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### **The Val J. Peter Newspapers: The Rise and Decline of a Twentieth-Century German-Language Newspaper Empire**

During the decade of the 1880s the last great wave of migration from Germany brought nearly a million and a half German-born to the United States. In the peak year, 1882, a quarter of a million German-born arrived. The census of 1890 recorded the country's number of German-born inhabitants as the largest in any census, about 2,785,000.<sup>1</sup> These impressive numbers of newcomers helped to create an institutional German-America that would reach its zenith over the next two decades.<sup>2</sup> In cities and rural areas of older German settlement, new German churches, social societies, gymnastic associations, mutual aid groups, and other organizations were established by and for the newcomers, and older German organizations were revived. German newspapers, which comprised the most impressive journalistic structure developed by any American immigrant group, also proliferated, and likewise were at their peak in terms of numbers of publications and circulation in the period beginning in the 1890s.<sup>3</sup>

The early twentieth century witnessed a long slow decline in the number and strength of the various institutions that bound German-America together—the inevitable result of a dwindling number of the German-born within the United States population. The decline demonstrated that institutional German-America was always heavily dependent upon the first generation of immigrants; although there were frequent appeals to the sons and daughters of immigrants to learn the language and preserve the culture, only a minority of the second generation fully responded. Many of them in fact did learn the language, but that often did not translate into continuing involvement with the institutions of German-America.<sup>4</sup> Among the institutions most affected was the German-American press. From a peak estimated at about 800 in



the early 1890s, the number of German newspapers declined to 613 in 1900 and to 554 in 1910.<sup>5</sup> Although this decline pre-dated the First World War and was well under way by then, the events of the war, with the various pressures brought to bear upon German-language publishers, helped to give the final blow to many small-town German papers. An estimated 278 newspapers remained in 1920. Where there had been about ninety German-language dailies in 1910, there were twenty-nine in 1920.<sup>6</sup>

What could be seen at the time as a decline in the world of German-American journalism can also be seen in retrospect as a transformation of its character. From a journalism of newspapers based upon many separate communities of Germans, it was becoming a journalism of regional newspapers seeking to encompass many and varied German communities. Larger newspapers, usually based in the bigger cities, picked up circulation from those newspapers that were dying out, and even managed to increase their total circulation on this basis. This also led to a journalism which tended to dwell more heavily on affairs within German-America, eventually leaving the field of general national, political and community affairs up to the English-language general-circulation newspapers which an increasing number of their customers were also reading.

A prime example of the direction of German-language journalism in its declining years can be seen in the newspaper enterprise built and expanded by Val J. Peter, an immigrant from Bavaria who purchased a newspaper in Omaha in 1907 and made it the basis of a newspaper chain which survived until 1982. In the years 1910 to 1930 the chain developed into the dominant German-language voice in the West, and after that began to expand into a national enterprise.

Peter began his career in journalism in modest circumstances. Born in Bavarian Franconia in 1875, he arrived in America as a boy with his family in 1889, in the last stages of the great migration wave of the eighties. The family immediately settled in Rock Island, Illinois. Val Peter's father was in ill health, and died in 1892; and so the younger Peter was obliged to go to work while still in his teens. He began his career in German journalism as a reporter for the weekly Rock Island *Volkszeitung*, then served as city editor of the daily Peoria *Sonne*, but returned in 1904 to Rock Island to buy the financially ailing *Volkszeitung*. After his marriage in 1905, Peter began to look around for a new environment for raising his family and for pursuing German-language journalism. He explored the possibilities in San Francisco, but was discouraged from trying to rebuild newspapers there after the 1906 earthquake. He then turned to Omaha, and in June 1907 purchased the *Westliche Presse*, a weekly paper. In 1908 he bought out the Omaha *Tribüne*, which had suffered a damaging fire. The two Omaha papers were combined as the weekly *Omaha Tribüne-Westliche Presse*. He sold the Rock Island paper



and moved his family to Omaha in 1909. In March 1912 Peter published the first issue of the daily *Omaha Tribune*, which would continue to be the centerpiece of his newspaper enterprise until his death in 1960.<sup>7</sup>

In the years before the First World War Peter began the process of consolidating smaller country newspapers into his Omaha enterprise. In 1913, the plains of Nebraska had at least eleven German-language newspapers, many of them small local weekly publications circulating one or two thousand copies. Eleven German newspapers also served communities in Kansas.<sup>8</sup> The *Omaha Tribune* itself claimed a circulation of 8,640; it also circulated a weekly edition, which reached into the countryside. Two other daily German newspapers served the Great Plains area, the Denver *Colorado Herald*, with 6,000 copies, and the Kansas City *Presse*, with about 3,000 copies.<sup>9</sup> In those years preceding the First World War, however, there was already cause for concern as to whether all these German newspapers would be sustainable (without the addition of many new German immigrants, which seemed improbable). A number of small Nebraska and western Iowa weeklies were thus merged with the *Tribüne*, beginning with papers in Auburn and Nebraska City in 1912, in Bloomfield, Nebraska, in 1914, and in Fremont, Nebraska, in early 1917.

The process of consolidation accelerated during the war as German newspapers and the German language came under attack from politicians and vigilante groups enforcing loyalty.<sup>10</sup> In addition, restrictive federal legislation passed in October 1917 required foreign-language publishers to translate all copy dealing with political and foreign affairs. This placed impossible burdens on many German-language newspapers, particularly small ones.<sup>11</sup> In late 1917 and 1918, four more Nebraska small-town papers succumbed. All were combined with the Omaha paper. By the end of that year the only remaining German papers in Nebraska outside of Omaha were the Norfolk *Westliche Rundschau*, which was to disappear by 1923, and the widely-circulated agricultural paper, the Lincoln *Freie Presse*, which moved to Winona, Minnesota, in 1924. Several western Iowa German newspapers were also acquired, including Iowa's largest German paper, the weekly Des Moines *Iowa Staats-Anzeiger*. The *Omaha Tribune*, which in 1913 had a circulation of 8,640, claimed by 1920 a daily circulation of 22,610.<sup>12</sup> Clearly Peter's newspaper had prospered by picking up the pieces from the damage wrought by the turmoil of the war period.

On the eve of the First World War Peter had also taken his first step toward publishing newspapers outside of Omaha and had conceived a plan to develop another regional paper covering Kansas and western Missouri. In 1917 he purchased the daily Kansas City *Presse* and invested heavily in a new printing plant there with the intention of turning that paper into another regional paper; but the fortunes of the war and its aftermath foiled this plan. The paper suspended daily publication and



became a weekly in May 1918.<sup>13</sup> He was left heavily in debt for the Kansas City improvements, and while the circulation expanded (to a claimed 18,000 in 1922), there was still not enough revenue to justify resuming daily publication.<sup>14</sup> Peter himself blamed the financial problems not on the animosities of the war but on the agricultural depression that hit areas of the Midwest hard in the early 1920s; many subscribers could not pay their subscriptions, while costs of labor to produce the papers rose.<sup>15</sup>

These same conditions also placed the Omaha *Tribüne* itself in difficult circumstances, and in August 1926 Peter was obliged to reduce publication of the newspaper to three times a week. This was a bitter pill, for he had prided himself that the Omaha paper was now the only German daily west of the Mississippi (except for St. Louis). He recognized that a daily appealed to a quite different market from that of a triweekly or weekly. The daily paper could compete directly with the English-language dailies; it offered its readers information which some looked for every day, like market reports, radio and theater listings, police reports and obituaries. When publication was less frequent, many who got such information from the German newspaper might simply turn to the daily English-language paper instead. Weekly, semiweekly and triweekly newspapers tended to concentrate on news not found in the English-language dailies, particularly news of the German community. After about seventeen months, Peter had reorganized the publishing company, appealed for support from within the Omaha German community, and issued new stock to raise capital. In January 1928, he returned to daily publication of the *Tribüne*.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1930s Val Peter's plan to consolidate German newspaper publishing into regional newspapers came as close as it would ever get to fulfillment.<sup>17</sup> In the West, four newspapers, each published in its own location, covered the area between the Missouri and the Rockies. The Omaha *Tribüne*, which maintained daily publication, focused upon western Iowa and Nebraska. The St. Paul *Volkszeitung*, another daily acquired by Peter in 1937, carried news of Minnesota, the Dakotas and Montana. The Kansas City *Presse*, which continued as a weekly, reached into Kansas and western Missouri. The Denver *Colorado Herold*, a weekly acquired in 1939, covered the Rocky Mountain regions. Another newspaper was aimed at the Russian Germans (or more specifically Volga Germans) across the Great Plains. This was the *Welt-Post*, which Peter acquired in 1932 and published weekly at Lincoln, Nebraska; it contained local news from the Lincoln area as well as news directed at Russian Germans elsewhere.<sup>18</sup> Peter also published at Lincoln a widely-circulated agricultural newspaper, *Der Landmann*, formerly published at Milwaukee and acquired in 1930. Val Peter's newspapers clearly now comprised the dominant force in German-American publishing west of the Mississippi.



The same depression years also took the growing newspaper chain along the path to becoming nationwide in scope. In 1929 Peter purchased the failing Baltimore *Correspondent* and dispatched two of his sons to manage it. At the time, he expressed the belief that Baltimore, one of the oldest German-American centers, was due for a new period of industrial growth which would bring a new influx of German immigrants.<sup>19</sup> The original *Correspondent* had been founded in 1841, but had fallen on unhappy days after the First World War, when the Raine family, which had operated it since its founding, gave it up to other managers. Reduced to weekly publication after the war, it returned to daily circulation in 1935, six years after it was taken over by the Peter chain.<sup>20</sup> Peter also purchased the weekly Toledo (OH) *Express* in 1933 and the daily Buffalo (NY) *Volksfreund* in 1935. He also acquired in 1931 the *Katholisches Wochenblatt*, which at that time served as a German-language organ for the archdiocese of Chicago. The available circulation figures for all these newspapers are questionable and not always clear, but it is probably safe to say that in the late 1930s the output of the Peter chain as a whole was greater than the largest single German-American newspaper of the day, the *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herold*, which as separate papers published about 70,000 copies daily in 1934 and as combined into one paper published about 50,000 in 1940.<sup>21</sup>

Although the Peter newspaper chain was at its zenith in the 1930s, conditions that would bring about its waning were already at work. The Great Depression and the approach of the Second World War no doubt had some influence, but a far more important factor was the inexorable workings of demography. By the 1930s the Peter papers had absorbed the readership of virtually all the other German newspapers in the regions they covered; there were few newspapers left to acquire, especially in the West. The total pool of potential readers, without any prospect of increase by new immigration, was headed toward rapid decline. The great majority of first-generation Germans had come in the wave of the 1880s and mortality was now making swift inroads upon them. Peter had chosen to concentrate his efforts in areas where many second-generation Germans still adhered to the German language. But most of these second-generation Germans were children of the wave of the 1880s; by 1940, their average age was forty-eight and about 56 percent of them were over the age of fifty. Many of these second-generation Germans had learned their German before the First World War in parochial or public schools, whose German-language instruction programs declined sharply after the war. Younger German-Americans had therefore had less opportunity to learn German.<sup>22</sup> With immigration having declined to a trickle and little revival in sight, there appeared to be nowhere for the German press to go but downward.<sup>23</sup>



It was under such pressures that the Peter newspaper chain began in the late 1930s a process of consolidating nearly all production of their newspapers in the Omaha printing facility, leaving only small editorial and business-office functions in the outlying communities. The first paper to be brought to Omaha was the *Kansas City Presse* in 1937. Peter began to print the *St. Paul Volkszeitung* in Omaha in 1938, followed by the *Toledo Express* in 1939, and by the *Lincoln Welt-Post*, the *Buffalo Volksfreund*, the *Denver Colorado Herold*, the *Katholisches Wochenblatt* and *Der Landmann* in 1940. Before American entry into the Second World War, then, all of the publishing activities of the Peter enterprise had been relocated to Omaha, with the exception of the *Baltimore Correspondent*, which continued to be published in Baltimore under the supervision of two sons of Val Peter. The Baltimore paper, however, had to reduce its frequency from daily to semiweekly publication in June 1941.<sup>24</sup>

With the printing operation centered at Omaha, the character and content of the papers changed somewhat. Much of the editorial compilation of the paper was done at Omaha, meaning that there was a large element of shared material among all of them—national and international news, features, and syndicated material. Perhaps one or two pages of each newspaper might consist of local and regional news and advertising pertaining to the place for which the newspaper was published. The news was often less immediate, given the time consumed by shipping the copies from Omaha for distribution over distances as far as a thousand miles away.

Another trend becoming more discernible in the Peter newspapers since the 1920s was an increasingly noncommittal posture on many issues of national or state politics. The reason was primarily that the newspapers, as they tried to encompass Germans from different localities, had also to try not to offend Germans of different party persuasions by taking too partisan a stand. They needed all the readers they could find. Here there appears a great difference between the German journalism of the twentieth century and that of the mid-to-late-nineteenth century. In the late 1800s the German communities had many different divisions and differences, and the German press reflected those divisions. A given city might have a Democratic paper, a Republican paper, a Catholic-oriented paper, a Lutheran-oriented paper, a free-thinking paper, and perhaps others. The German community was still large enough to afford the luxury of conflict, and the German press very often exacerbated those conflicts.

Now, however, the press that very often represented the only German voice in a region would be striving to unite all Germans and to alienate none. The result was a general attitude of nonpartisanship and even a somewhat bland political stance. The Peter newspapers, for example, often refused to endorse candidates in elections during the



interwar period. Perhaps the one exception in the area of national elections was in 1940, when the newspapers came out editorially for Wendell Willkie.<sup>25</sup> This position probably reflected more than anything else the isolationism prevalent among Germans (of both parties) at the time. Willkie, although he certainly could not have been called an isolationist, was seen as less likely than Franklin D. Roosevelt to get the United States involved in the European war. In the next national election in the middle of the war (1944), the newspapers went back to simply printing pictures of both national candidates and endorsing neither.

After the process of consolidating the printing operations of the newspapers, the next logical step was the merging of them. This began in September 1941 when the *Katholisches Wochenblatt* and *Der Landmann* were merged; the same month the Omaha and St. Paul daily papers were merged as the *Volkszeitung-Tribüne*.<sup>26</sup> This left only one daily newspaper in the Peter enterprise. Wartime conditions brought further consolidation in 1942. In September of that year, Val Peter announced to the readers of the Kansas City *Presse* and the Denver *Colorado Herold* the termination of both these papers; readers with unexpired subscriptions would receive the *Volkszeitung-Tribüne* instead. In his statement to the readers, Peter answered the question why the papers were being ended:

The reason is simple—immigration stopped a number of years ago. . . . There will be no new immigration till after the war and although at that time hundreds of thousands of liberty thirsty souls will seek admission here, there is a great question whether we—the United States—will look with favor on such mass migration.<sup>27</sup>

The shutting down of some of his newspapers came at a time when the war also placed great pressures on Peter and on other German newspaper publishers; he felt harassed by agents of the Treasury Department, whom he believed to be hounding German-American publishers and who had searched his office for records and papers for two weeks in August 1942.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, advertising revenue had declined sharply; in October 1942 he pleaded with readers to renew subscriptions, since he could no longer depend on advertising revenues.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, the principal reason his enterprise was shrinking, as he acknowledged, was that the first-generation immigrants who were the real mainstay of readership were now disappearing rapidly.

At the end of the war, the Peter chain renewed in a modest way its strategy of acquiring new newspapers and developing them as regional ones. All the new newspapers acquired, however, were printed in the Omaha plant, with usually only one or two people in the outlying city to handle business and local reporting. The first effort of this sort was the



purchase in July 1945 of the Bismarck (North Dakota) *Staats-Anzeiger*, a semiweekly published since before the First World War. In the first number which he published (and printed in Omaha), Val Peter declared his intent to make it the organ of German-Americanism in the Northwest States: North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho and the Pacific States Washington, Oregon and California.<sup>30</sup> Realizing this ideal, however, proved difficult. Over the next few years the paper attempted to develop correspondents from locations in the Dakotas, Montana, Idaho, Oregon and elsewhere. Their correspondence often consisted of chatty personal letters, frequently of no great relevance to other German-Americans. Much of it seemed to reflect the perspectives of elderly Germans, and to show that there was little left of institutional German-America to report upon in these far-flung places. News reporting from Bismarck itself was sparse, as was the amount of local advertising—seldom more than a couple of columns in the whole paper. This perhaps revealed one of the economic difficulties of Peter's regional strategy. With papers now geared to a readership spread across many small and widely dispersed groups of German-Americans, advertisers in one locality might see no reason to pay to reach those subscribers outside their own local market. It is apparent from the pages of the newspaper that local advertising was dwindling rapidly.<sup>31</sup> Some of the same problems could be seen in the pages of the weekly *Welt-Post*, a paper dated at both Omaha and Lincoln but claiming to be the organ of the Volga Germans in the United States. This had indeed been the long-standing reputation of the paper, but after the Second World War the paper increasingly consisted of the same material seen in all other Peter newspapers. Usually one page carried items from Lincoln and other items concerning Volga Germans. There was other Great Plains news, but it was usually copied from the Omaha paper. In 1948 the long-standing editor, Dora Stauss, moved to California; her successor, while German-born, was not a Russian German.<sup>32</sup> The principal remaining tie to the Volga Germans was in Jacob Volz of York, Nebraska, who was the most frequent correspondent to the paper during the 1940s. Volz, who had immigrated from Russia in the 1920s and was now in his seventies, had little apparent contact with Volga German communities elsewhere in the West; his discussions often centered upon such subjects as boyhood memories of Russia, his own personal ailments (particularly hay fever), the home remedies his mother had used in Russia, comments on sermons heard in church, and the weather. After he died in 1950, there was little remaining in the paper of direct relevance to Volga Germans.<sup>33</sup>

Val Peter's most ambitious undertaking after the war was to start an entirely new German paper, the weekly *California Freie Presse*, in 1949 at San Francisco. San Francisco had had no German-language paper since the Second World War, and Peter apparently felt it was one of the most



likely centers of new immigration from Germany, if immigration was to revive. The undertaking may also reflect a perception that many elderly German-Americans were now moving to California from various parts of the West. The San Francisco paper was started after careful cultivation of the German organizations in the San Francisco area, and claimed to be sponsored by the United German-American Societies of San Francisco. It contained more local advertising and local news than did most of the Peter papers, evidence perhaps of the greater involvement with the German community. It remained one of the stronger papers in the Peter chain until the demise of the business in 1982. From its founding, the paper was always printed in Omaha and shipped by rail to California.<sup>34</sup> Peter apparently felt that cities on the East Coast like Baltimore and Buffalo might also be centers for renewed German immigration, but he was largely disappointed. The Baltimore paper continued to survive, if not prosper, through the agency of his two sons who continued to live there, to sell advertising, and to maintain contacts with the German community. The Buffalo *Volksfreund*, however, proved more difficult. In 1950 Peter made a concerted effort to shore up the declining circulation of the paper (now published twice weekly). He appointed a new manager, and made a trip to Buffalo in December of that year in order to gather together leaders of German organizations and ask for more readers and more support. The next month representatives of the united German organizations met, and promised to find a thousand new subscriptions for the paper. The paper made an apparent effort to cover the activities of the German organizations more thoroughly. Nevertheless the constituencies of these organizations themselves lacked new members and were in decline, and the paper continued to languish through the 1950s. The paper was reduced to weekly publication in early 1959.<sup>35</sup>

When Val J. Peter died in February 1960, his publishing enterprise still consisted of seven papers; with the exception of the Buffalo and Baltimore papers, most of them were in the West. The publications were taken over by his son William, along with other family members. During the 1960s they acquired other newspapers and brought them to the Omaha printing plant. These included papers in Milwaukee, Los Angeles, Chicago and Cincinnati. After purchasing several papers in 1964, the Peter enterprise claimed that the twelve papers it then owned constituted the largest German-language chain in the country.<sup>36</sup> In 1965 a new printing plant was opened at Omaha, with an offset press which produced the newspapers in tabloid format, standardized for all the newspapers. The Baltimore paper finally moved its printing to the Omaha plant in 1967. Increasingly the content of all the publications was the same, much of it boiler-plate feature articles and international news obtained from press sources in Germany. The meager local news and advertising material, the only variation from one paper to another, was usually confined to one



page. The failing economic health of the whole enterprise was portended by the dearth of advertising matter in most of the papers. The audience for the papers was now so thinly and widely spread that it was difficult to speak to any one German-American community in particular.

With further combinations and mergers, the Peter newspaper chain carried on until 1982. The entire chain, then consisting of eight newspapers, was sold to a Canadian firm, which would combine them with *America Woche*, published at Chicago.<sup>37</sup> William Peter, in a final statement, took note of the rising costs of production and postage; he also added, perhaps most significantly, that the circle of readers was dwindling, and that recent years had seen little increase of immigration that would bring any hope of future growth for the German press.<sup>38</sup> The long process of consolidating a newspaper business out of the dwindling structure of German ethnicity had finally reached its limit.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, 1975), 105-6, 117.

<sup>2</sup> The impressive phenomenon of the German institutional structure at the turn of the century is discussed more fully in James M. Bergquist, "German-America in the 1890s: Illusions and Realities," in *Germans in America: Aspects of German-American Relations in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. E. Allen McCormick (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1983), 1-14.

<sup>3</sup> Carl Wittke placed the peak of German publications' numbers at about 1892-93, at which point he counted 800 publications of all sorts, including 97 daily papers. No doubt the severe depression of the next few years helped to reduce those numbers. See Carl F. Wittke, *The German Language Press in America* (Lexington: Univ of Kentucky Press, 1957), 206-9; for other discussion of the numbers and circulation of these newspapers, see James M. Bergquist, "The German-American Press," in *The Ethnic Press in the United States*, ed. Sally M. Miller (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1987), 142-43.

<sup>4</sup> Nationally, 71 percent of second-generation Germans claimed German as their mother tongue in 1940. These figures are based on statistical samples from the census of 1940 and are summarized in a recent study by Walter D. Kamphoefner, "German-American Bilingualism: *cui malo?* Mother Tongue and Socioeconomic Status among the Second Generation in 1940" (paper read at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, San Francisco, 9 Jan. 1994).

<sup>5</sup> Wittke, *German Language Press*, 206-9; Joshua R. Fishman, Robert G. Hayden, and Mary Warshauer, "The Non-English and the Ethnic Group Press, 1910-1960," in *Language Loyalty in the United States*, ed. Joshua R. Fishman et al. (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), 51-74.

<sup>6</sup> Wittke, *German Language Press*, 272-74; Fishman et al., "The Non-English and the Ethnic Group Press," 51-74.

<sup>7</sup> Obituary in the *Volkszeitung-Tribüne* (Omaha and St. Paul), 26 Feb. 1960; Omaha *Tägliche Tribüne*, 25 June 1937. Before the First World War, Peter was also the leader in Nebraska of the National German-American Alliance; see Frederick C. Luebke, "The



German-American Alliance in Nebraska, 1910-1917," in his *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois, 1990), 14-30.

<sup>8</sup> Karl J. R. Arndt and May E. Olson, comps., *German-American Newspapers and Periodicals, 1732-1955: History and Bibliography* (Heidelberg: Quelle and Meyer, 1961), 151-67, 281-98. Five of the Kansas newspapers were separate editions of the *Wichita Herold*.

<sup>9</sup> *N.W. Ayer & Son's Newspaper Annual and Directory* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, 1914), *passim*. Editions of this guide will hereafter be cited as *Ayer* with date of publication. The information contained in them is usually for the year preceding date of publication. Generally speaking, circulation figures are based on the publishers' statements, are not audited, and may be open to question.

<sup>10</sup> For discussion of the anti-German pressures in Nebraska, see Jack P. Rodgers, "The Foreign Language Issue in Nebraska, 1918-1923," *Nebraska History* 39 (Mar. 1958): 1-22; and Clifford L. Nelson, *German-American Political Behavior in Nebraska and Wisconsin, 1916-1920*, University of Nebraska Publication no. 217 (Lincoln, 1972), 27-35.

<sup>11</sup> Bergquist, "The German-American Press," 148-49; Wittke, *German Language Press*, 261-74; Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1974), 241-43.

<sup>12</sup> *Ayer*, 1914, 1920.

<sup>13</sup> Arndt and Olson, 244.

<sup>14</sup> *Ayer*, 1923.

<sup>15</sup> *Omaha Tribune*, 24 May 1931.

<sup>16</sup> *Omaha Tribune*, 15 Nov. 1927; 10 Jan. 1928; 24 May 1931.

<sup>17</sup> Much of the discussion in this article about the development and decline of the Peter newspaper chain is based upon review of its published output, especially the 350 bound volumes of newspapers donated by the Peter family in 1993 to the library of the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies in Philadelphia. These volumes (with a few exceptions) cover the period from 1927 on and include only the papers actually printed in the Omaha plant.

<sup>18</sup> Russian-German-oriented newspapers, including the *Welt-Post*, are discussed by La Vern J. Rippley, "Two German-American Newspapers as 'Communication Satellites': *Die Dakota Freie Presse* and *Die Welt-Post* Preserved the Identities of Germans from Russia," in *The German American Press*, ed. Henry Geitz (Madison, WI: Max Kade Institute f. German-American Studies, 1992), 169-81. In the years after the acquisition of the paper by Peter, its ties to the Volga Germans became more and more tenuous.

<sup>19</sup> *Omaha Tribune*, 1 Oct. 1929.

<sup>20</sup> Edmund E. Miller, *The Hundred Year History of the German Correspondent, Baltimore, Maryland* (Baltimore: Baltimore Correspondent, 1941), 16-20.

<sup>21</sup> *Ayer*, 1935, 1941.

<sup>22</sup> Statistical analysis from Kamphoefner, "German-American Bilingualism: *cui malo?*," pp. 5-9 and tables 1 and 2. Kamphoefner notes that German-language retention was considerably higher in rural areas than in urban ones.

<sup>23</sup> Nationally, the German-born population declined from 1,608,814 in 1930 to 991,231 in 1950 (no figures are available for 1940); the native-born of German descent declined from 5,204,289 in 1930 to 3,998,840 in 1940 and to 3,742,615 in 1950. *Historical Statistics of the U. S.*, 116-17.

<sup>24</sup> Arndt and Olson, 187; *Toledo Express*, 13 Oct. 1939.

<sup>25</sup> *Kansas City Presse*, 30 Oct. 1940.

<sup>26</sup> *Katholisches Wochenblatt*, 4 Sept. 1941.

<sup>27</sup> *Kansas City Presse*, 10 Sept. 1942; *Colorado Herold*, 27 Sept. 1942. The *Toledo Express* was also terminated in 1943.

<sup>28</sup> Val Peter obituary in *Volkszeitung-Tribüne*, 26 Feb. 1960. The *Volkszeitung-Tribüne* ended daily publication and became a triweekly at the beginning of 1950; it became a weekly in February 1959.

<sup>29</sup> *Volkszeitung-Tribüne*, 8 Oct. 1942.



<sup>30</sup> Bismarck *Staats-Anzeiger*, 13 and 17 July 1945.

<sup>31</sup> These generalizations about the content of the *Staats-Anzeiger* are based on a review of the files from 1945 to 1965; with some thorough analysis of the contents of issues of 27 June 1946; 15 June 1952; 31 July 1959; and 19 Nov. 1965. Post office forms published in the issue of 13 Oct. 1967 stated that the paid circulation of the *Staats-Anzeiger* at that time was 1,236.

<sup>32</sup> *Welt-Post*, 16 and 23 Dec. 1948.

<sup>33</sup> Review of the *Welt-Post* files from 1945 to 1950; obituaries, issues of 30 Mar. 1950 and 6 April 1950. The *Welt-Post* and the Bismarck *Staats-Anzeiger* were merged in September 1970 and continued publication as one newspaper until 1982. The *Welt-Post's* paid circulation was stated in 1967 as 424 (issue of 13 Oct. 1967); the issue of 9 Oct. 1970 gave the paid circulation of the merged *Welt-Post und Staats-Anzeiger* as 927.

<sup>34</sup> San Francisco *California Freie Presse*, 15 April 1949; and review of issues of subsequent years. The paper's post office statement in the issue of 13 Oct. 1967 claimed a total paid circulation of 4,532. At that time, it carried more local news and advertising than the other Peter papers.

<sup>35</sup> Buffalo *Volksfreund*, 29 May 1950; 21 Dec. 1950; 15 Jan. 1950; 25 Feb. 1959.

<sup>36</sup> Buffalo *Volksfreund*, 5 June 1964.

<sup>37</sup> The eight remaining newspapers were the Omaha *Volkszeitung-Tribüne*, the Buffalo *Volksfreund*, the *Welt-Post*, the Milwaukee *Herold*, the Cincinnati *Kurier*, the California *Freie Presse*, the St. Louis *Deutsche Wochenschrift*, and the general weekly *Amerika Herold und Sonntagspost*.

<sup>38</sup> Omaha *Volkszeitung-Tribüne*, 28 May 1982; the same statement was published in all of the newspapers.