Wyoming newspapers.

According to Julius Algermissen, who was there at the time, the men got away with the help of prisoners assigned to garbage duty. They were smuggled out on horseback in large garbage cans and set free near the Platte River.

The prisoners' absence was not discovered until the next roll call. Even then, the escape almost got by the Americans in charge. The Germans had made dummies of paper mache to cover the flight of the missing men. During the roll call, other prisoners held the dummies up and answered for the escapees. Although the officer of the day noticed that some of

the men looked peculiar, he did not realize immediately what was wrong. Only when he asked about the health of one of the dummies and grabbed hold of it did he recognize the constructs for what they were. A search was organized at once, but the escapees had a good start and were not found until three days later.

Other situations occurred in which prisoners were away from camp without authorization, but these were not really attempts to escape. Clinton Baker remembers that some prisoners set up clandestine meetings with young ladies whom they had met on local farms. In other instances, prisoners were left working in the fields through the carelessness of guards who had been sent to pick them up. On at least three such occasions, missing prisoners walked back to the camp and were let in during the night.

When the time came for the German prisoners to leave Douglas, some were reluctant to give up new friends and relationships. For most, the experience had left a positive imprint on their lives. As one of them put it, in an essay written for the camp newspaper, encounters between the Americans and Germans at Douglas "brought us significantly closer with respect to our understanding of one another, so that the artificial gap between us, which was created by the war, was recognized as nonsense, and the first steps were taken toward its elimination."[15]

THE SIDE CAMPS

Basin

In April, 1944, plans were made to employ German prisoners in the beet fields near Basin. It was suggested that the local CCC camp be used to house the prisoners, and personnel from the Douglas camp visited Basin to inspect the facilities.

Necessary modifications of the camp were not finished in time for prisoners to participate in the early summer beet work, and the first group of Germans, 160 men, were finally brought to Basin from Scottsbluff for the sugar beet harvest.

They worked until November, then returned to the Nebraska camp.

The following summer, 246 prisoners were moved to Basin from Douglas. They thinned beets until the middle of July, and were then sent elsewhere. The camp was reactivated in September, at the beginning of the beet harvest, and prisoners worked in Basin until shortly before their return to Germany.

Centennial

About 200 German prisoners were sent to a lumber camp at Mullen Creek, above Centennial, in July, 1945. The men worked through the fall for the Wyoming Timber Company near Keystone. On one occasion, some of them were called upon to help transport an injured timber worker to an ambulance which met them near Albany, but otherwise they had little contact with the public. By mid-November, they had cut approximately 2,000,000 feet of timber.

Clearmont

No German prisoners were used in the Sheridan area until 1945, when 350 men were requested for camps to be established at Clearmont and on the Sheridan Heights. Plans called for moving CCC camp barracks from Gillette to Clearmont, to house more than 200 of the prisoners, while about 120 men would occupy Sheridan Heights laborer homes owned by the sugar company.

When the requested number of prisoners was not available, plans for the Sheridan Heights camp were abandoned. The CCC camp barracks were moved to Clearmont in the hope that 275 prisoners could be housed there.

That summer, 250 German prisoners came from Scottsbluff to thin beets in the area. They were followed in the fall by 200 prisoners from Douglas, who harvested sugar beets through October and into November.

Deaver

Early in 1944, local workers renovated the CCC camp at Deaver, to make it suitable for the housing of German prisoner labor. During the beet thinning season beginning in June, 120 men from the Scottsbluff camp worked in Deaver area fields.

In the fall, when German prisoners returned to Deaver for the harvest, an unusual situation developed. Some prisoners were assigned to work in fields owned by Carl Hessenthaler. To his surprise, the farmer found that one of the German workers was his own nephew. The boy's family was in Germany, and Hessenthaler had not heard from them recently.

Prisoners also worked in Deaver during 1945. In June, more than 100 Germans were sent there as part of a group of 676 men assigned to camps in the Big Horn Basin. After thinning beets until mid-July, they were sent elsewhere, but returned in late September for the harvest.

Dubois

On June 1, 1944, it was announced that 138 German prisoners of war would be employed by the Wyoming Tie and Timber Company in a lumber camp above Dubois. A fenced tent colony was to be established at Du Noir, and the prisoners were expected to arrive near the middle of June to serve under a six-month labor contract.

Construction of the camp was delayed by heavy rains in the area, and the advance group of twenty-five prisoners did not arrive until July. Others continued to trickle in from Scottsbluff during the next few weeks, and a final group of 74 men arrived in the middle of August.

Public sentiment in the area soon turned against the prisoners. A newspaper article, revealing that the army was supplying the Germans with beer and Coca-Cola especially aroused the ire of local citizens.

Although official records do not show the reopening of the camp in 1945, it was activated again that summer. An

article in the *Riverton Review* reported that fifty German prisoners participated in the annual tie drive from Du Noir down the Wind River canyon to Riverton.[16]

Esterbrook

The first German prisoners from Douglas to work in a Wyoming lumber camp replaced Italian prisoners at Esterbrook in the spring of 1944. At first, only about twenty-five Germans were provided for the Laramie Peak operation, but after the reactivation of the Douglas camp, the work force there was increased to seventy-five men.

Huntley

In the fall of 1945, a mobile camp for prisoner of war labor was set up briefly near Huntley. Established in late September, the camp housed 150 German prisoners from Scottsbluff, who worked on Huntley area beet and potato farms through November.

Lingle

When the Goshen County Labor Board made plans to establish a prisoner of war labor camp at Lingle for the 1945 farm season, there were no facilities available to house the prisoners. Local farmers were therefore recruited to assist with the construction of a camp.

The first German prisoners moved to Lingle in late April or early May. Apparently, they were well received by local farmers, because on May 24, an editorial appeared in the *Guide-Review,* denouncing farmers for their soft treatment of the prisoners.[17] During the 1945 season, 300 German prisoners were assigned to the Lingle camp.

Lovell

One hundred German prisoners housed at Deaver were used in Lovell during the first half of May, 1945, to remodel

the armory building and the cavalry barn, which were used for prisoner housing during 1945.

The first agricultural workers arrived at the Lovell camp in early June. During the thinning period, and again during the harvest, 200 German prisoners worked in Lovell beet fields. The last prisoners did not leave there until the first week in November.

Pine Bluffs

German prisoners in a camp at Pine Bluffs were employed in the potato and beet harvests during the fall of 1944. The 160 men, who were brought from Scottsbluff, worked in the Pine Bluffs area from September until the first week of November.

Riverton

The state armory was remodeled for housing, and temporary buildings were erected to accommodate approximately 110 German prisoners during the 1945 farm season in Riverton. The prisoners were originally expected to arrive during the last week of May and remain until the beet crop had been thinned. Plans also called for their return to Riverton that fall.

About 100 German prisoners arrived at the camp in early June, but instead of returning to Douglas a few weeks later, they remained in Riverton all summer, doing miscellaneous farm work. After finishing the beet harvest, they were returned to Douglas in early November.

Ryan Park

In the spring of 1944, when Italian prisoners were no longer available, the R. R. Crow Lumber Company of Saratoga made arrangements to employ 300 German prisoners from a camp at Greeley, Colorado. The prisoners came to Saratoga in the early summer and remained in a camp at Ryan Park until the end of 1945. During 1945, together with

prisoners from the Centennial camp, they cut 21,000,000 board feet of lumber in the Medicine Bow National Forest.

Citizens of Saratoga were kept aware of the prisoners' presence through news of unusual events at the camp. In July, 1944, for example, four prisoners escaped. They were eventually found, well supplied with provisions, camped in the Saratoga rodeo grounds. In another incident, one of the prisoners was killed by a falling tree in November, 1944.

Near the end of the prisoners' stay at Ryan Park, the camp became a focus of controversy when R. R. Crow submitted to the state bills in excess of $2,000 for educating the prisoners in lumbering skills. State Auditor John J. McIntyre refused to pay the vouchers, arguing that the state had no responsibility to train German prisoners.

Torrington

German prisoners of war were employed at Torrington during both the 1944 and 1945 farm seasons. Prisoners from Scottsbluff came to Torrington in June, 1944, and worked for about six weeks in the beet fields. Later, 200 prisoners helped with potato and beet harvests.

On October 2, 1944, two prisoners escaped from the camp. Their brief adventure revealed a certain naivete concerning local geography. When captured only a few miles from the camp, the two men though that they were already crossing the Mexican border.

The following summer, prisoners returned to Torrington, and 287 of them worked there from June until November. One prisoner drowned on August 15, when a truck that he was driving plunged into a canal. His body was found and returned to Scottsbluff two days later.

Veteran

Unlike other side camps in Wyoming, the small camp at Veteran housed German prisoners continuously from April, 1944, until it was vacated in November, 1945. At its

peak, in the fall of 1945, the population of the Veteran camp was 300 prisoners.

Veteran farmers were enthusiastic about the prisoners' work, and they incurred the wrath of patriotic groups that spoke out against the positive treatment that prisoners were receiving. In September, 1945, the Veteran American Legion post joined a Torrington post in passing a resolution against the "coddling" of war prisoners used in harvesting.

Prisoners at Veteran were unusually vocal in their opposition to the war itself. On April 16, 1945, they issued a statement against continuation of the war. All but two of the 153 German prisoners then interned at Veteran signed the following written proclamation:

> For a long time now and with growing apprehension, we German and Austrian prisoners of war in the United States of America have been following the course of the war in Europe. The battle has become a hopeless one, greater and greater parts of Germany and Austria are being occupied by the armies of the United Nations and cleaned of Hitler's helpers. Everyone—even Hitler, Himmler, Goebbels and their helpers and stooges, know that the war is lost. And yet, the battle continues, one town after the other is falling in ashes, factories and railroads are being destroyed, fields remain untilled, while farmers, workers, students, and doctors senselessly and uselessly are sacrificing their lives.
>
> Can you in the homeland imagine our anxiety, our fear, that all suffering and all waiting was in vain, since this homeland is a smoking heap of rubble, since you, our fathers, mothers, wives, and children are no longer among the living, having been sacrificed in criminal madness? Has not enough blood been spilled? And what for? That the length of life of a few mad criminals will be stretched by a few months, yes, only a few weeks!
>
> This not even is enough, we hear that within Hitler's sphere of power are being formed gangs of snipers and assassins, the so-called "were-wolves" and that in the mountains SS-troops and other fanatical units are to continue the fight, even if Hitler's despotism has been broken everywhere else.
>
> Will you put up with that? Will you be accessory to the crime on your people, that Hitler's slave-drivers intend to commit?
>
> You ask what you could do? How to withstand the terror of SS and Gestapo? Believe us, we know that it is difficult, we too were living in the Nazi-Reich. But now, in the hour of the collapse of the Nazi organizations, something *must* now be down! It is the last, the very last opportunity to save our peoples, and our countries, and also us, from sinking into chaos, into Nothing.

And it can be done! Germans and Austrians have shown it, have saved their towns and their villages, their factories and their homes and thus have preserved their future.

You Austrians, keep in mind that men and women of Vienna and Wiener Neustadt saved their cities from complete destruction.

You Germans, keep in mind that the resolute action of some forced the hangmen of the SS and Gestapo to preserve towns like Heidelberg and Weimar for the German future.

Do not believe the lying vows of Goebbels, that the Soviet Union, that England, that America wants the destruction and slavery of Europe. We, as prisoners of war, live in spiritual freedom, are not being persecuted by hatred and revenge and know, that only war-criminals are punished. Austrians in Vienna and many other places have greeted the Red Army as a friend, and are being regarded by the Red Army as friends. The first free elections since 1933 were held in West-German cities. Does that look like slavery?

Certainly, the first years will be difficult, many wounds must be mended, wounds which we inflicted on others, which we—and that is a matter of course—must also help to mend, as well as the injuries of the fatherland. See to it, that you at home will be able to do this job, that these sufferings will not be more yet and not be heavier! Help the destroyer of Nazism! Refuse the execution of orders of officers of the SS and the army, follow the directions of the allied military commanders! They do not come to enslave you! Hitler and accomplices are the enemies of our future! They only want to send you into death, because they themselves have to die! Make an end to this Nazi war! Fight the snipers, the "were-wolves" as you can and where you can! They only want to avoid their just punishment, they want to make accomplices in crime out of you, they want that you and we shall not live, because *they* cannot! Refuse any help to the SS and other units, who want to continue the fight in pathless and remote regions! Commit sabotage against them and betray them! With this you will not betray your people, your honor, you will betray your hangmen and murderers. Assist the representatives of the American, English, and Red armies. With this you help your people, you help yourselves and us. With this you will bring closer the day of our return and a free future.[18]

Wheatland

The first German prisoners to be sent from Douglas to Wheatland arrived in June, 1944. Although 250 men had been requested for the camp, only 100 were provided. They re-

mained in Wheatland for about six weeks, and were then sent to Scottsbluff, when the Douglas camp was deactivated.

During their initial stay in Wheatland, eighty-three of the men regularly attended special Sunday services conducted in German by a local clergyman, the Reverend J. Schoenberger. The services were held at the Evangelical Bethlehem Church.

A week after the first prisoner church services were held, two of the Germans escaped from the camp. Within half an hour after they had crawled through the fence of the compound, however, they were captured by the night marshal as they attempted to hitch a ride out of town.

For the harvest, 134 Germans were brought to Wheatland early in October. An additional twenty-five men came later in the month. All were returned to Scottsbluff in November.

Prisoner labor for 1945 was supplied from the Douglas camp. The side camp was kept open from June until the beet harvest had been ended. During the summer, the men worked in hay, beans and corn. The camp reached its maximum population in 1945, when 250 men were employed in the beet harvest.

Worland

Worland's first experience with German prisoners was frustrating. In April, 1944, Worland growers requested 200 men for early summer beet work, and plans were made to house them in the abandoned CCC camp. When the prisoners arrived from Scottsbluff, however, only half of the requested number had been sent.

Less than two weeks after they arrived, ninety-four of the 100 prisoners went on strike. They complained of leaky barracks, that there were no benches to sit on in their truck, and that they had no athletic field. In response to the strike, military authorities placed the rebels on bread and water rations.

The strike took on a note of humor on the second day. The strikers prepared a letter addressed to Hitler, asking him

to intervene in their behalf. Whether or not the communique was ever sent was not revealed. In any case, the prisoners did not wait for an answer, but eventually returned to work after four days on bread and water.

Other periods when prisoners were assigned to Worland passed without incident. Two hundred men from Scottsbluff helped with the beet harvest in 1944, and 300 prisoners from the Douglas camp thinned, blocked and harvested beets near Worland during the 1945 season.

* * *

WRITINGS OF GERMAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN WYOMING

(Translator's note: All materials in this section were translated from the original German by *Lowell A. Bangerter*. Excepting the writings of Rudolf Ritschel, they are presented without commentary.)

POEMS AND ESSAYS BY RUDOLF RITSCHEL

Introduction

Mr. Rudolf Ritschel, who spent the summer of 1944 working in a lumber camp near Dubois, Wyoming, has this to say about experience as a prisoner of war in Wyoming: "For decades I have carried memories of the land of Wyoming in my heart. Again and again I pictured in my mind the days that I was able to spend in your beautiful country. Although I was a prisoner of war, during the time I spent in the Rocky Mountains I felt free and was happy every day to be able to work in that magnificent countryside."[19] All of the essays and poems included here were written while Mr. Ritschel was a prisoner of war in this country. He has provided the following brief overview of his earlier life and his prisoner of war experiences, as an introduction to his writings.

When I look back today, in the autumn of my life, I know that it is not only knowledge, courage and strength that conquer the abysses in human life. An important factor is and

remains luck. My generation specifically, was certainly not born under a lucky star. The years of my youth, after World War I, were full of privations. Worry about daily bread and an army of millions of unemployed men created fear and difficulty. Monetary inflation in the extreme stole the last savings.

My father ran a small printing shop. He worked day and night like a man possessed. My brother and I stood daily at the handle of a speed press, which at that time was still run by hand. We often turned the handle into the night, and nevertheless sang happy songs while doing so. Often enough, the next day in school we struggled with fatigue.

The war had brought with it a negative development in the behavior of people toward each other. The contrasts between poor and rich and the different political opinions caused tensions to arise, even in our small city. Farm workers and laborers opposed the rich landowners. The miners from the potash mines agitated against factory owners and capitalists. What the people needed, however, was work and bread. The slogans of the red functionaries about elimination of the middle class and nationalization of private industry helped nobody. Distress remained.

An Austrian recognized these weaknesses of the German people and developed a plan. In a suggestive manner and with persuasive gestures, he drummed away at the people in speeches that lasted for hours, in mass meetings, and in enormous parades. Like a Messiah, he promised peace, happiness and well being. His appearance and his words soon had effect and success. People fell to him in hysteria. Women wept over the radio during his speeches, and weak men were made into striking figures in brown uniforms. There was now only one salvation—Adolf Hitler. The people thought of nothing else any more, did not see the face often distorted with brutality when he spoke of his enemies. They did not see his narrow followers, who spoke of peace like him, while planning enormous murder. They succumbed to the promises and elected Hitler their leader. Thus began the great German tragedy.

I had completed a business apprenticeship, and to avoid waiting for an appointment, I joined the voluntary labor

service. This was a nonpartisan organization until, during the Nazi takeover, SA-formations occupied the camps. During this time I became acquainted with my wife, who was a branch director of a commercial firm. In 1934 we decided to marry and leased a small grocery store in Magdeburg. After two years of hard work, we moved to Weimar to take over a business there. During this time Germany developed into a powerful military state. The demagogues of this period convinced the people that the Germans alone were the nordic master race, which had to reduce the other nations to subjection. The great extermination of the Jews began. Driven together in concentration camps they were tortured and murdered by the tens of thousands.

In 1939, the fearful suspicion became reality; the German war machine started up. Its troops marched across all borders into the neighboring countries. In the spring of 1942, I was drafted into the air force. I received my training at Rochefort sur mer in France. After that I served with the ground forces at various air bases in France. But that did not last long and they made me into an infantryman.

By the fall of 1943, I was already lying in a shelter made of logs and earth on the Gustav-line at Cassino in southern Italy. The city with its world famous monastery became one of the most terrible chapters of this war. It changed hands several times and at the end consisted only of rubble and ashes. There I had the greatest luck in my life. I escaped that hell without physical harm. For weeks the American artillery had plowed up the countryside with heavy explosive shells and had inflicted heavy casualties upon us. Our positions remained only weakly occupied when they began the major attack against us. On the afternoon of February first it was all over. Suddenly some GIs stood in our trench in front of the shelter. "Come on!" they yelled, and we looked disheartened into the rifle bores. They had concentrated charges ready, of which one could have blown up both us and the entire shelter. Resistance would have been senseless. At the sight that we presented the soldiers they looked shocked. We had been under heavy fire for two weeks, almost without supplies, and without washing and shaving had become filthy figures. For days it had been

impossible to take two seriously injured men back to an aid station in the rear.

After a night march through a mine corridor, we spent the time until morning behind the front lines in a donkey barn. Stowed on a jeep, we then made the trip to the collecting camp. An enormous fenced area was crawling with German soldiers. And more and more were added. They were all happy that the war for them was over. After a week under open skies, we were taken in trucks to the harbor at Naples. On the way, we could experience the sympathy of the Italian population directly; they threw rocks and dirt at us.

In the cargo hold of an 8,000 ton transport ship, I too found a place. The crossing began in the middle of a convoy of many ships of the same type. All of us had only the one wish: to reach America without being discovered by a submarine. Soon after we put to sea, we got to feel what it meant to be locked up in such a ship, emaciated to the bone, during spring storms up to wind strength twelve. Heavy breakers fell on the ship and threw it to and fro. In the hold, tables and benches flew alternately from one side to the other.

Soon my condition was such a cause for worry that some comrades thought I would probably not get to see America. One thing contributed to the worsening of my condition. The course had to be changed several times because of the submarine danger. As a result of that, the trip was stretched out over thirty-six days. When the ship was off the coast of Florida, it set course for Newport News. Then the memorable moment had arrived. We had reached America.

In the halls along the harbor, trains with pullman cars stood ready. But before our departure, the prisoners were disinfected and medically examined. The thirty-six difficult days were over. We took courage again. A journey through various states of the U.S.A. with charms of many kinds brought us in three days and nights to Fort Robinson, Nebraska. Upon our arrival, we were confronted with what was for us a totally unusual scene. We left the train on snow-covered prairie at night. Spotlights lit up the scene with a ghostly light. Flashlights jerked up. Soldiers in fur caps on foot and on horseback

accompanied the march into the nearby camp. I felt like an extra in a movie production.

After the arrival at PW-Camp Scottsbluff, each of us felt the greatest amazement concerning the reception at that midnight hour. In the mess hall the tables were set and a meal was brought out, such as we had not seen for a long time. Every man received a duffle bag with clothing and underwear. What probably nobody had dared believe before was reality. We slept as prisoners of war in beds with white sheets.

After a thorough medical examination, a four-week period of rest was prescribed. Later, when I had regained my strength, life took on more variety. I rode along, out to the farms and did various kinds of agricultural work. I was often a guest for dinner in the homes of farmers of German origin. Each of them was interested in talking with the German boys some time.

The good treatment and food in the camp soon brought the Nazis to the surface again. They thought they were doing their country a service, when they did damage to the farmers in the fields or refused to work. Falsified army reports were read, and truth was turned into lies. Thus the situation in the camp became more and more threatening, the more the defeats of the German troops stood out. For reasons of safety, I and six other comrades placed a request with the American camp leadership to be transferred to another camp.

Before it came to that, I received from the interpreter the assignment to select twenty-five dependable men for an advance group to build a lumber camp in the mountains near Dubois, Wyoming. That was really something, to get out of the camp for once and make a trip by car into the Rocky Mountains. Up in the mountains we lived in log cabins, as we knew them from wild west films.

During the day, the area was cleared and leveled with bulldozers, and carpenters of the Tie and Timber Company worked with us to build the wooden floors for the tent city. Later, after everything was finished, additional POWs arrived and moved into the tents. Soon the first trees fell in the forest, which were made into railroad ties. It was the most beautiful time of my internment, and I will never forget it. Far away

from human settlements in this mountain wilderness, the living together of prisoners with their guards developed in a most friendly fashion. Christmas Eve was celebrated together quite according to German custom. The men on both sides were deeply impressed with the entertainment presentations.

Later, when the snow depth grew to more than a meter and work in the forest became virtually impossible, the camp was deactivated. I was placed in a side camp at Veteran, Wyoming. In this small camp, the facilities were very primitive, but a good spirit of comradeship prevailed. Everyone was striving not to succumb to monotony. With the most primitive tools, artists, painters and sculptors worked at projects that perhaps still today decorate the rooms of American officers.

We founded a variety group consisting of actors, scenery painters, music students and many others. I wrote dialogues and appeared several times as a narrator. The first evening brought a resounding success. Word of it penetrated to the main camp at Scottsbluff, and one day we heard that the officers were coming in a bus to see a performance.

The end of the war approached, the camp at Veteran was closed, and we went back to Scottsbluff. I received a position in the army library. It was directed by a first lieutenant named Terry, who was transferred to Frankfurt am Main shortly before my release. I hoped after my return home to be able to see him again, but because my home was in the Soviet sector it was not possible.

After a democratic re-education in a camp, the name of which I have forgotten, we were informed that we would be given preference over others in being released. From New York we travelled this time not in the hold, but like tourists in cabins, to France. From there we were taken back to Germany by train.

Untitled Essay

(Written for a writing contest sponsored by the Scottsbluff camp paper)

There are so many who, without thinking—as is so often the case,—brusquely reject the question: "How will I conduct my life after my return to the homeland?" In my

opinion, open competition for prizes should not be necessary for approaching the question, for it is really the most important problem that there is for us. It is now senseless, simply to curse and complain about what a criminal state leadership brought upon us.

It is, however, also totally wrong, now, when the war—this terrible murdering—has ended, to look at everything through dark glasses. We affirm life, and therefore we must be confident.

I hope that the submitted essays will be a motivation, especially for the younger comrades. Youth too often and too quickly allows itself to be carried away with prejudices. For that reason, we who were already employed for many years and who had to experience the struggle for existence in every form, want to say to the comrades who were torn from the school bench or from an apprenticeship that had hardly begun, that today more than ever, life outside demands the entire man. For this reason everyone should adopt as his motto the old proverb: "What Hans does not learn as a boy, Hans will never learn as a man."

Never again in life will as much free time be available, as is available here in internment. Is it not unpardonable foolishness to let the time pass unused? We really owe deepest thanks to the men who put themselves at our disposal with their knowledge, in order to give us in interesting lectures that which is necessary for occupational improvement and for daily life. So many reject this instruction with the observation that they do not need it, or that they will have no use for it later. Do not reject it so quickly, comrade. You will someday regret that you let pass without using it an opportunity to learn something.

I believe that each of us has grown to love his profession, and our longing and our thoughts go back to our work, because it gave our lives meaning. But the difficulties of the times will prevent many from taking up again their previous occupations. Is that any reason for a man with a healthy mind and a good general education to have doubts about his future? Should it really be so hard to find an appropriate place of employment in our homeland, which lies in

ruins and which we, of course, want to rebuild? I face everything much more confidently, when I rely upon my head, which is able to think clearly, and my hands that can grab hold.

For that reason, I finally will answer the question that was offered, briefly and concisely: I will do my part and work, no matter where, always in the belief that I will make it again.

The time of professional arrogance is past, but thank heavens, so is the time when men could cover their inability with the Party book.

Thoughts about Wyoming

More than ever, we are all inspired by the great thought that the long awaited return home, and with it the end of our internment, lies ahead of us. It is a thought which causes all hearts to beat faster and helps us to bear the fate of confinement.

There are many who already have spent nearly three years in our camp. Many of them had to spend the greatest portion of this time in the Scottsbluff camp, without once even having had the opportunity to leave this very limited area.

Many of our prisoners of war here in America are acquainted only with this extremely tiny spot—our camp. Day in and day out the same routine; no special experience shortened the time.

How much better, on the other hand, was the lot of all of those who were able to leave and go out to the farms, or even into the distant country, into a side camp. New impressions during trips and at the places of work caused the time to pass more quickly and more pleasantly. Unnumbered opportunities arose, to see American cities and villages, and to work and speak with their people. And with justification many can later say at home: Yes, America is also beautiful.

It is not intended as reproach, when I say that much too little has been said about the experiences of this kind. There are so many of these individuals who have returned to us here in the main camp, but everyone remains silent.

For this reason, I would like to make a start, to look back and awaken memories. Perhaps one or another will follow my example and tell us about his experiences. There was certainly for each one something new and noteworthy out there which would interest all of us.

For myself, the time that I spent in the forest camp at Dubois will remain unforgettable. My enthusiasm for this magnificent Rocky Mountain landscape will probably accompany me for my whole life.

Even during the long journey there, there was much to see, cities and villages, oil fields and large industrial sites! Endless prairies with enormous herds of cattle and real cowboys appeared. Yes, real cowboys, the dream of every boy, as we ourselves up until now have known them only from films and books. They are really audacious fellows who appear to be completely grown together with their horses.

And then the Rocky Mountains with their natural beauties, the overpowering giant mountains and the nearly infinite forests.

It was a special kind of romanticism for me to have lived up there among the loggers, cut off from the outside world. One would have to have gone through this world of mountains with closed eyes, not to have been impressed and enthused by it all.

Enthralled by the beauty of nature, at that time I gathered together everything that moved me, in the following simple lines:

Wonderful Wyoming

How still and peaceful lies the world
Down here now, right at my feet.
You glorious mountains and steep heights too,
You quiet lakes, and the green valleys' view,
O Wyoming, how fair are you!

O Wyoming, how fair are you!
My eye will ne'er tire of the view,
Many brooklets splash bright in the sun,
Over spraying, foaming waterfalls they run,
And o'er everything golden sunlight is spun.

O Wyoming, how fair you are,
When over the plains the herds wander far
And with them the cowboy upon his steed,
On free earth a free man indeed,
Who at the campfire lives and sings,
Who loves his homeland, his beautiful Wyoming.

O Wyoming, how fair are you
When the icy snowstorm hides the heights from view,
When moose and bear—by hunger annoyed—
From their loneliness come
And draw near to men.
When in hoar frost there glitter forest and hill,
And bewitched by this splendor each voice becomes still,
And my heart rejoicing sings
You wonderful fair Wyoming.

(*POW-Camp Dubois, Wyoming*)

(*No Title*)

I stand and listen
Again, again
Quiet, forsaken
Lie the grove and lea.
No bird is chirping
In the branches
It's as though there were
On earth none but me.

Way off, along the far horizon
Tower the lofty mountain peaks
Capped with snow eternal
Above them the final gold of
Rays of evening sunlight,
True miracle of God
Sets my heart aquiver here.

Slowly now sinks the land
In twilight low
And in the broad clear sky
Star after star
Appears with twinkling, friendly glow.
Soon covers night
The world and all with its dark wing.

And still I stand here,
Finding in my heart no peace,
Before my eyes
Out of night arise
Scenes of the distant homeland
Which the bloodiest of wars
Now endures.

You land, whose praise once
O'er the whole earth pealed,
In battle wild
You are destroyed,
In bitter distress and pain,
Now sink unhealed
The beauty and the joy
Into the wasted rubble field.

Yet from the evening's quietness
Grows in me
Power of hope I've never known,
Which can all pain now overcome
As faith and trust are in me sown
The nations all will surely
Join their hands in peace,
And love will conquer all and hate will cease.

(POW-Camp Veteran, 1945)

(No Title)

When brightly bells of peace are ringing
And German soldiers return home,
When maiden, wife and child are singing,
Then still will I feel all alone.

For in Nebraska's reaches, far from home,
Imprisoned by America's might,
I wait with longing for times to come
In which I'll see dear freedom's light.

And only then, when peace is in my land,
I'll say farewell, Nebraska's sand,
My hearts burns with a fiery heat,
My greatest wealth is freedom sweet.

When you with your warm arms surround me
And my young sons are then around me,
No more alone, then I'll be free,
Then can the world no fairer be.

(*POW-Camp Scottsbluff*)

(*No Title*)

America, land of freedom great,
I greet you in a time assailed by fate.
My way to you led over war and pain,
My glances now feast on the plain,
O'er the prairies roams my gaze
As thoughts return now to my childhood days,
As I, with cheeks afire
Read how the Indians battled hard for fame,
And always was it my desire
In cowboy circles to remain,
To ride a mustang,
Gallop o'er the plain.

Long are my childhood days now gone,
The great war broke over
German land,
And me it o'er the ocean banned.
And now I see with drunken eyes
You, free and undefeated land.
Yes, wild west romanticism
Is long gone,
The old time must give way before the new,
One thing remains, will never yield,
The freedom.
America, you are the shield,
Your sons fight now in every land
Where men knew only slavery's band,
America, you will the world this freedom
Once more give,
And then all men at last
In peace will live.

(*POW-Camp Dubois, Wyoming*)

Spring's Awakening!

Once more the storms now bluster over the prairie,
The song of the nearing springtime
Is their sweet melody.
They waken with rattling and soughing
The nature that slumbers
And soon the young blossoms and grasses
Are reaching again for the light.

Once more the storms now bluster
And led by God's own hand
Drive now with violence
Over the spacious land.
They drive away darkening cloudbanks
From blue and vaulted skies,
And in glorious sunny glow
The world awakened lies.

Once more the storms now bluster
Over the land away,
Waken in mankind the faith,
The love and the spirits so gay.
Let us forget now the sorrow and pain,
Greet full of ardour
Springtime again.

(POW-Camp Veteran, 1945)

Dedicated to my Comrade Leo Riesinger on His 37th Birthday

Dubois, November 6, 1944

A hard misfortune brought us late together,
We both went forth into the foe's domain,
Together we've endured and come through fight and misery
And stood where our dead comrades we could see.
In all you've been to me a help, in fear and dread,
Too often shared with me your last dry crust of bread.
Today you stand yet helpful at my side,
When I am homesick and my cares rob me of my hope once more,
Then it's your sense of humor, your good word
Which always can my confidence restore.

For that I thank you every hour and every day,
Whatever fate may bring us, come what may,
You will remain my friend and comrade for all time,
I'll stand by you in all your joy and pain.

My only wish today upon your birthday will now be
That you may in our homeland soon
Live better and find joy in what you see.

SELECTED POEMS AND ESSAYS BY OTHER PRISONERS

Everyday Life in the Rocky Mountains

Give me a palette and brush! But don't forget any color, be it even the tiniest deviation from the seven colors of the rainbow. Yes, I would say that, if I could paint. Unfortunately, I have only words at my disposal, to attempt in a description to come close to doing justice to this harsh beauty which presents itself to our eyes up here.

Today we took hold, and without regard for the additional Sunday drops of sweat, we climbed up the mountain. Ever higher and higher from our logging camp, until we finally reached the peak of Beltai Mountain.

There I now sit upon stone overgrown with rust-red patches of moss, and I let my gaze wander in a wide circle. I really do not know where I should begin. A feeling of freedom moves through my breast at this magnificent view. I take everything into myself with new eyes. Another world lies before me than the one up until now, the accustomed one, which almost let one forget that something like this still exists too. It is to me as though I had spent my entire internment waiting for this moment.

This mountain peak, which is green almost to the top, is surrounded by forested slopes. Four more just like it lie in its vicinity. The fir trees and yellow pines, which grow up to within a hundred meters of here, lean, primarily on the north and northeast sides, with the angle of the slope. Only a few healthy trees jut up with their disheveled crowns out of the

dry, ghostly underbrush. Toward the southeast, the valley opens a little bit. There, like a gatekeeper, lies at 2300 meters elevation the small town of Dubois, which is French means "of the forest." Its houses are all made of artistically framed wood timbering. In the south, as far as the eye can see, stretch the snow-covered peaks of the Rocky Mountain chain, which reaches from Canada to South America. But their white peaks are rather faded in comparison to a month ago, when snow also lay up here. Situated in front of the Rocky Mountains is a rugged sandstone mountain range that stretches for miles. Its steep slopes glow red-brown, like marble in the sun. Their flat stubby peaks are covered with gray-green plains grass. Right now the shadows of the clouds are tracing their outlines upon them. Very close by is the border of the Indian reservation. The bare slope that lies across from us to the northeast is somewhat higher; its snow fields testify to that. All around at our feet is forest, nothing but forest, leaving free only a small mountain meadow lying southward. By and large I feel as though I had been moved to the Black Forest of our homeland. The surrounding mountain range is similar to the Bavarian or the Austrian Alps. There is lacking only the peacefully nestled villages. The climate is severe here. Milder traces do not appear until a thousand meters lower. White cloudbanks cover the horizon, which only gives place to the sun for moments, letting then everything in mountain and valley shine forth in ever richer colors. Then hordes of flying insects land on the rocks to warm themselves. In all keys they hum and rumble like a hurricane; ranging from fat bumble bees, through animals that I do not know at all, to singing, humming one-day-flies. Their fleshy bodies shimmer colorfully against the white stone. Magnificent butterflies, that could not be more beautiful if they came from paradise, spread their wings waving to the sun, and then praise the Sunday, fluttering in an arrogant, happy wedding flight from flower to flower.

The grass is rather sparse and pale in color. Nevertheless, a few undaunted little flowers do not let themselves be kept back from living out their lives. Several kinds of common leeks with red and yellow blooms on soft stems blossom here in indescribable fulness and beauty.

Also, innumerable sky blue blossoms, similar to forget-me-nots rest on carpets of green-gray moss, without stems and leaves.

Far below us on the meadow slope cows are peacefully grazing. Down there, the edge of the forest is bordered by blooming mulleins, just as if they had to light up the dark at night, because the candle shoots of the yellow pines flourish up here for far too short a time.

Over the boulders in the west, a thunderstorm is threatening. High above us, a hawk circles majestically without beating its wings. Just as he lifts himself from the earth, so we today with this experience lift ourselves away from the everyday world of the prisoner.[20]

HEINRICH THEODOR, Dubois

Our POW Home

It seems to be especially characteristic of the German, or at least of the German soldier, that he views the area to which he is bound for a certain time, whether voluntarily or by force, more or less as his "home," and that he also defends it against the defamatory insinuations of a stranger. This does not mean that in so doing he forgets his real home or his fatherland. No, but in addition to that home, one can also "find a home," which, if one approaches this task with some love, can help to form a somewhat more joyful life in the foreign land.

One would think that for us POWs this task is especially difficult in a foreign land that one sees, for the most part, only from the barbed wire perspective. Yes, perhaps the camp can soon become a homeland and the barrack a home for a person. But the area or the town of the camp too? For many an outsider, that will be inconceivable.

And yet it is true, even if not everyone is as yet willing to admit it.

We "Basin residents" are, in any case, not only well acquainted with our POW-town and its surroundings, but have—I can probably say it with a clear conscience—also

grown to love it, by opening our eyes during our trips to the different farms. Perhaps it was especially easy for us here, to make friends more rapidly with this spot of earth, than may have been the case elsewhere.

Alone the pleasant site of our camp gives us residents of Basin a right to be especially proud. Tall, shady poplars surround our seven barracks which, in an orderly triangular arrangement, encompass a grassy place in the middle, on the tree lined edges of which many other cool, shady places can be found. But we can also be proud of our POW-town, Basin. Decorated with numerous parks and flower gardens, it is a clean little town. In addition to the pretty colorful single family houses, it possesses also rather impressive buildings, as for example the county building (Big Horn County), the high school, and not last, the beautiful public library. Even the three Basin bars are not unknown to us POWs. Even if we haven't yet had the pleasure of a closer look there, many of us will have painted with active imagination a picture of their interiors, and will certainly have been there in spirit at dances and evenings of drinking.

At first we had great difficulty in getting used to the broader surroundings of our POW home town. The bare, treeless mountain chains of the Rocky Mountains with their often steppe-like foothills and valleys did not appeal to us, even though we had the best intentions. It was first the alert nature lovers among us, who soon found even here its beauties, for which they certainly did not have to search long, especially on the way to our place of work on the other side of the town of Greybull. Wonderfully beautiful, unforgettable pictures were conjured up often enough by the morning sun, which, with its first weak rays, transformed the snow-covered peaks of the mountains into glittering thousand colored majestic domes. A picture, that many of us will gladly take back to the homeland, a homeland, which to be sure bleeds from a thousand wounds, but nevertheless will be there for us in its old beauty. Even such a lovely spot of earth as our "POW home," which many have grown to love, cannot deceive us and make us forget that.[21]

A. K., Basin

Thoughts Before the Journey Home

In a few days, the majority of us will leave Douglas. Many have been in the camp for more than a year; many were previously in other camps in America or North Africa. The long period of imprisonment will soon be over. Everyone is happy that he can soon depart from the world behind barbed wire, in order to follow his civilian occupation once more, with significantly more personal freedom.

A glance back at the past months—for many even years—will not let the thought arise in anyone, that we were treated badly as prisoners in American hands. Lodging, food, clothing, sanitary facilities, medical treatment—all could be termed more than adequate. Even the treatment from an intellectual point of view can be noted with praise. Study courses in all areas of knowledge benefited us. Music, theater, film and an extensive library gave form to our free time and helped many to overcome homesickness. The work on the farms or in the factories was for a large number of us unfamiliar and therefore difficult. Nevertheless, the accomplishments were good and were recognized by the American army and civilians, as we read with pleasure and satisfaction in our last camp newspaper. Insofar as a linguistic understanding was possible between individual prisoners and American soldiers or civilians, we were able to learn that in many areas of daily life many points of contact exist, which, during the discussions, in many instances brought complete agreement of opinions. Other conversations were enlightening and instructive for both sides and brought us significantly closer with respect to our understanding of one another, so that the artificial gap between us, which was created by the war, was recognized as nonsense, and the first steps were taken toward its elimination. Who of us, who has come to know Americans, does not consider it possible that he could live in the same house with an American family and have the American as a good neighbor? We do not doubt that they are precisely such people as we are, and that we could live with one another under one roof in peace and quiet and the best of harmony. We have learned, not only in America but also in other lands, that the higher

leaders of National Socialism brought hate and division among humanity, and brought war upon us, but that the nations want to have peace and quiet.

When our train crosses the enormous land masses of the United States in the next few days, and our ship brings us across the seemingly endless expanses of ocean and nearer to home, then we will know that the fate of imprisonment is sad and certainly hard, but that in America we had it good and that we were treated more like equals than like evil enemies. We hope and wish and intend to do our part that peaceful, beneficial cooperation will become the leitmotif for the future.[22]

GUETHE, Douglas

A Summer Day in Douglas

Sky glows with golden heat now without cease,
And like a glistening, rises o'er the land,
Where even lies the crickets' little band
At rest in midday's deepening silent peace.

In peace, whose silence stretches without end
As far as eye o'er this broad land can see,
In peace, from which the storms of war now flee,
Before whose glow night's shadows backward wend.

Is it peace, toward which all those people press,
Who far below there wander, once beguiled,
The tired old man, the mother with her child,
Millions whose future's all that they possess?

Is it not peace that calls to hope anew,
And—like the heavens which to this dry land
Must soon now give a drink with cooling hand—
To dried-up souls brings rest and comfort too?

Yet hotter from the sky the sun's rays seep,
The glistening glow still rises o'er the lea
Where shadowless this world's life silent, free,
Unmoving lies in midday stillness deep. [23]

E. D., Douglas

In Autumn

The tree 'gainst which I leaned on summer days
Is colored now, for fall has come already,
It shielded me before the sun's hot rays,
Now from the north, cold winds are blowing, steady.

The time is gone, its course so quickly run,
With its green leaves, its shadows, golden lights.
The graying day that has for me begun
Is filled with sterner faces, solemn sights.

I lean and tremble now against the tree,
My ear lies listening on the cold rough bark,
I hear it creak and sigh in there, and see
The branches bend in wind now raw and stark.

The leaves are falling, rustling, rustling in the sand,
Are driven roughly, heartlessly away,
I wave to them goodby now with my hand,
Til with the tree I'm left alone today.

Consoling through the dance of leaves I see
A friendly scene, long borne in silence, oh!
It stands in its old gleam in front of me
Just as it did once long, so long ago.

I said farewell then, full of worry, care,
But hoping that I'd sweet reunion know,
And many precious hands waved to me there
As I saw colored leaves around them blow.

Today the hands are waving at me too,
Like then, the leaves are dancing to and fro.
A quiet voice says, "I am waiting, you!"
And my voice answers, "I'll return, you know!"[24]

W. M., Basin

In Wyoming Near Basin

Immense, immeasurably great, this land,
White peaks afar jut upward to the sky,
Where clouds tear loose from them, from summits grand
And their dark shadows wander o'er the throngs of high,
Bleak, empty hills—of men completely free,—
As broad, as lonely as the distant sea.

Close to the river that flows through the plains
Presses itself a broad green strip of land
Which fields and meadows, house and yard contains
Along the edge of fruitless barren sand.
It colors water that gives drink to fields,
Flies in the wind, when sun its hot breath yields.

The land is large and lies untamed and wild,
The thunder rumbles in the far ravine,
The lightning flashes in the darkness mild,
The storms rage through the deep bay, cold and mean.
Wild waters rush in fury downward bound
And drag so many to the grave's cold ground.

But when upon a happy sunny day
The tender breeze blows through the green trees there,
When man and beast in cooling shadows stay,
Then is the quiet land sunk down in prayer.
From distant peaks, untouched, caught in white glow,
One feels the breath of the eternal snow.[25]

W. M., Basin

Adam Hermannsdorfer

Fresh air is good for everyone.
It strengthens nerves and blood, my son,
And Hermannsdorfer knows that too,
Thus chooses he the evening hours
For breathing the fresh air.

But since it's always dark,
Alone he does not go,
Or otherwise a moose cow
Could be his doom, you know.

He whistles with his whistle
And brings us on the run
And counts us off in order,
To see if six men somehow
Added a seventh one.

His words with gestures leading,
He speaks the news to all,
He never mastered reading,
Commands are his downfall,

The foreign words within them
He cannot say at all.
His last words surprise no one,
"It is not so?" we hear,
And then the most used question:
"Is that clear?"[26]

ANONYMOUS, Dubois

Franz Marchhart

Once I heard someone speaking
Who did not like it here:
Just what does Marchhart do then?
It's not too much, that's clear.
He sits in the scribe's tent
And dozes the whole long day,
And then for being idle
Still gets a lot of pay.
But truly that is not well said,
The man to false conclusions was led.
For someone has to sit up there
As even the most stupid know,
And it had to be Marchhart
From Austria, it's so!
And I can tell you why,
I'll clear it up for you:
Up there we need a smart man,
A dumb ox will not do.

How good it tastes to all
When for dessert Franz mail presents
And stretches his full length
Above the crowd unbent,
And then I hear so gladly
His Viennese accent:
"Now listen just a little bit."
I have right here three letters,
Unfortunately that's it.
For me it has become too dumb,
Just see how he runs to and from.
One finds no prisoner today,
If I bring paint and brush,
He hollers, "Go away!"[27]

ANONYMOUS, Dubois

Russ, The Firemaker

A fire maker we have got
Who should at four rise, on the dot,
To heat the water for us all.
To laugh about it, you've no call,
For when you get here then at six,
You find that you are in a fix.
The water still has ice therein,
You take it with a sour grin.
I've known it long, we need not fear,
Our Russ is the best fire maker here.[28]

ANONYMOUS, Dubois

(*No Title*)

Chaste and modest in word and deed,
You should always give these words heed,
So spoke our Walter Happel's mother when
He joined up with the army's men.

For in this army there are naughty boys
Who oft their evening hours employ
Telling some tales and some pictures showing
Of things Walter had no way of knowing.
Show him a woman in negligee,
He'll blush and then say to you: Go away!

But quiet waters, they run deep,
A voice in Walter would not let him sleep:
You're no child, that's sure,
And yet your heart is pure.
Kissing, however, is what girls are for, you see,
What's more, they can even from Dubois be.

You need not always blush so, when
You must know, such a handsome man as you
Will ne'er be born again.

But if you know it, then take care,
Or wrinkles in your face you'll wear.
Labor moderately and love the wine,
Go down into Dubois to your girl fine.
That strengthens your nerves and then your mind,
It's the best medicine you'll find.[29]

ANONYMOUS, Dubois

SELECTED CHRISTMAS WRITINGS

Our Christmas Celebration

So solemn, deep, grasped ne'er before
At our poor hearts a Christmas feast,
The candle light has all but ceased,
The table holds few gifts in store.

External glow has died away,
The unencumbered joys are gone,
Each one is wrapped up, still, alone,
Within his cares and sorrows gray.

But brighter glows for all to see
Within us now a new light's ray,
And whence it comes, no one can say,
It shines forth from eternity.

A spark it is of strength and might,
O let it in our hearts now burn,
The hope, the faith, for which we yearn,
It leads us safely from the night.

A spark it is, which evermore
Will burn at Christmas through the years,
When you've learned of its strength that cheers,—
And ne'er so wonderful before!

"And ne'er so wonderful before!"
Can one write such a thing in these times?

We quarrel with our fate, and we turn away from a world which promises us so much and disappointed us so terribly. Life seems to us to be without content, the path into the future choked with rubble.

Now the Christmas celebration has come again. What should be we do with this festival of love, of warmth, of light, we who far from a destroyed homeland, without news of our loved ones, live out our lives in brooding and worrying? We have become foreign to ourselves, and the days that now are to

be celebrated again are no less foreign. Gone is their magic, gone the intimacy and secret joy which filled our hearts year after year. Care and restlessness have now intruded into them.

When I recently heard a Christmas song in an afternoon concert, I remembered the letter that I received from Germany at the beginning of the year. It had been written on Christmas Eve, and in it appeared these words: "We have a Christmas tree again. To be sure, it has only a few lights and no decorations, yet in spite of that it appears to me to be more beautiful than usual, and we look more reverently into its little flames. This time we are not alone. Strangers are here, a mother with her little son from Frankfurt and an old man with his two grandchildren from Hamburg. They have all been here only a few days, and yet this evening we are together like a single family, as though we had known each other for a long time. And believe me, I am actually very happy, and if I examine myself in earnest, I have only one wish: that you were here with me . . ."

I do not know whether she is still alive, she who wrote this letter to me. None of us knows whether a gracious fate has preserved his loved ones, but we know that thousands and thousands of thoughts and wishes fly over here to us from our homeland, thousands of thoughts that greet us and long for us. Perhaps you are included, perhaps I am too?

There is this much that such a Christian letter can tell us, when we read it correctly: about the power of the Christmas tree, and that of total strangers, driven by the war, gathered together as a single family; about the strength which allows the hunted to catch their breath in its influence and gives them peace and a feeling of happiness; about the power that becomes all the stronger, the poorer, the more helpless despairing people are.

We too have now become poor, we too are in despair. Perhaps we too are permitted to feel the blessed influence of the Christmas tree upon ourselves.

"And ne'er so wonderful before!"

Certainly, this Christmas celebration will differ greatly from others. It will be so infinitely much simpler, without the

outward splendor and show of the usual "celebration." One sees no people clothed for a feast, who spread gifts that have long remained a secret, beneath the Christmas tree, who give and receive with a joyful heart, who look forward to a special holiday meal, to a theater performance, to a concert. All we wrapped up in their cares; all have suffered and lost much. But somewhere they will gather around a Christmas tree, as we will too, to celebrate Christmas. On us as well will the simple, undecorated tree have its effect, and we should ask ourselves: Why?

We quarrel with our fate and we rebel against it—we live. We have the will to live and must cope with our fate under new conditions, in new surroundings, in the face of new challenges. For the first time, as changed men we step into the circle of light of a changed Christmas tree, to which we now actually draw nearer, because all the habits and customs which were dear and familiar to us about it, have now fallen away, habits and customs which also masked the real meaning of the Christmas celebration and here and there caused it to disappear completely. We see the lights burning on the tree, we sense its fragrance, hear the flames crackle. Scenes of the past arise, which already appeared to have sunk away. They fill us with melancholy and joy and also cause a light to be kindled in our hearts, more brightly than usual, the spark that gives us confidence, that we call "faith," "hope."

Christmas is today! It has become Christmaslike within us—without show, without glamour, without all the accessories. Without all the accessories we have moved closer to life itself; it speaks more directly to us. We should not close our hearts to it, because it has much to say to us, because many rubble-choked springs and wells have been opened again, which clearly whisper into our ears things that earlier could hardly be heard.

Do you not also see the burning lights with new eyes? Do not the flames appear to be brighter to you, because all the splendor has gone which distracted you before? You will notice that such accessories are not necessary at all to celebrate a deep, intimate Christmas, that you celebrate your Christmas more intimately than usual. You "experience" your Christ-

mas more truly, more deeply! "To live means to experience!" Remember those words.

Soon, in a changed homeland, we will be confronted with a changed life. Change yourself as well!

Hear how directly life will speak to you there. Do not let yourself be intimidated by distress. Do not let misery harden you. Be happy about life that grows up unbroken out of destruction! Think, when you eat your bread, about how it was sown, how it grew, how it ripened and was harvested. Be happy about the child that greets you in a friendly manner. Look at the flower that blooms at the edge of the path. Listen to the thousand voices. Take in the multitude of impressions with which nearby speaks to you. Then you will "experience" your life, and you will approach your daily work with inner satisfaction, with that spark in your heart which the Christmas tree has, to kindle in it,—let us call it "faith," "hope."

It is necessary that we go back to the springs of life and draw from them. They alone can give us the strength that helps us go on. The light on the tree is such a spring, for it embodies for us amid ice and snow and bitter death, warmth and security.

The people in our homeland, who this year will also gather around the Christmas tree, will celebrate a deep, intimate Christmas, just as we do. Their thoughts and wishes will fly over to us, ours over to them. And we will all be nearer to those "small" and so often unnoticed miracles—the eternal miracles of life.[30]

WERNER MENGER

Christmas

The snow fell from the sky in heavy flakes, thickening the white blanket which, in many places in the valley, covered the landscape meters deep. The road that led up to the mountains had been cleared by the snowplow, but the freshly fallen snow made walking very difficult.

Today was Christmas. The clouds hung gray and heavy in the mountains and surrounded the majestic peaks with a misty veil.

For the first time in six long years the bells of the little village church rang in the Christmas of peace. Never before had they sounded so clear and pure, and in the mountains their peals echoed a thousand times, as though they wished to express their joy.

From the small pretty houses the light of the Christmas trees streamed once more, which during those long years had had to hide itself behind the blackout curtains.

Through the window, we see the family of the mountain peasant Anzengruber. The farmer's face is as hard as the cliffs up in the hills. His bright blue eyes look into the lights of the tree, as though they were directed into the far distance. The little round peasant woman sits on the bench at the warm hearth; today her busy fingers are folded in her lap. She has closed her eyes. Her thoughts wander far over the ocean, over the broad prairie plains to her only son, who now spends his second Christmas as a prisoner behind barbed wire. Plainly, she sees the blond boy before her, as he used to gaze in wonder at the Christmas tree as a child, his eyes alight when he discovered all the gifts, for which she, his mother had saved from the sparse income of the farm. He had never been able to say much, her Toni, for the people here are as silent as their mountains, but his eyes had always spoken an eloquent language of thanks. It had been that way year after year. Then the war came, and Toni went out to do his duty as a soldier.

In France, on the channel coast, the waves of the sea had sung their Christmas song to him. Up in Norway, the icy polar storms later howled their melodies to him, and the following year Toni and his men huddled deep in the forests of Russia around a little tree that brightened the shelter with its lights. The next year he had been at home and had sat there on the bench by the hearth, and had stroked his mother's hard work-marred hands. Here, through the window, she had watched him, as he marched back down the valley to do his duty out there.

Last year, after long, fearful waiting, she had received a letter from Toni, from his place of confinement. Her prayers had always accompanied him along his paths during these difficult years, and this year too, she pleaded with God to watch

over and protect her only beloved son, far away over there in a foreign land, and to bring him home right soon, healthy and happy, to the mountains that he loved so much.

Over there, however, in the foreign land, Toni lay upon his bed. He had closed his eyes. Outside, the snow rustled down and the prairie wind swept around the barrack. The stove radiated a pleasant warmth. Toni's thoughts wandered over the ocean, whose mountainous waves lapped at them in vain. They wandered far across the German country, up the windings of the path that led to his mountains. Plainly he saw the small clean house of his parents before him. In the stall, he plainly heard Liesel, the old cow, lowing, and Maxl the little Dachshund barked with his hoarse voice. Inside, however, in the living room, sat father and mother. The lights of the Christmas tree shone clear and bright as never before. Peace had come to Germany again.

His thoughts wandered a little way farther, past the mighty beech tree, beneath whose protecting limbs the crucifix stands, to the little village church. He heard the bright ring of the bells, and from the church the organ rang, which the old schoolmaster played with trembling hands. He also heard the choir sing. Among the many faces one glowed especially; from the many voices one soprano rang so clear and pure. It was Christl, his fiancee.

In his thoughts he held her warm, soft hand in his and whispered into her ear, "I'll come back soon."[31]

WILLY PAUL, Douglas

Christmas Song

From heaven to deep chasms bare
A mild star smiles down warm and bright,
The fragrances from forests fair
Arise and float on winter air,
And night's aglow like candle light.

My startled heart for joy would sing,
This is the dear sweet Christmas time.
I hear the distant church bells ring,
Enticing, homey sounds awing,
Which grand in fairly—stillness chime.

A pious spell holds me in thrall
Adoring, wond'ring I must stand,
There sinks o'er me, as eyelids fall,
A pious child's dream over all,
I feel a miracle's at hand.[32]

ANONYMOUS, Douglas

Have You Already Heard It?

Knecht Ruprecht has, the same as we,
been made a prisoner of war.

I saw him trotting through our woods
right toward the camp today,
to me it seemed he carried still
a bag of gifts so gay.

Together quietly we sit
at holy eventide,
'neath cozy glow of lighted tree
await we side by side
the news Knecht Ruprecht
may bring us
in the old accustomed way.[33]

ANONYMOUS, Dubois

Greeting for Santa Claus

O Santa Claus, now we greet thee,
Who can but come from Germany,
We greet thee in a troubled time,
Who in the great folk-strife afar
The dear old German Christmas feast
Must spend as prisoners of war.[34]

ANONYMOUS, Dubois

Santa's Greeting

The war drove me to the U. S. A.
To Wyoming in the wild west,
Near Dubois, in the mountains high.
I think you are the best.
'Twas fate that brought you here together,
As real Germans—but imprisoned
In this, a bitter, troubled time.

I greet you now
And am prepared to pass around the presents
And these few happy hours yet
To spend here in your presence.

I greet you now in this, the Christmas night
And wish you from my heart
That soon may smile on all a free sun's light.

May all of us forgive the cares
And pain, yet let us quietly
Remember our dear homeland sorely tried.
May God beside our loved ones stay,
That we at last, when this hard time is past,
May once more see them healthy, happy, gay.[35]

ANONYMOUS, Dubois

(*No Title*)

A truck transports us from the base,
So all the timber men
Quickly reach the working place.
The truck's side walls are made of
Thin light boards of pine,
Now twice have fallen out
Prisoners along the line.
Once it was on some stones,
Then on snow,
And I believe that
That brings woe.
Again now they are creaking,
The side walls, suspiciously,
Myself, I sit both morn and evening there
And have strong fear in me.
Perhaps the truck will even get
Some proper walls for Christmas,
Strong and new.
Me and the other timber men
That would cheer up too.[36]

ANONYMOUS, Dubois

NOTES

1 Judith M. Gansberg, *Stalag: U.S.A.* (New York: Crowell, 1977), p. 2.

2 "24 Prisoners are Still at Large," *The Sheridan Press,* 8 Jan. 1945, p. 7, col.

3 "American Girls Date Germans in POW Camp," *The Wyoming Eagle,* 22 Nov. 1945, p. 3, col. 3.

4 "Stills Found in Camp Hale Prison Center," *The Wyoming Eagle,* 8 March 1944, p. 4, cols. 4-5.

5 "Homesick American Soldiers in Europe Disgusted as Germans Return from U.S. with Luxuries," *The Wyoming Eagle,* 24 Nov. 1945, p. 21, cols. 4-5.

6 Unpublished recollections of Mrs. E. B. Fairfield. Typescript provided by Mr. Joseph W. Fairfield.

7 "Prisoner of War Labor Used in State," *The Wyoming Eagle,* 24-27 July 1945, Section 5, p. 9, cols. 3-7.

8 Information concerning Mr. Algermissen's experiences as a prisoner of war was obtained during an interview with Mr. Algermissen on July 12, 1978.

9 Interview with James Fitzpatrick, November 3, 1978.

10 "Prisoners Happy at Nazi Defeat," *The Sheridan Press,* 10 May 1945, p. 4, col. 3.

11 "Cheyenne Tribune's Charges of Meat Burning at Local Prisoner of War Camp Erroneous Committee Reveals," *The Douglas Enterprise,* 23 May 1944, p. 1, cols. 3-5, p. 8, cols. 1-2.

12 *Ibid.*

13 Peg Layton Leonard, "When Douglas Hosted Unusual Company," in *West of Yesteryear* (Boulder, Colorado: Johnson, 1976), p. 200.

14 Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Clinton Baker, September 29, 1978.

15 Guethe, "Gedanken vor der Heimfahrt," *Douglas' offene Worte,* 18 Nov. 1945, p. 2.

16 "Ties Reach Yard Here; Stacking Work Begins," *The Riverton Review,* 6 Sept. 1945, p. 1, cols. 3-4.

17 "Irons in the Fire: They Are Not Our Friends," *The Lingle Guide-Review,* 24 May 1945, p. 1, col. 5.

18 Mimeograph copy of the original proclamation, in English, provided by Mr. Rudolf Ritschel, one of the signers.

19 Translated from a letter to Lowell A. Bangerter, September 16, 1977.

20 Heinrich Theodor, "Ueber den Alltag in den Rocky-Mountains," *Scheinwerfer* (Scottsbluff), Nr. 4 (August, 1945), pp. 3-5.

21 A. K., "Unsere PW Heimat," *Douglas' offene Worte,* 16 Sept. 1945, pp. 6-7.

22 Guethe, "Gedanken vor der Heimfahrt," *Douglas' offene Worte,* 18 Nov. 1945, pp. 1-2.

23 E. D., "Ein Sommertag in Douglas," *Douglas' offene Worte,* 16 Sept. 1945, p. 1.

24 W. M., "Im Herbst," *Douglas' offene Worte,* 7 Oct. 1945, p. 10.

25 W. M., "In Wyoming bei Basin," *Douglas' offene Worte,* 23 Sept. 1945, p. 8.

26 "Der Adam Hermannsdorfer," *Weihnachtsfeier im Kriegsgefangenenlager Dubois-Wyoming U.S.A.—Weihnachten 1944* (Dubois: mimeo., 1944), p. 6.

27 "Franz Marchhart," *Weihnachtsfeier . . . ,* p. 7.

28 "Der Feuermacher Russ," *Weihnachtsfeier . . . ,* p. 9.

29 *Weihnachtsfeier . . . ,* p. 13.

30 Werner Menger, "Unser Weihnachtsfest," *Douglas' offene Worte,* 23 Dec. 1945, pp. 6-8.

31 Willy Paul, "Weihnachten," *Douglas' offene Worte,* 23 Dec. 1945, pp. 9-10.

32 "Weihnachtslied," *Douglas' offene Worte,* 23 Dec. 1945, p. 5.
33 "Habt Ihr es schon vernommen?," *Weihnachtsfeier . . . ,* p. 1.
34 "Gruss an den Weihnachtsmann," *Weihnachtsfeier . . . ,* p. 2.
35 "Gruss des Weihnachtsmannes," *Weihnachtsfeier . . . ,* p. 3.
36 *Weihnachtsfeier . . . ,* p. 12.

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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 Pharasaic 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-Loraine 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 Pharasaic 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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