

# **“A NOBLE EXPERIMENT”**

The Story of the Germans and Americans

Who Transformed

A Dictatorship To A Democracy

Behind Barbed Wire

in the

United States of America

1943-1946

Book Proposal

**Lynn Ermann**

*CAPT. FELIX TROPSCHUH turned on his heel at the word "traitor," and took off across the yard. He wasn't waiting to see what the Nazis would do to him next. He already knew. They would pounce without mercy, smash his face, break his ribs, stomp him to a pulp. He had seen it before. It was this kind of savagery that made him despise Hitler, a secret hatred he confided only to the pages of his diary, the one stolen out from under his pillow by the Gestapo that morning and presented as evidence of his treachery minutes before. Now the accused man was running for his life, chased by a mob of Nazis, determined to make it to safety. After all, the Fuehrer was an entire ocean away. They were not in Germany anymore. They were in Kansas, in a U.S. camp for German prisoners of war.*

*Near the gate of Camp Concordia, Tropschuh saw his first chance to be rescued, a guard truck passing. The driver, an American, slowed for a few seconds, then screeched away. Tropschuh had even worse luck with the American camp commander, whom he begged for help. The commander returned him to his barracks to be beaten to a bloody pulp. Wolf Dieter Zander, a fellow POW, knew Tropschuh was in mortal danger. He ran to the Americans himself later that day and pleaded for the captain to be removed from*

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*the camp, to no avail. The Americans refused to believe Tropschuh's life was in any real danger. By 11 p.m. on that mid-October day in 1943, the "traitor" hanged himself in his cell. He was, according to U.S. military investigators, given a rope and forced to sign a suicide note that said only: "I voluntarily take leave of my life."*

America unwittingly brought a brutal dictatorship into its backyard during World War II: 370,000 German prisoners of war who began arriving in the Spring of 1943, fresh from defeats in North Africa, and with their political systems still very much intact. Captive and captor were strangers to each other then, and separated not just by a language barrier but also, unbeknownst to the Americans, by a wall of silence imposed on the German side through Nazi terror tactics. The outward complicity of the German POWs with their leaders—the heil Hitlers, Swastika displays, lockstep marching—led Americans to the natural assumption that every one of the prisoners was a devout Nazi in his heart.

Americans never could have imagined in 1943 that there were POWs who had been forced to serve in the military after being thrown in work camps for their outspoken opposition to Hitler, or that others had joined solely because refusing the draft altogether meant certain death. The Germans, for their part, also judged Americans by their actions. The way POWs were fed and housed exactly

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to the specifications of the Geneva Convention convinced many of these enemy soldiers that their American captors were fair.

Fearing the growing influence of the enemy, the Nazis stepped up their Gestapo techniques and targeted any POWs who did not truly support Hitler. This time, however, the victims of their brutality and the witnesses thereto saw an alternative to passively accepting their fate. They called out to the Americans they had by now come to trust and, if their trust was initially badly misplaced, it was eventually rewarded. Following the hanging at Concordia, anti-Nazi POWs rallied louder for protective measures, even writing letters to the American media, until their cries reached the White House itself. Thus began a partnership that would transform a dictatorship to a democracy behind barbed wire in the United States and, eventually, in Germany itself.

In 1944, Americans and anti-Nazis first started to identify dangerous Nazis and remove them from the general population at the POW camps. In this safer environment, the prisoners held democratic elections to elect their own leaders. A selected group of anti-Nazi German POWs, German exiles, and American intellectuals began printing German books that had been banned by Goebbels, as well as translated versions of books by American writers, translated American newspapers, and an original German newspaper for distribution within all the POW camps. Germans who had long been accustomed to

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Goebbels' one-sided propaganda were exposed to a staggering variety of differing opinions, often on the same page in the American newspapers. The Germans would learn that this ongoing debate among the different political factions in America is also the essence of a free country. Indeed, the men's cause to create and nourish their own free press within the camps would deepen and evolve into a strong desire to educate themselves and their fellow POWs in all facets of democracy, with the goal of returning to Germany to contribute towards rebuilding the country during the post-war period.

Their call for education/training was answered when America set in motion an unprecedented top-secret plan here in the United States to train a select group of anti-Nazis to be leaders in the new democratic Germany. In the summer of 1945, following V-E Day, a prisoner of war camp on Rhode Island became a thriving liberal arts college and a rarified utopia. Here, an idealistic corps of renowned American academicians hailing from Harvard, Cornell, Brown, Yale and The New School struggled, through lessons and by example, to impart the essence of a true intangible—democracy—to a select group of German prisoners of war at a crucial moment in their shared history. The Americans did not aim to 'create' men who parroted back a specific ideology, but rather to encourage and enable the men to be critical thinkers with a much harder-to-measure sense of civic responsibility. In defining this country, the teachers also

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had to address truth about racial inequality and present our country as an imperfect work-in-progress and criticism as both necessary and patriotic. It was an education that stood in stark contrast to the kind of indoctrination that the POWs had been exposed to in Germany. Here, the Germans were not told what to believe by professors who condescended to them from a pulpit; rather, captor and captive acted as equals and together discussed and debated the past mistakes of Germany and ideas for changing its future.

The remarkable school was truly the culmination of a mutual education between the German POWs and the Americans that began when the Germans first arrived on America's shores two years before.

The first part of the book will detail the singular experiment in democracy that occurred, initially by accident, within the controlled environment of these POW camps. This 'reconstruction success story' becomes a prism through which to view the actual reconstruction of Germany. I believe that the contrast between the singular experience of this transplanted 'country' in America and the early period of the actual military occupation in Germany is instructive. The latter section of the book finds the former German POWs returning to Germany, where they are now on the outside of the barbed wire looking in at an imprisoned population that is dealing with starvation conditions. This time, it will be the former German POWs who know that this 'military democracy' is a sham that in

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no way resembles true democracy, and it will be their voice that will speak for the true ideals of democracy and be the conscience of the new Germany. How can an institution that is essentially authoritarian in nature teach democracy by example? Can we have a chance to influence hearts and minds when the stomach is empty? We still face this problem.

“A Noble Experiment” is a nonfiction historical narrative that chronicles the connected stories of a select group of Germans who influenced and were influenced by the American democratization initiative and, through their stories of individual transformation, explores the conditions necessary to move men from political passivity to action. The characters include: **Wolf Dieter Zander**, an international businessman and opponent of Hitler who nonetheless saw no alternative but to report for duty when the draft notice came. In America, Zander first used his English skills to negotiate favors and privileges for his fellow POWs and then, in a moment of heretofore uncharacteristic courage, used them to plead with the Americans to protect fellow POW Felix Tropschuh (as described in the first page of the proposal). While Zander is unable to save Tropschuh, his action will identify him as a non-Nazi and, by 1944, he will be called the “leader of the anti-Nazis at Concordia” and will become involved with the life-threatening work of identifying the dangerous Nazis to the Americans. Zander and his group of anti-Nazis were integral in creating an ambitious high

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school and university at their camp to educate fellow POWs, and proposed the idea for the democracy schools themselves. **Horst von Oppenfeld** began as a farm boy whose land was appropriated by the Soviets. He credits Zander with introducing him to “mind opening impulses” at Concordia University and says that teachers at the democracy school set him on a path towards a career in humanitarian work. **Walter Hallstein**, a professor (and already in his 40’s at the time of his capture), had managed to advance rapidly in his academic career while still avoiding party membership by switching jobs every year. This shrewd decision, along with a passionate devotion to democratic ideals that he developed through democracy school in the United States, pushed him to the fore in postwar Germany. **Karl Kuntze** is a former schoolteacher, communist, and vocal opponent of Hitler who had been imprisoned for his beliefs, along with his wife, and then forced into service in Hitler’s fighting penal division. He continued his activism at Camp Breckenridge in the United States. Kuntze’s letter writing campaign to American journalists in the aftermath of Concordia drew attention to the problem of camp violence and to Kuntze himself, who worked with the Americans in a close but sometimes awkward alliance, creating original media for the camps and planning the democracy schools. **Alfred Neber** was a young enlisted man weaned on Hitler’s indoctrination when he arrived at the camp, but would later be influenced by the actions of all these other men and



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by America itself. Neber had been a passive unquestioning participant in the Nazi regime but began to question all he had known. Neber also saw the contradictions and sins of this country firsthand while on work duty for local farmers.

Neber's interest and democratic impulses were further encouraged by the media created by Kuntze and later by his experience at the last democracy school. Both Kuntze and Neber eventually became teachers in Germany, and taught a young generation, the "lost generation," to be questioning, independent-minded thinkers and active citizens.

The book also includes three German-Jewish characters brought into the camps to act as translator, intelligence man, and democracy school teacher, respectively. They offer a necessary critical voice and valuable perspective on both the POWs and the Americans, and complete the picture of a transplanted Third Reich Germany. **Thomas Naegele** is a young German-Jewish refugee when he is sent to Camp Indianola, specifically to work as a language interpreter in the American compound, though he comes to act as "cultural interpreter" for both the Germans and the Americans. Initially very cynical about the possibility of moving men to action, Naegele undergoes his own personal transformation alongside the POWs. It is through Naegele's experience that the reader will get the first behind-the-scenes views of the American compound and an inside view

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of the design behind the democracy school. (As with the others, Naegele also encounters the contradictions/hypocrisies in this country such as the experience of a Camp Indianola guard, a Japanese American man whose family is interned.) **Henry Arnhold**, a German-Jewish formerly wealthy financier from Dresden who worked as an intelligence man, was assigned to screen students who had already been singled out as possible anti-Nazis for the democracy schools, though he had no access to their party membership files in Berlin. His experience conveys the difficulty of determining the politics of the men, and his story, revealed later in the book, intersects remarkably with Zander's. **Henry Ehrmann** is a German-Jew who was imprisoned by Hitler for political activism in Germany and who went on to join the French resistance before escaping to the United States. Ehrmann became a teacher of German history at all three democracy schools and continued to correspond with his beloved former students once they returned to Germany and struggled to implement all they had learned.

In the pages that follow, I have outlined the proposed structure of "A Noble Experiment" to give a sense of the movement of the story:

PROLOGUE: "The Hanging"

The prologue will detail the Tropschuh hanging; this immediately engaging scene is the turning point of the story, and will be revisited in

subsequent chapters in greater detail.

## CHAPTER ONE: "Prisoner Of War"

Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, would later claim that the 10<sup>th</sup> Panzer division fought to the end with knives in hand-to-hand combat in North Africa, but Wolf Dieter Zander remembers it differently: "We were out of food and petrol," and waiting to be picked up by British forces. It was Lt. Zander, then 27 and an English speaker, who was elected to radio the British and work out the surrender on behalf of his entire division. Zander's fellow officer and friend, Horst von Oppenfeld, 30, drove their commander to the British lines on Cap Bon near Tunis. The commander, von Oppenfeld says, waved a makeshift white flag—a shirt tied to the tip of a carbineer—as they sped toward the British on a BMW motorbike. The date was May 12, 1943.

This chapter will describe the capture in more detail and within the broader context of Rommel's defeat: The British, pitying the captured Germans who had already walked 50 km in the desert heat, allowed their prisoners to drive to the camp in their own vehicles. On the way, the Tunisians greeted the enemy with facetious cries of 'Vive les Allemandes'. As 100,000 Germans and over 100,000 captured Italian POWs sat huddled on the ground at the base camp,

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the British, who were unprepared for these numbers, politely passed out tea and crackers and, for one night, it seemed all of the men were exhausted enough to forget that they were enemies. From there, the POWs were handed over to the French and traveled by rail to Casablanca, and then by ship to the United States. This chapter will also describe the voyage itself, ending with von Oppenfeld coming above deck just in time to see the Statue of Liberty looming large, a vision that he “will never forget.”

## CHAPTER TWO: “Basic Humanity”

The train rolled from New York to Kansas. Through the windows, Zander and von Oppenfeld stared at the vastness and surprising wealth of the enemy. At one point, one of the other POWs shouted that he was sure they were in Akron, Ohio, and everyone craned their necks to look at the rubber factories. “German propaganda wanted us to believe that the Americans were so short of fuel that they could not use their cars anymore,” von Oppenfeld remembers. “But now we see all these laborers arriving for morning shifts in big limos” and thousands more cars in the parking lots of the factories. “Then some dumb Nazi said: ‘Don't you know they placed those cars there just to impress you?’ He did not fool many of us,” says von Oppenfeld.

This chapter will show how the Nazi propaganda machine sputtered in the United States as Germans encountered contradictions to everything they had been told about America. I describe their first impressions of America and Americans. I will describe how they stepped off the train at Concordia, Kansas and found the entire town waiting on the platform to get a look at The Germans and how Von Oppenfeld was struck by the red-cheeked, healthy faces of the local farmers.

Camp Concordia sprawled across a pristine prairie, its “grandiose” scale alone impressive to POWs accustomed to makeshift bull-pens in bombed out cities. Surrounded by a high barbed wire security fence, spiked with guard towers, were two compounds, one for sergeants, non-com, and enlisted men and another for officers. The camp would eventually hold 1,700 officers and 600 enlisted men. Each barracks in the officer’s compound housed 40 men with four to a room: Oppenfeld and Zander’s two roommates were young, wide-eyed Klaus Burk, a friend from the 10th; and a forty-something man, “Muffi,” who smoked a pipe, spoke little, and whose real name they can no longer recall.

Their accommodations painstakingly met the requirements of the Geneva Convention, as did every other aspect of their treatment. “We were treated with basic humanity, very fairly” recalls von Oppenfeld, and this deeply impressed him and the others. The Convention dictated that the prisoners were to be fed

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the same rations in quality and quantity given to the “depot troops,” in this case the guards at their camp. Since America was not suffering war shortages, POWs would eat better than they had in years: “We had access to luxuries we had not seen in Germany since the beginning of the war: citrus, other fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, raisins, milk, butter, meat, fruit juice,” von Oppenfeld says. He and other prisoners gained so much weight from the plentiful food that their uniforms split down the rear; they patched them with wedges of material from U.S. uniforms. “Our rears made for a funny sight,” remembers von Oppenfeld, and they took to calling their patches “the Victory Wedge.” Their weight gain was also due to a sedentary lifestyle: under the Geneva Convention, only enlisted men could be sent out on work detail for local farmers or contractors; non-commissioned officers like von Oppenfeld and his friends could not be required to do any manual labor.

This chapter reveals how the POWs first learned the true democratic character of America through its treatment of them. It is this perceived goodwill that encouraged the anti-Nazis to rise to the surface and reach out to the Americans. The treatment of POWs in the U.S. will also contrast with the initially harsh U.S. treatment of the enemy in postwar Germany. (A chapter at the end of the book finds von Oppenfeld working for the U.S. Ministry of Agriculture and daily encountering Germans who are too hungry—some are

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literally starving—to be able to think about the future of their country.)

### CHAPTER THREE: “Building A Life, Behind Barbed Wire”

Life at Concordia was at first drab and small, reduced in scope to a few privileges—eating the plentiful food, listening to the radio, smoking cigarettes—and an obsession with attaining more. Zander was the messenger on these missions (a role he first earned when he secured bathroom stops for the prisoners on the train ride from Tunis to Casablanca). Within a short time of his arrival, Zander became the camp interpreter and developed a friendly relationship with John Sterling, the first American commander at Concordia, a “kindly old man” who was agreeable, if dangerously dim. I’ll describe these interactions and indicate that Zander, for his part, was initially only interested in securing a few amenities here and there that might make life more pleasant for the men. He had no greater ambitions—yet. In those early days, he stayed busy mainly to distract himself from worrying about his wife, from whom he had not received any letters since arriving at Concordia. (He would not hear news of her fate for almost two years.)

The later section of this chapter will describe in some detail how, through Zander’s wheeling and dealing, the officers of Concordia began to create a richer

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life for themselves: they arranged soccer games, built a theater where they held productions, established a camp newspaper, and, finally and most significantly, created a university. For the most part, von Oppenfeld thinks, the American attitude was “let the krauts keep busy with their little projects and they won't get into trouble.” The more patronizing the Americans were, the more Zander longed to tell them that they were not all Nazis. The Americans were sometimes accommodating, sometimes indifferent, and sometimes given to spontaneous, if peculiar, acts of generosity. When camp officials learned, for instance, that the leader of Rommel's personal band was at Concordia, they brought the rest of the band over from other camps so they could play together again.

As the months dragged on at Concordia, the German POWs sought out increasingly meaningful pursuits. As active soldiers, the men had been too preoccupied with hunger and fear to consider the implications of what they were doing or to consider the future, but here at Concordia, the open hours, relative comfort, and full bellies allowed the German POWs to reflect deeply about the past and the uncertain future.

Concordia University was the brainchild of Colonel Heyse, formerly Director of Military Planning for Rommel, but it was Zander who arranged the classes, coordinated the curriculums, and secured textbooks. Zander also proposed a high school for the youngest men at Concordia, who had belong to



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the Hitler Youth. Many of these men would graduate from the high school and progress well into their college studies during their two and a half years in the United States. Concordia University offered opportunities to the men that they could not come by otherwise: Germany was a class-based system, meaning the children of laborers or farmers rarely were able to obtain the kind of education afforded to children of a higher class. Here in America, the Germans were able to start over again and, albeit unconsciously, follow the path of the typical immigrant pursuing the 'American dream.'

Camp Concordia was divided between the prisoners who had been unable to start careers because they joined, or were drafted into, the military before completing their schooling and those who had worked in professions before being drafted. The latter—doctors, artists, lawyers, judges, and even a famous geologist—volunteered to teach the former in their areas of expertise. Zander taught English, French and—"with a total lack of humility"—lectured on 'Parliamentary Government Systems'. "In this last effort, I was a few hours ahead of the class," says Zander, who started each lesson with a warning: "No complicated questions, please." Heinrich Hendus, a former judge, taught the law courses.

Burk and von Oppenfeld were students. Von Oppenfeld had never attended college and his long apprenticeship on his parents' farm was now

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useless: their land in East Germany was in the hands of the Soviets. Not that he or anyone else voiced their worries about an uncertain future outside the barracks. To do so would acknowledge Germany's impending defeat—a dangerous point of view in a camp still dominated by Nazi officers and Nazi ideology. Nor did von Oppenfeld, Zander or Burk dare express their true feelings about Hitler, except among themselves. During the evening meals, they kept silent as the German colonel regaled them with an endless stream of propaganda about the 'evil intentions of the American enemy' and the latest 'reports' of Germany's supposed victories from the front.

Though reading an American newspaper could get a man beaten severely at Concordia, Zander secretly secured copies of *The New York Times*, *The New York Herald Tribune*, and even *Fortune*, which he read with his roommates in the barracks, and a radio which they kept tuned to the American stations for the 'real news.' I'll describe what the POWs heard in battlefield reports on their radios through the fall of 1943 and the journalists they came to trust, particularly Walter Winchell and Dorothy Thompson, whom they considered fair and impartial. I'll also describe what they heard about the growing controversy surrounding them, the German prisoners. Reports had come out from camps that the prisoners were being 'coddled,' and many Americans were furious about this 'special treatment.' (America was following the Geneva Convention to the letter for the

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protection of its own troops.) A number of incidents at other camps, involving public displays of Swastikas, had only confirmed that all the prisoners were devout Nazis, and 'incurable.'

#### CHAPTER FOUR: "The Secret Anti-Nazi"

Wolf Dieter Zander was born in Brandenburg, Germany, and was in the insurance business before the war. His wife was American, though he had never been to America, and he was accustomed to working with business associates from all different backgrounds, many of them German Jewish. As Hitler's grip tightened, he urged them to leave Germany before it was too late. "This Hitler is a monster," he said to one who replied: "I'm not going anywhere. My father served in WWI. I'm as German as anyone!" What could Zander say? His friend was as German as he was, only now the world was turned upside down. And the Nazis did come. They dragged the man away with his wife while Zander and Jane watched in mute horror from across the street. That night, and others, returned to him often at Concordia. So many of his friends, some German Jews, some French too, would meet the same fate, one by one, and Zander felt powerless to help them. He, too, stayed in the country too long, reluctant to leave his new home and to uproot his lovely new wife; and he too found that the

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window of opportunity to leave had closed. When the draft notice came for Zander, there was nowhere to go: those who refused to serve were sent to work camps or shot for treason. "I was drafted and I went," says Zander with a slight shrug that belies his sad expression. Then, softly, and almost to himself, he adds: "I fought for a man I hated."

This chapter will explain in detail the background of the main characters at Concordia and discusses how they came to serve Hitler: Victor Klemperer's "I Will Bear Witness" shows how Jews managed to stay in Germany even as pressure mounted against them, how they went along with each new oppressive rule, thinking it would be the last. I intend to point out through the stories in this chapter that many in the rest of the German population were doing this as well, and show how they found themselves trapped in the system. Did they feel personally responsible for their actions or did they view themselves as victims, too?

Horst Hendus was a former judge and opponent of Hitler who joined the army partly to avoid joining Hitler's party. Though Hugo Mueller opposed Hitler, he had children and a wife to support and thus joined the Nazi party in 1937 when party membership was required in all professional fields. His wife, who had up until that point been a teacher and a second breadwinner, had been forced to quit due to the new regulations forbidding women to work in the Third

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Reich. Meuller was drafted in 1939. Young Klaus Burk was the son of educated anti-Nazis, a doctor and a lawyer. His own professional prospects had been cut short by the war; I'll describe his limited education as a member of the Hitler Youth. Felix Tropschuh was a 30-year-old engineer from a small German town and a reluctant soldier, according to his nephew, whose duty in the Afrika Corps was to fix and maintain the tanks and equipment. In letters home, which I will quote, he agonized over the morality of what he was doing. If he didn't fix the equipment, could he end the war sooner and destroy Hitler? The only problem with this line of action, Tropschuh wrote, was that not doing his job properly just meant getting his fellow soldiers killed, many of whom were also victims of this terrible dictatorship. At Concordia, he stopped writing letters out of fear and, fatefully, committed his thoughts instead to his diary. Von Oppenfeld, by his own account, was still "just a farm boy" when he became a POW, though Zander says he had sensed von Oppenfeld's good nature and potential right away and put his faith in him. Von Oppenfeld recalls that his world up until Concordia had been limited to what he had seen while in the military foreign service: "Except for war service in foreign countries—not the best way to learn about other countries—my knowledge of the world had not expanded beyond the German province of Pommern. In my rural setting, I had little contact with the outside world. Accessible media were confined to radio and newspapers, both

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government controlled.” He had no context in which to place the disturbing events that had unfolded around him, how Hitler ‘won’ the election by beating up his opponents at the polling booths, how one by one those opponents and church leaders were jailed, how associating with local Jewish shopkeepers and merchants was forbidden so that his old friends became strangers.

Von Oppenfeld was drafted in 1939 and sent to the Russian front. I’ll describe one incident he witnessed there in some detail. Briefly, he heard shots while passing through a Russian town with his battalion and says he was “shocked” to learn that the SS had just shot some Jews on the other side of town. “What is the alternative? We lose the war?” his commander told him later when von Oppenfeld questioned what he had seen. Von Oppenfeld put it out of his mind. Obviously, the commander’s reasoning was nonsensical and von Oppenfeld must have known that Jews were being killed. His own version of the scene, however, will show how he was able to detach himself from the fact that he was part of the same organization that was committing the act. Only at Concordia did he begin to think deeply about his silent complicity. Here, behind barbed wire, his worldview was broadening through conversations with Zander and his exposure to the American media.

The events of October 18, 1943 could have easily extinguished von Oppenfeld's nascent quest for answers but, instead, they transformed a ‘farm

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boy' into a full fledged anti-Nazi.

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It was minutes after the 7:30 a.m. roll call on the morning of October 18, 1943, and the American commander had left the compound. One of the German Colonels was now alone with his men. He crossed his arms and stared grimly into their faces, looking up and down the line. He knows something, thought von Oppenfeld anxiously. What could he know? Could he have found out about the *Tribune*? Had he heard what they whispered in their barracks late at night? Then von Oppenfeld discovered he was standing just feet away from a condemned man.

“Captain Tropschuh!” shouted the commander, “Forward ten paces.”

Tropschuh trembled as he stepped out of the line.

The colonel plucked a tiny book out of his jacket and held it high with a pronouncement. But Tropschuh was gone.

A Nazi pack gathered and set off in pursuit.

Von Oppenfeld returned to his barracks, in despair, to talk with Zander, whom he learned was already on his way to the American compound.

In vain, that afternoon, Zander pleaded with Sterling to transfer Tropschuh out of the camp immediately for he would surely be dead by morning. But no matter what Zander said, the American commander found it

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impossible to believe Tropschuh's life was truly in danger.

"We have Republicans and Democrats," he told Zander, "but we don't go around killing each other."

"Yes," Zander replied in exasperation, "but this is a dictatorship."

Zander begged him to put Tropschuh in protective American custody.

With a patronizing sigh, Sterling called in one of the German Colonels, a man of indeterminate politics, and right there in front of Zander asked if he thought Tropschuh was in any danger. The German Colonel dismissed the threat. He smiled agreeably at Sterling and looked darkly at Zander. That night, Zander returned from the compound, and von Oppenfeld watched him wordlessly remove a golf club from the closet and stash it under his bed. Within two months, two more men would be forced to commit suicide at Concordia before the "atmosphere of terror," as Zander put it, would change for the better.

#### CHAPTER FIVE: "The Troublemaker"

Karl Kuntze noted the first Concordia 'suicide' in his diary on October 19, 1943. The news must have traveled overnight to Camp Breckinridge in Kentucky instantly sending a chill through the anti-Nazi contingent. Kuntze's diary was also filled with strong anti-Hitler feelings, page after page of them. But this



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former schoolteacher had no fear of being 'outed' by the rabid Nazis at Breckinridge. Everyone there already knew he was a devoted anti-fascist. Kuntze and his friends were part of the famed 999<sup>th</sup> Penal Battalion, the division of the Afrika Corps that was comprised entirely of prisoners who had been serving time in Hitler's work camps before being released and forced to serve in the front lines as a shield for the rest of the elite Afrika Corps. The majority of these men had been jailed for being vocal, active ideological opponents of Hitler. These were the men who were beaten at the voting booths or rounded up on street corners for distributing anti-fascist pamphlets. Kuntze became disenchanted with democracy and turned to communism. He became a teacher at an experimental communist school in 1931. He and his wife joined the underground Red Fighters to fight the rise of fascism. Both were arrested for subversive activities. His two years in a work camp only strengthened his convictions and determination to fight fascism. Private Kuntze and his fellow POWs were captured in Tunisia at the same time as the Concordia men and brought to the United States.

I am in the process of having Kuntze's diaries translated and will be interviewing his son to learn more about the background of this unlikely activist, and to flesh out his character, his humanity, for readers. (In between the political rhetoric, he kept tabs on his son's birthdays each October 9<sup>th</sup> and worried about

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his wife Marianne.) This chapter will not revisit the details of camp life which were already laid out in the Concordia sections, but will focus on the issues unique to this group: The 999 men immediately started asking the Americans to pull them out of the general population, but the Americans responded to their pleas by calling them 'troublemakers.' Kuntze will be sharply contrasted to Zander who, with his mild German accent and cheerful disposition, charms the Americans from the start, and will ultimately change the system from within. The Americans at Camp Breckinridge were, by contrast, initially irked by the noisy protestations of Kuntze to the point that they actually favored the disciplined Nazis over the 'deserters.' "We broke our oath of allegiance and that makes us suspect," wrote Kuntze. As threats mounted against the anti-Nazis, there were reports of violence at other camps culminating in the Concordia hanging. No one had yet been killed at Breckinridge and apparently the Americans wanted to keep it that way.

Within a week of the Concordia incident, the American commander at Camp Breckenridge volunteered to segregate anti-Nazis within the camp for their protection and asked all anti-Nazis to come forward. Kuntze would give lectures at the camp to convince more men to take an anti-Nazi stand. Out of 2,000 men, 200 came forward (a diverse group of men from all backgrounds: communists, social democrats, Catholic centrists, and previously apolitical farm

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boys, as will be described to readers). This was a significant number considering these men had to be willing to brave constant death threats—but not nearly high enough to make the solution an effective one.

Kuntze recognized that it was not possible to operate a two-party system (anti-Nazi and Nazi) within the brutal dictatorship of the camp. He insisted that the solution was to either segregate the anti-Nazis into their own camp or start removing the rabid Nazis to make the entire camp safer. Kuntze was further infuriated by the continuing preferential treatment the Americans showed the Nazis, at one point allowing them to march through town on their way to church singing the Horst Wessel song, a fascist war cry. The commander spoke no German so he had no idea that the Nazis were singing about the brown shirts and victory.

There were only a few Americans whom Kuntze had come to truly respect during his time at Breckinridge: radio newscaster Walter Winchell; famed columnist Dorothy Thompson whose work he had read in *The New York Herald Tribune*; and Gerhard Seger, the editor of an anti-Nazi German newspaper in New York that was available at Breckinridge (to anyone who was willing to risk life and limb).

The chapter will end with Kuntze's last desperate attempts to draw attention to his cause: through a letter writing campaign to all of these

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journalists, one that would have significant impact on the men's lives, both present and future.

## CHAPTER SIX: "The Accidental Anti-Nazi"

This chapter will focus on Alfred Neber. An average enlisted man who had never before given much thought to politics, Neber was now becoming a nonbeliever in Nazi propaganda through firsthand exposure to America.

Neber was sent out on 'work detail' for the first time a week after arriving at Camp Algona in Iowa and, over the following months, he and his fellow POWs husked corn, picked turnips, and shelled peas. He even did odd jobs for local contractors, making roofs and so forth. According to the Geneva Convention, enlisted POWs could be employed by local businesses and farmers as long as they were paid for their services. (Concordia was chiefly an officers camp and, as mentioned before, officers did not have to work.) This chapter details how, daily, over many months, Neber looked out across the Nebraska plains and saw an untouched landscape that was nothing like the burning wasteland Goebbels described. I'll describe his interactions with the particular farmers he encountered along the way (whom he found warm and easygoing), including their conversations and the way the men would sing 'Don't Fence Me

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In, ' the Bing Crosby hit of the year in POW camps, as they worked. In a larger sense, Neber represents the average enlisted man who became greatly influenced by the actions of both Zander and Kuntze. He will eventually participate in the last democracy school.

I hope to include [or replace this example with] an enlisted German POW who worked on a farm in the South (and witnessed Jim Crow). See chapter 14.

#### CHAPTER SEVEN: "The Interpreter"

When Thomas Naegele fled Germany in 1938, the Jewish refugee never imagined that, six years later, he would be ministering to the Nazis through barbed wire, at least not with him on the outside. In early 1944, Naegele was dispatched to Camp Indianola in Nebraska to work as an interpreter in the American compound. He was one of hundreds of German Jewish refugees used for this purpose in what he calls the earliest, if inadvertent, phase of the reeducation program. It was a bizarre reversal of fortunes, thought Naegele, whose experience had already made him old far beyond his 20 years. Though he did not relish the irony, there was something bittersweet and strangely appropriate about his being reunited with his former countrymen in this manner, and about Jews being a presence again in a transplanted Germany. Jewish

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shopkeepers, tailors, teachers, and financiers had become such a vital presence in so many communities. Now, these German POWs were turning to a Jew to help them create recreational activities, fill their libraries, and, finally, to teach them about America. Often, Naegele wondered if he was a reminder to the prisoners of “all they had lost” when they pushed out the Jews. (Much later, it will be his camp that comes forward and delivers a statement of horror and shame regarding the concentration camps.)

Naegele's arrival signals one more step in the direction of mutual understanding between the Germans and the Americans, for he acted as a 'cultural interpreter' for both. In this chapter, I'll detail Naegele's early experiences at Indianola, including the first day, when a local builder is trying to get a group of POWs to help him move a modular building and asks Naegele to be the interpreter, an undertaking that proves far more complicated than anticipated and that is executed with hurried shouts in German and English —“It's falling!”—and completed with a cheer all-around. (Naegele later painted this scene and others depicting his Indianola experience.) He will ride into town with a few of the men on another day to help them pick out curtains for the camp theater, visit a music shop with another group eager to find instruments for their ensemble, and help a small-town carpenter, Alfred Freidank, locate piles of scrap-wood so he can make cabinets. (Eventually, Freidank also makes picture frames

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for Naegele, who is a painter.) It is Naegele who will answer the POWs' questions about this unfamiliar new country. His years under Nazi oppression make him thick-skinned to the taunts of some of the Nazis. "I'm not going to deal with that Jew," one told Naegele's superior, who, to Naegele's delight, retorted harshly: "You're in America now!"

Naegele's father was a German Christian and his mother Jewish. His father's status had enabled his family to linger longer than most, as each new Jewish code passed over them, but they all grew increasingly fearful for their mother's fate. I'll detail his experience living as a 'German,' how his classmates, one by one, became Hitler Youth, and his teachers struggled to protect him. He was tearfully reunited with one former teacher, his beloved divinity schoolteacher in the library of a camp he briefly visited in 1945. Naegele was sent to England to complete his schooling while his mother and grandmother fled to the United States. They were all reunited in 1940. Had the Naegele family stayed in Stuttgart long enough for him to reach 17, he would have been drafted and either killed, or a POW himself. Half-Jews could not attain a status above private so they had typically been relegated to the frontlines as with the 999 division. (Occasionally, Naegele even came across half-Jew soldiers who sought his advice. "I was confronting a guy who but for the grace of God could have been me," he recalls).

Through the course of the book, Naegele goes through a personal transformation alongside the POWs: At the start of the book, Naegele is cynical about the possibility of moving men to action, partly from witnessing the passivity of his own family. As Naegele works with the POWs, first at Indianola and later at one of the democracy schools, he is witness to—and learns to believe in, ultimately—man’s capacity to change, to positively impact the future.

At night at the camp, he explained the “Krauts” to his fellow Americans. He defined the term ‘Nazi’ and told them how Hitler had ‘won’ by a minority by beating up voters at the ballot boxes and throwing his political opponents in concentration camps. Naegele told the Americans that there were ‘good Germans’ who were caught up in the madness. He told them that there were German Jews like himself who had to flee their own country and about the family he had left behind. Indeed, Naegele's experience gave the Americans running the camps an even more nuanced look at Hitler's regime, and will offer the reader the same.

In describing Naegele’s interactions with the Americans at Indianola, the chapter will also give the reader a glimpse inside the American compound. One Japanese-American guard was the son of parents who had been sent to Japanese internment camps, while another was a depressed alcoholic deemed unfit for service abroad. Still others were merely unqualified officers with minimal



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training, as the rest of the country will soon learn.

#### CHAPTER EIGHT: "On The Record"

"Beserk Captain Shoots Wife of Col Sterling" was the headline of the story that ran in *The Concordia Blade-Empire* a week after Tropshuh's death. Two American captains at Camp Concordia became engaged in a drunken scuffle at the officers club and when Colonel Sterling's wife tried to intervene, a gun went off and she was accidentally shot in the stomach. She survived, but the incident highlighted the shocking incompetency of the Sterling administration. Nosey Greene, the aptly named unrelenting *Blade* editor, also reported that there was a "country club" atmosphere in the American compound: guards arrived for work drunk or not at all. The shooting incident occurred just four days after Tropshuh's hanging and, unbeknownst to the Concordia POWs, it was this bizarre incident, not the hanging, that first brought investigators to the camp. Once there they learned of the earlier incident. This led to the installation in December of a new highly trained and German-speaking regime who were still unable to prevent a second suicide despite their best efforts. All this was reported in the *Blade's* story a week later. "Fear Causes German Prisoner Suicide" detailed how Private Francis Kettner had been put into protective American

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custody after being booed in the enlisted man's mess hall and expelled from the "German fellowship" in kangaroo court. That night, a Nazi still managed to relay a message to Kettner telling him that if he did not kill himself that night, his family back home would be killed. The Americans found him the next morning, dead on his bunk, his wrists sliced open. This time, the camp commander decided to release the information to the media both about this suicide and Tropschuh's hanging. News reached the media at large, which was already receiving reports from other camps, though these stories would be censored from camp newspapers.

In March, Walter Winchell delivered a story on the Nazi reign of terror at Camp Breckinridge and condemned the Americans for allowing the Nazis to dominate. Winchell described the Horst Wessel incident, calling it an embarrassment. His sources: Kuntze and others in the anti-Nazi 'party' whom, he reported, had just been safely relocated to another camp altogether. I will quote the Winchell newscast.

Then, on April 12 and 13, 1944, *The New York Herald Tribune* ran a two-part story by journalist Dorothy Dunbar Bromley on Breckenridge, for which she interviewed their new commander (who had taken over in December), prisoners, and the departed anti-Nazi party. One story pointed out that there was only a single German-speaking member on the staff of the American compound, while

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the other story described the history of the Nazis and anti-Nazis at the camp. Though the vocal group of anti-Nazis had been relocated, they and the American officers were sure that there were many other anti-Nazis who were afraid to come forward. The Americans had begun a process of rooting out the Nazis and sending them to a hardcore Nazi camp in Alva, Texas, to make the environment safer for the others as best they could—but the men who could identify the Nazis were now out of the camp. Only ten days after Bromley's stories ran in the *Tribune*, Dorothy Thompson addressed the need for camp reform in her column 'On the Record,' the most-read syndicated column in America. The famed journalist condemned the Americans for favoring the well-behaved Nazis and ignoring the anti-Nazis, going so far as to say that America was giving Nazis the opportunity to strengthen their ideological grip on the minds of the other prisoners.

The chapter will detail the media coverage of the camps, quoting a few stories, and describe the behind-the-scenes politicking of the journalists involved, for the journalists are the second major catalysts for free expression in the book and represent the free speech that is afforded Americans, and will soon be afforded the Germans. The chapter will give a sense of the background of some of these journalists/activists. Thompson and her peers filed their first stories during the worst depression in the nation's history, and rose to prominence while

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covering the most ambitious social reforms in the nation's history. Many had also spotted the danger of fascism early: in 1931, Thompson interviewed an up-and-comer named Hitler and sounded an alarm in her articles, which led to her being kicked out of Germany by his regime and starting her famous column here in America. While many of her fellow journalists and even FDR himself were sticking to an isolationist policy, Thompson lobbied hard in her new syndicated column for American intervention in Nazi Germany. In 1942, her life and her tempestuous relationship with Sinclair Lewis were also immortalized onscreen by Katherine Hepburn in *The Woman of The Year*, so that by the Spring of 1944, Thompson was the second most famous woman in America. She was one of the few female journalists to reach such prominence. Her friend Bromley's work was always relegated to the 'women's activities' page though her recent POW scoop had been an exception. Bromley, at that time, was best known for the two books she had written on birth control and for her involvement in all aspects of the women's rights movement.

In the Spring of 1944, Thompson and Bromley took the problem of camp violence directly to Eleanor Roosevelt, the most famous woman in America that year, and begged her to take some kind of action to democratize the POW camps. Much to their consternation, the two journalists would hear nothing regarding any potential outcome of that meeting for over a year. In May, Thompson and a

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number of her peers formed a committee of concerned Americans to promote the reeducation of POWs. The committee was headed by Gerhard Seger, who continued to correspond with Kuntze (the letters are at the International Institute of Social History in the Netherlands). It was clear by now that Germany was losing the war and that the country would be occupied by the Allies and transformed to a democracy. But a second force concerned the members as much as the negative influence of the Nazis—communism—for the members anticipated a battle of ideologies between the East and West zones of the Allied occupation in Germany. If America did not encourage their prisoners to learn about democracy, they might 'go East' when they returned home. This debate continued through the next sixteen months, for the journalists were unaware that their call to action had been heard and was being answered, in secrecy.

Unbeknownst to Bromley and Thompson, Eleanor Roosevelt had been deeply moved by their impassioned pleas and wasted no time responding. She called Maxwell McKnight, chief of the Administrative Section of Prisoner of War Camp Operations, and invited him to the White House for dinner. Midway through a relaxed, pleasant meal, the First Lady reportedly turned to McKnight and said: "I've been hearing the most horrible stories from Dorothy Thompson and Dorothy Bromley about all the killings that are going on in our camps with these Nazi prisoners. I was told that you would be able to tell me whether there

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was truth to these stories." This conversation led to another, which led to a tete-a-tete with her husband, Franklin. "Imagine, the Nazis controlling the ideological thought process in our backyard!" she reportedly declared to FDR who then arranged a trip to the Pentagon. The Prisoner of War Special Projects Division (SPD) of the Provost Marshall's Office, which was assigned to the reeducation effort, started looking for a loophole in the Geneva Convention which forbade outright 'indoctrination,' or anything that would allow them to introduce the prisoners to a new ideology, and found it in the summer of 1944: prisoners could be provided with "intellectual diversion," which could mean books, magazines, or movies, but not outright teaching until after V-E Day. While the SPD was working out the details, a new wave of German prisoners was arriving in the States, and these men would help loosen the Nazi grip at the camps, if inadvertently, by spreading a message: Germany is losing the war.

#### CHAPTER NINE: "The 'Deserters'"

The prisoners who arrived at POW camps in the Spring and Summer of 1944 quickly learned not to speak openly about their disastrous defeats in Europe or even the possibility of defeat. They didn't have to: their bedraggled uniforms and wan faces alone contradicted the rosy Nazi propaganda. In this chapter, I'll

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describe the arrival of these new POWs at Concordia on the first day, particularly how they were greeted with suspicious glares by the hardcore Afrika Corps Nazis and their disorientation during the evening mess hall Nazi 'news report' of Victory on every front. I'll focus on one POW, Heinrich Treichl, a longtime friend of Zander and von Oppenfeld. The chapter will chronicle how Treichl and the other anti-Nazis continued to build up Concordia University, becoming increasingly ambitious and eager to change the environment at Concordia as best they could within the still-dangerous camp.

Zander pulled Treichl aside upon arrival to fill him in on what had occurred in the previous months at Concordia. Treichl learned, with horror, about the hanging of Tropschuh. He learned that, as far as Zander could tell, that death had at least resulted in this new and better American administration. (Zander didn't know about the second suicide in the other compound or about the shooting of Sterling's wife.) Zander also told him that the new German-speaking commander was more intelligent and sympathetic and, where Sterling had been indiscriminately friendly to all the Germans, Commander Lester Vocke had sought out connections with anti-Nazis like himself. From the investigation, Vocke may have known that Zander had come forward in Tropschuh's defense and that he was an ally. While some of the worst Nazis had been removed, including the colonel, Zander believed that a full investigation of Tropschuh's

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death had not been pursued in the immediate aftermath—he knew far too many Nazis remained, and that they now suspected him and anyone associated with him. Treichl was cautioned to never leave the barracks after dark, not even to go to the bathroom without a club if he could not locate one of the anti-Nazis as an escort.

Treichl was a deserter. He had been an Austrian lawyer and blue-blood with deep roots in the Vienna community; his grandfather had built many of the most famous and beautiful buildings in the city, including the cathedral and the Natural History Institute. Treichl himself was a devout Catholic but he was also a quarter Jewish on his grandmother's side, though she was a convert. As the anti-semitism increased, the whole family worried about her well-being and, finally, Treichl's father devised a method of assuring her safety. He raised doubts about her parentage with the authorities, implying that she may very well have been the illegitimate child of Aryans. He was able to have her 'tested' at that same Natural History museum that had been built by their family and that was now the headquarters of a perversion of science. Treichl's grandmother sat perfectly still, trying to hide her terror, as a team of men in lab coats measured her forehead and other facial features. They (wrongly) declared her Aryan, though so many who passed through those halls would not be so connected or so lucky. This determination had other unforeseen consequences. Treichl had just



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been drafted and had planned on getting through the war as a private with as little responsibility as possible until he could find an opportunity to desert. Once his grandmother was tested, he received a notice in the mail, stamped with the Reichstag eagle, that informed him that he had been promoted to officer because he was now of completely pure blood. Surely, this lunacy could not last long, he thought. How could Hitler possibly separate the Jews from the rest of the population? Amongst his friends, the educated elite of Vienna, intermarriage was so common that the Jews were like a fine thread woven tightly through the community. What Treichl did not know was that Hitler was going to rip that fabric apart.

Treichl met von Oppenfeld in 1942 while the two were working for Colonel Klaus von Stauffenberg, a man whose name would be known to the world by the end of the summer of 1944. I'll briefly describe that experience, and how Stauffenberg was friendly to them but opaque. Only two months after Treichl's arrival at Concordia, Stauffenberg tried to kill Hitler with a bomb placed strategically under the Fuhrer's desk, unsuccessfully of course, and Stauffenberg and his accomplices were executed as traitors. Neither Treichl nor von Oppenfeld had any inkling of Stauffenberg's beliefs and still don't know whether his actions were a result of anti-Nazi beliefs or political ambition.

Upon his arrival at Concordia, Treichl enthusiastically threw himself into

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the projects Zander had begun, particularly the University. Treichl taught French and History during the day and stayed up late into the night helping Zander strategize about how to make the school run more smoothly and secure textbooks. Because there was no way to teach anything but Nazi ideology, Zander tried to keep the coursework focused on utilitarian courses. By the fall of 1944, Concordia University was offering an eclectic roster of 300 courses, including Historical Theology, Physics, Physiological Chemistry, Electrotechnics, Book Binding, German Literature, Sculpture, General Civil Law, Creditor-Debtor Civil Law, Penal Justice, Bookkeeping, Management and Balances, Farm Management, Embryology, Parasitology & Protozoology. Oppenfeld and Burk left their barracks each morning with chairs folded under their arms, for the classes were held wherever space was available that day. I'll briefly describe their class experiences and how, at night, they continued to learn about America through radio broadcasts and newspaper stories and lively conversations between Treichl and Zander, conversations that would ultimately change the future of Germany itself.

#### CHAPTER TEN: "The Spirit of Kearney"

No barbed wire surrounded Fort Kearney. No watch-towers loomed

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above. The sky was open, crisp New England blue, and soft breezes swept through the barracks. True, the location itself was escape-proof—an island in the middle of Narragansett Bay in a remote part of Rhode Island—but Kuntze suspected the choice of Jamestown served more to keep prying locals away from the top-secret mission underway here than to contain him and the other eager participants. Kuntze's letter writing campaign had urged the Americans to investigate the violence in the POW camps, but it had also made them aware of a singular resource within the camps: skilled, passionate anti-Nazi men like Kuntze and his friends from the 999<sup>th</sup> Division, who were determined to fight the Nazis. Thus, a group of selected anti-Nazi prisoners of war, German refugees, and Americans had been called here to translate books, screen movies, create book lists for POWs, and compile an original German newspaper for distribution to the camps. Yet, beyond the proscribed official parameters, the Germans here all felt that their mission signified far more: to create the first free German press since Hitler came to power and, by doing so, to liberate the minds of their fellow Germans.

This chapter describes the work of The Factory, as this group called themselves, and introduces a few of the Germans and Americans involved, most of whom will later turn up as students and teachers at the democracy schools. Kuntze was the Director of Studies at Kearney and, in this capacity, he both

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monitored, and participated in, the work of his fellow POWs in all different departments. Through him, I will cut to various characters and then focus in on a few individuals like Alfred Andersch, a deserter and former Dachau inmate who began his renowned (in Germany) literary career at Kearney; Heinz Schroeder, a fellow 999 man and devout communist; and Curt Vinz, a former publisher who was put out of business by Goebbels. I'll also describe the Americans, a remarkable group of professors from top schools, activists/intellectuals all: Colonel Edward Davison, the published poet who directed the entire team; Henry Ehrmann, the German Jewish refugee and French-Resistance fighter who had worked at the New School; T.V. Smith, the philosopher/politician and author of books on American life; and Howard Mumford Jones, Harvard dean and noted thinker.

There were built-in conflicts at Kearney that served to better define their mission: The American team had selected most of the Germans from among the 999th division. The 999 men had a proven track record of activism in Germany which made them singularly reliable anti-Nazis, though their radical, in some cases communist, views also made them peculiar bedfellows for the Americans. The Germans were also still captives, even if they had volunteered for this particular mission. To deal with the latter problem, Americans and Germans would, by mutual agreement, act not as captor and captive, but as equals at all

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times. Both Germans and Americans moreover agreed to ignore ranks within their own armies so that a private in either army could contradict an officer in either army. I'll describe how the Germans and Americans also agreed through many discussions and debates that the guiding compass in choosing and creating education materials would be 'truth.' As long as they presented America with all its flaws and without any propagandizing, the program would never verge on indoctrination and, furthermore, another message would be communicated: this is a country where it is okay to criticize the system, in sharp contrast to Hitler's Germany.

This chapter might start with or cut to a description of an actual editorial meeting for *Der Ruf* ("The Call"), the original newspaper the men were producing at Kearney. I'm getting the details on the editorial meetings from Kuntze's notes and from Henry Sussman, a German Jewish translator who worked on *The Call*. Kuntze was in the company of some of the top writers in Germany, including Alfred Andersch, Gustav Hocke, and Hans Werner Richter. The latter two were established writers in Germany while 25-year-old Andersch would find his muse at Kearney. Overseeing this group of German prisoners of war was Walter Schoenstadt, an exiled German writer who was now a naturalized American officer. I will cut back in time at a few points to give some background on how each of these men was influenced by the burning of books

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and indoctrination methods. It is necessary to have this context to understand why the first issue of *The Call* brought tears to their eyes and how liberated Kurt Vinz felt publishing the New World book series, featuring the works of Goethe, Schiller, Mann, and other German authors who had been silenced by Hitler, as well as works by American authors including Hemingway and Steinbeck. Vinz later wrote that the Factory men had decided to promote a humanistic literature to counter the German skepticism about “human values and democratic idealism.”

The Germans at Kearney had had experiences with indoctrination that also now allowed them to strike the right tone in the creation and distribution of the media. For example, it was the Germans who insisted that *The Call* and all the other materials not be distributed for free but be made available in camp canteens, so that prisoners would be able to choose whether or not they wanted to buy them. It was also the Germans at the Factory who, early on, insisted that their mission would be pointless if the environment in the POW camps did not change. Thus, in the fall of 1944, educational liaisons were sent to every POW camp with the immediate mandate to start pulling the dangerous Nazis out of the camp and separate them into special Nazi camps. For, argued Kuntze, what was the point of distributing a literature of freedom if any POW reading it would be hung from the rafters?

CHAPTER ELEVEN: "Leader of the Anti-Nazis"

In November, Zander and Treichl learned that an educational liason had been assigned to their university. Unaware that they were now part of a nationwide reeducation initiative—they would have blanched at the word 'reeducation' alone—they assumed that their Concordia University had become so singularly big that the Americans felt the need to offer them extra assistance or maybe, they feared, supervision. In fact, Karl C. Teufel proved an even more reliable and actively anti-Nazi ally than Vocke, and this chapter will detail the rapid Denazification of Concordia that ocured through a partnership between Teufel and the anti-Nazis. Zander and his friends were, by now, so eager to free the camp from the reign of terror and to influence some of the younger men before it was too late, that Teufel was able to enlist their help, despite the serious risks.

The chapter will be told from the perspective of Zander and his friends but will also introduce the American perspective through excerpts from Teufel's 1945 History of Camp Concordia monograph detailing conditions at Concordia. This outside perspective on the Concordia men confirms all they have said thus far, as well as details their increasing acts of heroism. It also indicates that the

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Americans at Concordia had begun to know and trust Zander and his friends. Teufel described Zander, the "leader of the anti-Nazis," and the others, and how their work as spies averted an "impending riot" in the camp and resulted in 44 Nazis being relocated. I'll look at the actual scene of them gathering information to avert the riot and detail how, soon after the threatening Nazis were relocated, the camp held its first truly democratic election, in contrast to the attempts at Camp Breckinridge to hold an election within an atmosphere still dominated by Nazi brutality.

The last section of the chapter describes how the New World book series and *Der Ruf* were then introduced within this new free environment. I will describe how they reacted to the books, how Treichl read and reread Nicholas Hayek's *Road To Serfdom*, a bestselling American book at the time which detailed the flaws in socialism and contrasted it with democracy and how Oppenfeld fell in love again with the writings of Goerte, whose books had been burned by Goebbels in Germany. The new media, particularly *Der Ruf*, also proved an easy way to find the last dangerous Nazis in the camp. The newspaper reached out to POWs individually, bypassing the Goebbels propaganda machine: "*Der Ruf* will reach every one of us. It is the call from Camp to Camp throughout the United States... We want you to help us, to write us. Send us contributions on every interest. We ask only one thing of you: think and be aware... have a sense of



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responsibility." The Nazi contingent set the first issues of the magazine on fire before anyone else could fully read the contents, thereby prompting their own removal from the camp.

## CHAPTER TWELVE: "What Was Your Number In The Party?"

By late 1944, Zander's room had become the unofficial headquarters of the anti-Nazis of Concordia, and a nightly 'salon' of sorts where the men discussed American news and talked about the future. Emboldened by the success of their Denazification efforts at Concordia, Zander, Treichl and von Oppenfeld hit upon an idea one night, and sent out a memo to the American commander (I have confirmation of the memo's existence through two separate sources). The men proposed that the Americans start sorting the Nazis and anti-Nazis now, before the war was over, and use the anti-Nazis in the reconstruction of post-war Germany. They wrote that, once the war was over, everyone in Germany would claim to be an anti-Nazi, but here was an opportunity to sort out the Germans in advance—the ones who were chosen and trained could be "ambassadors of the democratic way" to Germany. By their initiative or a "truly remarkable coincidence," noted Teufel, just such a program was discussed a few months later at the Factory.

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From the memo, I will then focus on Kuntze and fifteen other Factory men representing different professions, all feverishly engaged in working out the details of the school. I will detail this meeting from Kuntze translated notes (again, available at the archive in the Netherlands). The Administrative School at Forts Kearney and Getty and The Police School at nearby Fort Wetherill were to be America's solution to a pressing post-war problem: finding 'democratic-minded' Germans who could work with the Americans to help rebuild Germany. The graduates were to be slotted into administrative positions in the American military government in the U.S. zone of occupation. While Nazis had effectively wiped out many ideological opponents from German soil, anti-Nazis could be found right here on America's shores among the German prisoners of war in U.S. camps. Promising candidates would therefore be given the opportunity to voluntarily go through 60-day 'training' courses with the added incentive of early repatriation.

That March, Treichl was called out of the barracks with a peculiar message: "The International Red Cross wants to check on your health," he was told. At the American compound, he was instead greeted by an American officer who presented him with their memo of months before. "Did you sign this?" the American asked. Treichl nodded. "How many others like you are there who would sign a paper saying they are anti-Nazi?" Treichl estimated 25. Over the

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next few weeks, he and his friends tried to steer class conversations to topics that might indicate the politics of those in the class. Treichl assigned essays on liberty in his French History class and then delicately approached students whose political leanings appeared to be anti-fascist, a risky process. They delivered the names to the Americans, who were vague about their reasons and who never mentioned plans for the schools. They then heard nothing more for months. All across the country, the 'sniffers' at each camp were likewise gathering names that would be passed along to the SPD, which sent out intelligence men to investigate. At Camp Indianola, Naegele too was asked to gather names; in describing the candidates he selected, I'll recap his participation in Denazifying his camp. He has been the perfect ink blot for, from the start, the Germans identified their political leanings through their reactions to Naegele: anti-Nazis at Indianola trusted Naegele and came to him for help while the devout Nazis identified themselves through their harsh treatment of him.

Then Henry Arnhold traveled the country to POW camps in "the most Godforsaken towns in America" to interview potential candidates and find the ones who were "reliable enough politically" to be used in the military government of postwar Germany. The ensuing process presented the complexities of selecting 'clean' Germans on a large scale, in that the spirit of the mission could so easily be lost in the effort to abide by a proscribed set of

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standards. The Americans and Germans at the Factory had decided that the selected candidates had to meet three criterion: first, obviously, they had to be dedicated anti-Nazis; second, they had to have university educations so that the teachers had something to build on; third, they had to have professional experience so they could be installed in positions in particular branches of military government in Germany; and fourth, they could not have been members of the Nazi party.

The first requirement was easily met: sniffers at every camp had found many sincere anti-Nazis, men who had truly proved their dedication in action. Many POWs also met the second requirement, as education programs in most every camp had allowed men from all backgrounds, even farmers, to obtain university degrees. However, most professions required party membership, meaning that anyone who was working in Germany in 1945 was most definitely a party member; many of the POWs had also been forced to join the party before being drafted. There were men who were drafted before the membership requirements were enforced or who had actually joined the military to avoid having to join the party, which they felt was a worse alternative and involved more complicity. However, in his efforts to determine party membership, Arnhold faced another glaring problem: he had no access to the party membership files in Berlin, though the men he interviewed were unaware of this.

Thus, as I'll describe, Arnhold's questioning techniques involved intense stares, knowing nods, the occasional accusatorily arched eyebrow, and long silences while he shuffled through a thick stack of official-looking papers which were usually just old menus and attendance lists. "Did any of the prisoners he interviewed suspect how little this intelligence man actually knew?" he often wondered, but his little tricks worked. "I'd look at my papers for a long time and then I'd ask them "What was your number in the party?" and they'd say "I forgot" or give him a number. That was how I knew they were in the party!" Arnhold would also rely on his knowledge of Germany to determine who was telling the truth. Which schools had they attended and where? What was the name of the school's headmaster, the one with the limp? He'd trip them up on details for this German American knew his native country better than anyone. He'd lived in several major cities, attended the top schools, and was working at his family's investment firm—a 100-year-old operation—in Dresden when Hitler came to power. The Arnholds would then flee the country and leave it all behind. At least as he tells it, he was not bitter; he was a realist even then. He just wanted to find the honest Germans—"I knew there were real anti-Nazis"—and get rid of the fakers and opportunists, though even he knew that party membership did not indicate a devotion to Hitler.

Finally, I will focus on individual future students of the Administrative

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School, which I will refer to hereafter as the first 'democracy school.' Forty were interviewed at Camp Aliceville and one was chosen, Guenther Peter Ertel, an anti-Nazi who had been captured at Normandy in 1944; he believes that they determined his political leanings from the articles he wrote on the newspaper or that perhaps his father-in-law, a devout anti-Nazi, had somehow intervened on his behalf. Heinz Henze was one of twenty from Camp Ruston in Louisiana to be called for an interview. Henze had been pulled out of his first camp in Texas after making a Hitler joke and receiving a death threat. His background was in economics and he was one of those men who had served in the military rather than be forced to join the party. Walter Hallstein was chosen from Camp Como, where he had established a university on par with the one at Concordia.

Hallstein was a former professor of law who had managed to avoid party membership until 1944 by switching jobs regularly and, in this manner, had become one of the few anti-Nazis with significant work experience and no party affiliations. Hallstein, who was already in his forties when he became a prisoner of war, would go on to be the democracy school's most influential graduate. (I am gathering more information on his POW experience and may give him his own chapter.) Hugo Mueller and Freimut Springe from Concordia were two of a small number of men accepted to the school who were party members and openly admitted their membership, though this would ultimately prove

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problematic. (A later chapter describes how Mueller ended up waylaid in Belgium for a year, as a result, and finally had to return to America to get work. Springe would later found a Democratic Society in Munich only to be deposed because of his earlier party membership and would later commit suicide.) A few of the POWs from the Factory, including Alfred Andersch, would also be selected to go through the school. (Andersch had been at Camp Ruston with Henze before he was sent to Fort Kearney to help edit *Der Ruf*.)

#### CHAPTER THIRTEEN: "Defeat"

The first week in May 1945 found everyone at every POW camp in the country, Germans and Americans alike, gathered around their radios. When Germany surrendered unconditionally, the anti-Nazis breathed a sigh of relief. Then depression set in: Newspapers that were once a source of comfort and connection to the world for Zander and his friends now detailed atrocities. Though the war was over, they remained in U.S. custody and were forced by their captors to watch films about concentration camps—images that filled them with shame and sadness. This will be a difficult chapter and I will work hard to find the right tone. I may want to describe and quote part of an atrocity news reel in detail here since it speaks for itself, and then describe the way the men

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reacted—cried, shifted in their seats, looked away—during and after the screenings. I might contrast between Concordia, Indianola, Algona, and, finally Kearney, to describe the reactions.

I believe that many truly did feel horror at the images of atrocities even if, logically, they could not have been completely revelatory. They hadn't let themselves absorb the enormity of what was happening to the Jews until that moment. If their time in America had also been an escape from reality to some extent, now reality hit them so hard that it nearly paralyzed them. I'll describe, through the news reports emanating from radios, how America's attitude towards Germany was now understandably retributive. U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau was advocating a plan—ultimately rejected by President Harry Truman—that would reduce Germany to an agrarian society to punish the country for its crimes and prevent it from ever rising again.

It was in the midst of this dark time that the Americans came to Zander and asked if he wanted to participate in Germany's reconstruction. Was this the democracy school he and the other men had proposed? For a moment, Zander recalled their heady optimism about the future of a democratic Germany of six months before, hope and faith in the future which now struck him as perverse and absurd. The time for acting had long since passed. Nothing could ever make Germany healthy or whole again. Nothing could change the horrors that had



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already been committed by the Germans. There was no future for Germany, and no future for the German POWs. Nonetheless, Zander accepted the Americans' offer with a shrug, bade goodbye to Treichl and von Oppenfeld, who would soon follow, and traveled by train through the night to an unknown destination.

#### CHAPTER FOURTEEN: "A Noble Experiment"

"The morning fog had prevented us from recognizing where we were, though we smelt the salt water of the sea," Zander recounted in a speech several months later. "At noontime after having had several roll calls, the sun pierced through the fog and lifted the veil around us. We found ourselves on a small island, a rock in the sea." They were in Jamestown, R.I., at Fort Getty, right across the bay from Fort Kearney, where, over the next eight months, 455 POWs would be trained for jobs in the U.S. military occupation government. Initially, the depressed, defeated Germans slid into straight-back chairs with sighs. Zander fully expected to be lectured by stiff, impersonal military instructors. Instead they were introduced to brilliant, lively academics from Harvard, Brown, Cornell and other top universities—men not much older than their students who were as eager to learn from the Germans as to teach them. "They were of such caliber and such representatives of the best kind of Americans," recalls Zander, who had

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never met men like these. Treichl would say later that it was the teachers who kept the school from ever approaching “canned democracy.” Here were teachers who managed to set the right tone, who could easily switch from cracking wise to reminding their charges of the gravity of their mission, without breaking their even stride.

Most beloved was American History teacher T.V. Smith: philosopher, renowned professor at the University of Chicago, former senator of Illinois, famous author of bestselling books on American life, host of a popular radio show, and a man so intelligent, principled, and kind that Zander and his friends took to calling him the ‘tower of light.’ Smith himself was the embodiment of the American myth to them: he was actually born in a log cabin in Indiana and favored plain-spoken truth to pretension. Henze and Hallstein were most impressed by T.V. Smith’s real experience in politics which proved that he had put his theories to use. (During his political service, he was affectionately called Senator Philosopher by his fellow senators.) In his morning lectures, Smith illuminated the philosophy behind this still-mysterious country of so many different nationalities and so much wealth that had been their home for two years. He presented America as a beautiful experiment, a work in progress. Smith told them that America was defined by its imperfection and that dictatorships and communism suffered from perfection or the desire for its

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attainment. Our jostling disparate cultures necessitated constant compromises, and he would define democracy as the art of "creative compromise."

Smith's American History textbook, the (unpublished) one he produced just for the POWs, is titled A NOBLE EXPERIMENT. (I would love to reprint a few sections in an Appendix.) I'm not sure if I can use his title as my title even if it is clear that I am referencing his book. This is a WIP title for the proposal and a temporary replacement for A NOBLE EXPERIMENT.

The Germans were also moved by the vision of Ehrmann, who taught German history with an eye toward the future. At a time when the rest of the world was talking about Germans as if all of them were irredeemably evil, Ehrmann traced the democratic thread in their history. Rather than attack the German character, he attacked German political passivity. I'll present this lesson in detail, quoting his lectures. It was in Ehrmann's class that Andersch first began thinking seriously about the moral responsibility to act, which would be the central theme of his writing for the rest of this life. Some of the students from the 999 were impressed by Ehrmann's past activism: like them, he had served time in work camps in the 30's for opposing Hitler and he later joined the French Resistance. For Zander, it was Ehrmann's unspoken lesson that impressed him most deeply; here was a German Jewish refugee treating a class of Germans with the respect and humanity he had never been afforded himself. "He was such a

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kind man," says Zander.

In the afternoons, the students and professors sat around tables, no more than ten, as equals, and talked about the ideas that had been presented in the morning, a format totally unfamiliar to the Germans who were accustomed to lectures from a pulpit: I'll describe one class (depicted in an army film which I located in the National Archives) where Smith talked about the separation of particular powers in America, including between church and state. After describing the 'American way,' he turned to the ten POWs gathered around the long table with him and, to their surprise, asked: Is this model useful for Germany? "I should like to elaborate a little more on the problem of church and state," began one young POW with a brush of thick, spiky hair and the crudely handsome wide face of a farm-boy that belied his intelligent precision, "because I really feel that the fact that we never achieved in establishing that separation had a great bearing on the development of our whole country [Germany]. I'm interested in analyzing whether or not it will be possible to achieve this separation." Smith nodded but replied: "You have to first decide whether it is desirable." The POW (whom I am trying to identify, though Zander, who is at the same table, doesn't remember) looked confused for a moment but replied firmly: "But I think it certainly is." Smith, as if sensing he may have sounded patronizing, reassured the young man and all the men at his table: "Fellow

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students, I'm open to further instruction for I'm here to learn as much as you..."

Smith did listen to his students with interest. This amazed von Oppenfeld, who had attended strict boarding schools where the instructors droned on and patronized him, "the farm boy." I'll describe how Smith often let his students debate ideas amongst themselves, as in one class where Ertel and a few other students were challenged to come up with "ways to familiarize regular Germans with the practice of democracy" and arrived at the idea of town hall meetings.

I'll describe too how he encouraged them to freely criticize America: In one class, a POW confronts Smith: "We had to stay almost three years involuntary [sic] in this country so we learn something about your problems," he says describing the unequal treatment of African Americans he witnessed while working on farms in the South. Smith agrees, without reservation, that this is a contradiction, that our work-in-progress country has yet to live up to its high ideals. They discuss this.... Smith later segues into a conversation about Germany's "minority problem" and the history of anti-semitism. It is odd, awkward, but it is at least an attempt to face truth. The point is not to make an exact parallel but to demonstrate that, to paraphrase James Baldwin, relentless criticism of one's country is an act of love (and faith). Blind loyalty leads to authoritarianism.

Here, just as at The Factory, Americans and Germans, captor and captive,

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teacher and student, blue-blood and farmer, officer and enlisted man, all behaved as equals, so that the men experienced democracy in practice too. Just as at Kearney, Germans were asked to give up their military ranks so that an enlisted man might lead a discussion or contradict an officer. Americans too made a conscious point of ignoring their own ranks while in front of the Germans and behaving casually and with good humor. Nowhere was this "casual American" approach more pronounced than in Cornell University professor William Moulton's and Brown University professor Henry Lee Smith's English conversation class, von Oppenfeld's favorite part of the day. Americans and Germans of all ranks acted out amusing scenarios together, like asking someone out on a date or getting a haircut. "Max, have a cigarette!" they'd shout with delight. Here, just as it had for the Kearney men, the physical freedom also affected them all. Von Oppenfeld recalls waking early every morning and eagerly clambering down rocks for a swim in the bay and the many days when teachers led discussion groups outside on the grass.

It was an idyll, yes, but a sense of the gravity of their task pervaded everything at Getty too: History had given them and them alone a respite from the trauma of war and its aftermath before barreling on, as they were reminded constantly by their teachers. In a sense, their entire POW experience had been just such a respite, but now they were being asked to actively use this last chance

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to plan for the future, to turn their reflection to action. Every discussion, every idea, was fraught with meaning, for all of it could soon have real application. Early into each session, the Americans discussed the specific personal problems the men might face when they returned home, at one point showing them slides of their hometowns. "You are to be entrusted with a great responsibility," their teachers told them, "There is horrible clean-up work to be done, emotionally and literally, and we need you to be prepared for the worst." It was that distressing, but necessary, presentation that made Ertel secretly vow to follow through on his promise.

The day's discussions continued after class and late into the night. Often they gathered around the radio together in Smith's quarters or read news items, scenes I'll describe, standing in sharp contrast to the early days of hushed conversations around the newspapers and radio at Concordia. A community even more cohesive than the one at Kearney developed between student and teacher that gave both renewed optimism about the possible success of a partnership between Germany and America.

Henze recalls one evening when the teachers arranged a mock debate on the merits of the Morgenthau Plan between he and Hallstein. Henze had to argue the pro side and make a case for stripping all the resources of Germany and reducing the country to an impotent agrarian state, despite his beliefs to the

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contrary, while Hallstein had to make a case against the plan. I'll describe Hallstein's impassioned speech in as much detail as I can manage to reconstruct from Henze's recollections and those of other students who were present. It is clear that the experience was formative for both men: Henze would go on to work at the Bavarian Ministry of Economics. Hallstein became Secretary of State for Adenauer and later president of the European Common Market, the forerunner to the European Union. In this capacity, he was singularly insistent on strong economic relations between Europe and the United States and famously met with JFK and convinced him of the importance of a cross-Atlantic partnership. (I will discuss all of this in the later chapters where I detail what these men accomplished in the post-war period.) Henze, who later worked with Hallstein at the ECM, says that for he and Hallstein, the democracy school at Getty was the "beginning of a lifelong friendship with the United States."

I'll also describe how Zander, Smith, and Treichl talked many nights over bourbon and Coke about what went wrong with Germany, how, as Smith put it, a culture that produced Beethoven could produce Hitler. "We felt—not as in the dark years of our past—that things can be done because they must be done, but that things must be done because they can be done," Treichl would say in his commencement speech.

There were some missteps along the way: Military Government, the only



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purely pragmatic course, was designed to teach the men the workings of the temporary military government of Germany in which they were to be assigned jobs, but proved (prophetically) uninspiring. Even Alpheus Smith, one of the teachers and the director of the school, had to admit that a 'military democracy' was an inherent contradiction. His idealistic vision of Germany in the Occupied Military Government in the U.S. Zone (OMGUS) didn't mesh with the reality they found later. The abstract idealism and problem solving methods that the men learned in the other classes proved far more useful in the long run. The military government class did introduce students to teacher Charles Kraus, a German-American Midwesterner, who was the only faculty member to return to Germany with the men. He was later instrumental, along with Ehrmann in the States, in helping many of the men get through the significant red tape to secure jobs in OMGUS or to find work in the private sector. Students from the Police School received more training but also shared the basic language and history classes with the Getty men. (Since the nonspecialized classes were all taught at Getty, both tended to refer to the "Spirit of Getty.")

A few absurd sociology theories were also tested out on the students—to their and often their teachers' amusement. Treichl recalls that some visiting sociologist had decided the Germans should talk about Hopi Indians in their language classes because the supposedly peaceful nature of the tribe would have

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a soothing effect on the men. For a few days, teacher Moulton reluctantly obliged but even he couldn't resist subversive wisecracks. Treichl and the other POWs were also occasionally submitted to Rorschak tests from the overeager on-staff psychiatrist and his underlings. "We teased them," laughs Treichl, "whatever they showed us, we said it looked like TANKS!" The testers were noticeably unnerved at first but eventually caught on to the prank. (That the men were comfortable enough to have some fun teasing the test-takers itself says something about the relaxed atmosphere too. Smith, their favorite teacher, had told them that humor is the most American quality and all of their teachers were themselves notorious pranksters.)

There were also times too when the Germans poked fun at the 'can-do' Americans who thought there was an answer to everything—the Americans took the teasing with good humor—but ultimately the Germans were moved by the effort and transformed by it. "Aside from the individuals, I think I could perceive the honesty there of the American government to make a positive contribution to what would happen to Germany over the next twenty five years," says von Oppenfeld, who fondly called the democracy school at Getty 'A Noble Experiment.' Treichl was amazed by the "faith in humanity" the Americans exhibited in creating such an ambitious school for the education of enemy prisoners. Of the memo they wrote at Concordia proposing the school, Zander

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says "it was a dream" dashed off in a moment of youthful arrogance. They "never, never expected anything to come of it." That the Americans responded at all amazed him. That they followed through with such a top-notch faculty and such an ambitious program was beyond anything they could have hoped for, and the materialization of their first American dream. Zander, Oppenfeld, and Treichl, along with a dozen other Concordia men, all opted to delay early repatriation and stay on that summer after graduation to be teaching assistants at Getty/Wetherill in the next sessions, where they welcomed each new class with inspiring speeches about "The Spirit of Getty." Ertel and Henze were actually in the second and third sessions, and thus were taught by the Concordia men, as was Hallstein, who would become close and lifelong friends with Zander, Oppenfeld, and Treichl, and go on to put many of their plans into action.

On October 30, 1945, the *New York Herald Tribune* held a forum entitled "Responsibility for Victory." Though it would be an additional two years before his plan would transform Germany, George C. Marshall spoke that night and later was in the audience, along with Bromley and Thompson, when Wolf Dieter Zander took the stage. He was there representing Getty and all POWs on his last night in America and, dressed in a sleek suit, his first civilian clothing in years, he delivered a 15-minute speech titled "Freedom and Barbed Wire". "I am one of 370,000 German prisoners of war in America," he began, and went on to detail

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his transformation in his adopted home, particularly at Getty. "If I were to try to convey our present mood, in two simple words, I would choose: hope and faith," Zander told the audience and those listening to the speech on the radio.

"Americans, our deepest thanks to you, for the chance you gave us." In the next day's *Tribune*, where his speech was reprinted, this former prisoner of war would be held up as proof of a "democratically minded Germany." By then, Zander was on his way home.

#### CHAPTER FIFTEEN: "The Call"

Loyal Klaus Burk was still at Concordia, alone with 'Muffi,' the fourth roommate, an older man with whom he had exchanged maybe two sentences in two years and who had continued his silent, happy, pipe-smoking oblivion through the summer of 1945. No one had ever known Muffi's politics, or if he had any to speak of; he had always stayed on the balcony smoking his pipe, out of earshot, even as his living room became the bustling headquarters for the anti-Nazis. In the summer of 1945, Burk combated the loneliness by throwing himself into his studies with an even greater zeal, and found a mentor in Teufel, the director of the new American School at Concordia. For, during the summer

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following V-E Day, the educational liaisons in camps across the country began their 'general education' efforts under the still-watchful, if bloodshot, eyes of the Factory men. Teufel brought in guest lecturers to teach the POWs about democracy, and encouraged them to talk about many of the same concepts that the men had discussed at Getty using many of the same textbooks. I compare a classroom scene at Concordia to one at Indianola where Naegele taught classes, though I will not dwell too much on classroom scenes in general lest they become redundant.

Rather, the chapter will detail the connections between the camps through *The Call*. In their first issue, the editors had asked POWs from every camp to write in with their own opinions so that their newspaper might truly be "the call from camp to camp" and, by that summer, the POWs were using the newspaper as an open forum. The Concordia men wrote about a few men in their number who insisted on wearing the insignia of the German army, and why they should put their uniforms away for good. The men from Naegele's Camp Indianola wrote about their thoughts on the atrocity films and issued a statement of apology. From Kuntze's former camp, Breckinridge, came an essay on the rebuilding of Germany's architecture in which the writer suggested that the bombed out cities should be completely recreated along different, innovative lines. The Goethe poem at the start of this proposal appeared in Alfred Neber's

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Camp Algona newspaper. Up at Kearney, Andersch, who continued to write while he attended the Getty school, wrote about the state of being a prisoner and the importance of turning passive reflection to action once they returned home. Essentially the 500 POWs by this point had become one community. Many of the Germans at the camps were also, if their reading tastes were any indication, beginning to feel that they were part of a global community. That summer, one of the top selling books at POW camp canteens was Wendell Wilkie's *One World*, which promoted the idea of a world free of national and racial boundaries. "Freedom is an indivisible word," wrote Wilkie in the book that had been a number one bestseller in America two years before, "If we want to enjoy it, and fight for it, we must be prepared to extend it to everyone, whether they are rich or poor, whether they agree with us or not, no matter what their race or the color of their skin."

The chapter ends with Burk, who did not manage to get into any of the education programs but would, nonetheless, have his own final democratizing experience in America: Though he was an officer, he and most of his friends volunteered that fall to fill the manpower shortage and work on local farms, hence Burk's last and most positive impression of America would be formed through his friendly interactions with Americans on a tomato farm in Indiana. Ultimately, the education program was successful because, through a

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combination of design and serendipitous circumstance, it reached most every POW in the United States.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: "Military Misfits With A Mission"

Throughout the Winter and Spring of 1946, 20,000 pre-screened POWs passed through a special 6-day version of the 60-day democracy school which was taught by the same teachers and located at Fort Eustis in Virginia. Called the '6-day bicycle race' by the POWs because of its frenetic pace, the course was basically an intensive empowerment seminar / civics lesson designed to encourage the men to be active citizens in the new democracy of Germany on the eve of their repatriation. This chapter offers an inside view of the American side of the education programs and is told mainly from the perspective of Thomas Naegele. Naegele had been called to Eustis to work over a four-month period as one of Ehrmann's teaching assistants and discussion leaders. (Teufel was working there as well, either as Ehrmann's assistant or Smith's.) I will start the chapter with Naegele's description of the teacher training because it gives an inside view of the method behind all the democracy schools.

Ehrmann takes his trainees back to the late Spring of 1945. The Germans at POW camps were grappling with the reality of defeat and faced with a barrage

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of images of the atrocities committed by the Third Reich. According to the reports sent to the Factory, the POWs were increasingly feeling a growing sense of futility and hopelessness about the future. Ehrmann and the other teachers realized that their challenge would be to give their incoming students faith in their ability to change the future even while instilling in them a sense of responsibility for the past. Studies from the camps (and conversations between the Americans and Germans up at Kearney, which I'll detail) had been showing that the men responded to the popular idea of German 'collective guilt' either by distancing themselves further from the atrocities committed by the army, or by sinking into paralyzing depression, which meant some alternative theme of responsibility would have to be presented. Moreover, the Germans at the Factory and Ehrmann himself believed that the idea of 'collective guilt' did not allow for the fact that this had been a dictatorship that imprisoned and killed political opponents like Kuntze or Andersch or Ehrmann himself (who had first been imprisoned in 1933 for his politics, not his religion).

Ehrmann also told his trainees, all German Jewish interpreters like Naegele, that *what* they taught would be far less important than *how* they taught it. Their work with the Germans at Kearney had inadvertently shown the Americans that creating a democratic atmosphere was as important as teaching the specifics, and they had successfully recreated this open atmosphere at the



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Rhode Island schools. Discussion groups would also be the core of the teaching at Eustis so that each man would learn to speak up and argue for his own opinions. This, too, would distinguish the program from the 'indoctrination' model used by Hitler. Though there had been considerable design to the 'spontaneity' of the Rhode Island schools on the part of the teachers, little by little, Ehrmann said their faith grew and true friendships developed between all the men. The experience gave him and the other teachers renewed faith in the possibility of a German and American partnership though he said the true outcome of the school would not be known for years. In private conversations, he told Naegele about his prized students and how they were faring, which I'll detail also. All the teaching assistants and most of the incoming POWs had heard Zander's speech on the radio and were aware of the apparent success of the earlier effort.

I will next briefly describe Naegele's daily experience of leading discussion groups for the incoming POWs but will focus more on the evening behind-the-scenes brainstorming sessions led by Ehrmann and the other teachers to give a sense of who the teachers were. I want to capture their enthusiasm, the lively, laughter-filled atmosphere, the way Alpheus Smith would throw an idea out to the others and then say "Now, tear it to pieces boys!" The teachers were still high from what they perceived to be a great success at Getty and thrilled that

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they, a bunch of intellectuals, had been entrusted with such an important mission. In fact, they almost didn't make it to Eustis: The Getty program, Naegele learned, had run into some troubles at the last stages when the camp chaplain 'reported' on the teachers and the decidedly unmilitary way in which these military misfits were behaving, particularly their penchant for not wearing their uniforms (this does not show up in the official army films for obvious reasons) and leading classes while sprawled on the grass. The teachers were allowed to proceed with Eustis and to conduct the school in much the same manner as before, but they were now much more cognizant of being scrutinized and made a point of wearing their uniforms even if, according to Naegele, they did so haphazardly. Naegele says this was "a faculty made up of reluctant soldiers for whom this culmination of the second World War was a fulfilling experience on several levels, professionally for them as academics, [and] as officers and noncoms who served in a war proudly but reluctantly and who had an opportunity to teach and learn at the same time and make sense out of this monstrous experience." (Naegele's view confirms that this is a kind and idealistic group of men who have, as T.V. Smith indicated, been trying to learn from their students as well as teach them.) I'll fill out the professors as characters here and detail some sessions where they talk about new teaching ideas.

These behind-the-scenes brainstorming sessions also give a darker view of this last stage of the program: First, there was the problem that the Americans had, unbeknownst to the Provost Marshall's Office, offered the German prisoners to the French for work projects. Once this was revealed, there was much alarm amongst those involved with the education projects and fear of losing all the progress that had been made. The Eustis school was a delay-tactic for holding on to at least some of the prisoners a bit longer in the hopes of getting them straight back to Germany and preventing them from being waylaid in France, though some still were. Moreover, now that the teachers had access to the party membership files in Berlin, they regularly checked on students who seemed like they might just be opportunists parroting back the party line. This is in contrast to the Getty / Wetherill schools where the men had been much more carefully screened in advance and then rechecked once they arrived at the schools, but treated with trust thereafter. There, the teachers had privately agreed that, once the school started, they must trust all of the students and maintain complete openness in their dealings with them or the school would never work. At Eustis, the teachers were dealing with assembly line time-frames and students who had been hastily screened and selected, many based on recommendations from local sniffers, but also from questionnaires and unreliable interviews. (Men like Klaus Burk, for example, were overlooked.) Thus the sifting process was still taking

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place when the POWs arrived, unbeknownst to the POWs, and some would be sent back to their camps and denied participation. Those who graduated would be given papers that said they had participated in the program, papers that would make their repatriation process easier and declare them 'clean' and thus able to navigate the Denazification process.

For Naegele, this experience, if imperfect, was ultimately transformative, the final step in his coming to terms with the past and the possibility of shaping the future. I will describe how he was moved by Ehrmann's view of German history and his agreement with the idea that passivity caused the rise of Hitler along with flaws in the governmental structure that allowed a minority to seize power. This view enabled him to devote himself fully to the school and gave him renewed optimism about the future. He was also moved by the mere fact that the Americans were devoting such energy to trying to inspire defeated enemy POWs to go home and improve their home country. He became a believer in the necessity of activism and participation in a democracy.

I will briefly describe here Alfred Neber's positive impression of the school upon his parting. The 6-day program hasn't changed Neber's already positive views of America, which I'll detail, but rather has crystallized all he has seen and given him the words to explain them. Ehrmann and the other teachers gave these students clear, inspiring lectures with lessons in them that they could

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return to, like reassuring catechisms when they faced difficulties in Germany. Smith told him of the imperfection of a democracy and the need for 'creative compromise,' a phrase he recalled later during the bumpy reconstruction period. Neber left the school with a true feeling of hope, but he also left with a paper that said he had participated in the democracy program, a paper which made him 'clean' and gave him a head-start in a Germany morassed in an ill-conceived Denazification process. In post-war Germany, papers now meant everything.

#### CHAPTER NINETEEN: "Displaced Person"

Von Oppenfeld spent his first night of freedom sleeping on a Frankfurt subway platform in the midst of a snowstorm, his head resting on his sea-bag and its few remaining contents. He and Treichl had left Getty three weeks before, and arrived at Le Havre, France to the taunts of the U.S. staff, who knew nothing of the "Getty Spirit" or the existence of anti-Nazis. The Americans did not allow the POWs to deposit their luggage but instead chased them around a large field until, one by one, the exhausted POWs "dropped part or all of their belongings which were then pilfered by the guards." Von Oppenfeld relinquished most of his books, except his prized copy of Goethe's *Faust*, though Treichl stubbornly held on to every one, all fifteen, including *Road to Serfdom* and several signed

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books by T.V. Smith.

Eventually the men were released to a U.S. camp in Darmstadt, Germany on January 31, 1946 "with RM40 equivalent of \$10.00." Von Oppenfeld and a few others were sent on to the Frankfurt station where they found practically all the buildings in town reduced to rubble. "None of us, who had formed a group of nine, knew where to go," recalls von Oppenfeld, and they agreed that he and another homeless East German would stay behind on the platform to watch the luggage while the other men contacted relatives or friends "who might offer at least a roof over our head for protection during our first night." Von Oppenfeld recalls that "each of them returned before curfew, 9 p.m., with the same story: "Where my sister, parents, or friends once lived, the house is destroyed or gone." They looked for shelter in the underpasses but found them already "overflowing with refugees from Eastern Europe." They had to sleep right there on the platform. The men would disperse in all directions within the next few days. "I was still a non-person," recalls von Oppenfeld, "until I was recognized and registered as an East German refugee," also known as a "DP" or "displaced person." At this point, von Oppenfeld traded in his blue American uniform stenciled with the letters 'PW' for a suit which he bought with a carton of cigarettes in his bag that somehow had escaped the notice of the pilfering guards in France. Then he went looking for work...

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Zander had returned to Germany a month earlier and found his old Berlin apartment in rubble. I'll describe how he tracked down his wife in Austria. When they reunited, she tearfully handed him a packet of letters, two years worth, all of which had been returned to her not long before from U.S. censorship with an attached official note indicating that they had been confiscated and held as 'suspicious.' The reason: they were written in English. Zander held onto his wife—tightly—for a long time.

#### CHAPTER NINETEEN: "Retribution"

Odema is an extreme condition of malnutrition that most often afflicts the elderly. Characterized by oozing, painful sores and swelling, it is a disturbing sight to behold—one von Oppenfeld was quickly becoming familiar while working for the Berlin Ministry of Food and Agriculture, a department run by the U.S. occupation authorities that distributed food to Germans. Daily, von Oppenfeld witnessed elderly people making trips to the country with wheelbarrows just to buy potatoes. He saw families selling china, silverware, anything they could get their hands on to pay for the most basic necessities. Germans got food stamps every month, but the average caloric intake still dropped as low as 1,040 a day. Everything was rationed, including fuel. On

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certain days of the week, there was no electricity. Getting just about anything done in Berlin involved long lines and red tape. The occupation government's nonfraternization rules, a conscious attempt to punish the population, forbade interaction between Germans and Americans, and made communication difficult—while a harsh blanket Denazification policy was punishing many who had joined the Nazi party because they had no other choice, and allowing other diehard Nazis to attain major positions of power. This chapter will detail the above-noted conditions through von Oppenfeld's daily experiences and then look at these specific experiences of former party members Freimut Springe and Hugo Meuller.

Meuller returned to Hamburg in late 1946 and struggled to find work, any work. He had been waylaid in a POW camp in Belgium with his students from Eustis where he became hopelessly caught in the Denazification machinery of a faceless American military occupation. I will describe his predicament and then cut to von Oppenfeld offering his passionate 'testimony' to exonerate his friend from Nazi guilt (mirroring his earlier attempts to rescue Tropschuh from the machinations of another dictatorship). Both Zander and von Oppenfeld would have to testify on behalf of many friends, particularly those who had been too old to be drafted and who had stayed in Germany and joined the party simply to keep their jobs and feed their families. The Denazification policy punished many



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who joined the party because they had no other choice but, by 1948, the Americans would be installing known Nazis into government positions out of desperation to find skilled candidates. Zander wrote to Ehrmann that Denazification was "a rough machine turning out rough results and hurting many who admitted to their mistakes and expected clemency in accordance with a partly recovered belief in Christian principles." I'll also detail the horrifying revelations emerging from the Nuremburg trials which were unfolding at the same time.

This chapter describes the harsh atmosphere in detail through the eyes of the former POWs, who felt trapped in the middle. They recognized painfully that the Americans were losing the goodwill of the Germans and, moreover, poorly representing the true character of America by not treating them with basic humanity. "There was this negative, very negative view [of Americans] in Germany, and they were saying, 'The Americans are doing all the wrong things,'" recalls von Oppenfeld, who often found himself coming to America's defense, insisting that the Americans really did want to "get things moving again" and trying to explain what a true democracy looked like, the kind he and his fellow POWs had learned about in America. This was not exactly the role he or any of the other Concordia men envisioned when they first proposed that they be "ambassadors of the democratic way."

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE: "Faith and Hope"

This chapter begins with Ehrmann at the breakfast table with his wife one morning in the United States in the Spring of 1946. He is reading news items to his wife from the paper that detail the horrendous conditions in Germany, worried about his students. (I'll get the details from Claire Ehrmann.) While Ehrmann wanted Zander and the others to be influential when they returned home, he also came to care about them personally, and he feared that they could be literally starving to death. The continued silence from Zander made him fear whether perhaps he and the other teachers had hoisted too much responsibility upon Zander, that he might actually be paralyzed from the emotional burden, if he was even alive. Thus, in the Spring of 1946, the Ehrmanns would begin sending packages of food to as many former students as they could locate, necessities that saved their lives or the lives of their families in some cases. Though he sent them anonymously so the recipients would not feel pressured to respond at a point when they might not even have paper at their disposal, his students nonetheless went to great lengths to find the sender and were moved, though not the least bit surprised, to find it was Ehrmann. For if T.V. was the 'coolest' teacher, Ehrmann, with his endearingly thick German accent, deep

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brown eyes, and ready laughter, was the one teacher that the students felt they could truly trust and confide in. Over a hundred students wrote to Ehrmann to thank him and update him on their lives and the state of Germany. Thus began a correspondence that lasted for years in many cases. Ehrmann would later tell one student this was the truest embodiment of the spirit of the democracy schools. Zander wrote back in the winter of 1946: "... I am still very grateful to you Henry; I think that most of the boys appreciate only now what you have been for them. Well I liked you from the beginning and I hope I will remain worthy of your esteem. Give me a slight kick from time to time, so that I do not forget the future for the present. My kindest regards to Mrs. Ehrmann ..."

Through correspondences, Ehrmann tried to help his charges get employment, visas, books, whatever they needed to do the work of spreading democracy, and, in many cases, just to handle their personal crises. It was Ehrmann who ultimately rescued Meuller from limbo in a Belgian POW camp after receiving a postcard from him, and it was Ehrmann who was forgiving when Zander later left Germany for the United States in 1948 with his wife Jane. Kuntze, Andersch, and Oppenfeld wrote him letters, but so did men from Eustis whom Ehrmann had barely known, but who were apparently deeply moved by the teacher's message of action and his soft-spoken, gentle ways. He, in turn, connected the Eustis men with the other graduates, enabling them to organize

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together. I will describe a few of the letters in this chapter and how the men told him that they were thinking of the 'Spirit of Getty' or the 'Spirit of Eustis,' but also trying to find a way to communicate these ideas to a despondent, pessimistic German population, just as Ehrmann had before. Through their correspondences, Ehrmann and his students continued their partnership and mutual education. Over and over again, his students wrote of their struggles to communicate the spirit of democracy to the Germans.

Letter To Henry Ehrmann: October 26, 1946

Dear Henry,

We have just sent you a copy of the new *Der Ruf*, published in Germany now for a wider publicity with the same old aims we had already fixed in the USA: tolerance and decency as well as peace and international collaboration. Nearly all our former editorial staff is together again in Munich now. Everybody is doing his best to foster the new paper despite of all present difficulties. We are glad to be able to tell you that the first echoes have been very favorable. We are convinced that our special kind of approach, especially to those young Germans, who till now have proved to be more or less apathetic or even hostile to the new constructive ideas of genuine democracy, will succeed in helping them to form

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their own independent opinion... Hoping you will further on give us your kind support writing about any subject you find particularly suitable.

Sincerely,

Curt Vinz

I will also describe an editorial meeting of *Der Ruf* that parallels the earlier one. This time, the newspaper was named *The Call: The Young Generation* and the editors were determined to reach this supposedly 'lost generation' of Germans. I will recap what Andersch and Vinz had done since returning home. (Kuntze will appear in a later chapter in connection with them.) Then the chapter will look at another hopeful meeting on December 14, 1946 of Demokratische Gesellschaft, the democratic society founded by ex-POW graduates from Getty, Kearney, Eustis, and Wetherill with the help of Charles Kraus (from Getty) and Teufel (from Concordia/Eustis), both of whom were working for the American military government. (In one of many odd connections, Teufel would later marry von Oppenfeld's ex-girlfriend.) Curt Vinz was there too, along with Henze and Concordia/Getty men Freimut Springe and Freidrich Boecker (I'll fill out Springe and Boecker as characters once I have more information.) They discussed their plans to create education programs for youths across Germany. In this effort, they had already enlisted their former teachers who were sending them lectures

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that were used at the democracy schools. Vinz would also publish another series of books, just like the ones they had released at The Factory.

From that meeting, I will cut to a town hall meeting run by Ertel, where the locals are airing their problems and attempting to come up with makeshift solutions. No building materials? Why not use the bricks from the demolished buildings on the other side of town? Though Ertel struggled to make the best of the difficult circumstances, he found that even he had difficulty concentrating and feeling optimistic on an empty stomach. He would try to create German American clubs in Hesse to promote further understanding but would be stymied repeatedly by the American nonfraternization policies for another year. The chapter will then focus on a discussion group at Frankfurt University where Hallstein, by then the rector, was instituting Getty-style teaching. Hallstein would create an American Institute at his university and a local Frankfurt branch of the Democratic Society.

By 1947, the Soviet threat was forcing America to take an interest in winning the hearts and minds of the Germans. The Americans were now actively supporting education programs such as those discussed above and, as the next chapter details, economic and political reforms.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO: "One World"

When Herbert Hoover toured Germany in 1947 to assess the country's food supply and economic situation, it was Von Oppenfeld who arranged all his stops in Berlin. He insisted that Hoover be taken to an-out-of-the-way hospital that was treating scores of elderly victims of odema, a visit I intend to describe in detail (I am tracking down an account from Hoover's report). I will then detail Hoover visiting the Bavarian Ministry of Economics in Munich and meeting with Minister Ludwig Erhard and his team, including Henze and his democracy school classmates Freimut Springe (who had become president of the Demokratische Gesellschaft)) and Guenther Bruns. I'll use Hoover's notes and testimony from Henze to fill this out and describe the main issues they were discussing, particularly currency reform (which would occur in 1948), and the creation of a free market economy that would encourage individual enterprise. The scene will echo the round table discussions that the men had participated in back at the democracy school.

Hoover's tour was part of America's new kinder policy towards Germany as embodied in the The Marshall Plan and the end of nonfraternization policies. The Berlin Blockade of 1948 would superficially join America and Germany against a common enemy and further jumpstart the democratization process. The first national election was held in 1949, and resulted in the birth of the

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Federal Republic of Germany. Hallstein intersects with most every one of these plot points—he even lobbied hard for Adenauer with the Americans, who trusted Hallstein—so the story will be told from his, and possibly Henze’s, perspective. Hallstein left his post at Frankfurt University to be Adenauer’s first Secretary of State in the new Republic. His story even touches on the East/West conflict: his Hallstein Doctrine said that the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) represented all of Germany and that the Federal Republic would sever all diplomatic ties with any country that acknowledged the existence of East Germany. Hallstein also, as mentioned earlier, would become president of the European Economic Market where he promoted strong ties not only between the countries of Europe but also between Europe and the United States.

I will continue to do research on Hallstein for the book. When I met Henze in Brussels, he gave me a stack of documents on Hallstein, including papers written by him that I am currently translating. Hallstein, who died in 1980, was a bachelor and essentially lived at the office; his friendships tended to be work-related. Nonetheless, he was known as a remarkably passionate and principled man. (Henze also passed along information on their friend Andersch, who will be discussed in the next chapter).

Either in this chapter or in the next one I will address the troubling sacrifices made in the rush to get Germany’s economy and political system



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working again: expediency was chosen over true Denazification. Even Hallstein was criticized at the time for installing a number of known Nazis in his cabinet when he was Secretary of State.

Hallstein created a free market economy without which a democracy could not flourish and it would be Hallstein who steered Germany into a true community of nations.

Other graduates of the democracy schools would tend to the conscience of the new Germany.

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE: "Moral Responsibility"

In the fall of 1947, *Der Ruf* was shut down by the Americans in Munich for challenging American policy, for exercising the very freedom of speech they had been taught to value in the United States. Vinz would then fire Andersch and Richter from *Der Ruf* and much of the original staff to appease the Americans, and start printing a new *Der Ruf* that is merely American propaganda and no longer espouses the ideals of the original *Der Ruf*. The Cold War was creating an undemocratic atmosphere not just in Germany but also in the United States, as this chapter will detail. Walter Winchell would become an avid anti-communist who later famously supported Joseph McCarthy's Red Scare. Some of

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Ehrmann's colleagues from Getty, though not Ehrmann himself, were also cowed by the anti-Red furor that began with that investigation up at Getty, and started to distance themselves from their former students and their more radical ideas of years past. (I'm still researching this point.) Ehrmann would write Zander and tell his former student not to be discouraged by the unresponsiveness of his former idol T.V. Smith for, Ehrmann writes with obvious disgust, Smith and his fellow teachers (but not Ehrmann and Moulton) were now just "trying to keep their shirts clean."

From America, I will shift back to Germany and detail how Andersch and Richter, along with the rest of the former POWs who had been dismissed by Vinz, would go on to uphold the true principles of democracy. Refusing to allow free speech to be a casualty of the ongoing East/West conflict, the disbanded news staff formed Gruppe 47 (Group 47), named for the year of their disbandment. This literary movement, the most famous of the postwar era, was committed to perpetuating the same idealistic and humanistic principles that the men had discussed back at Kearney. Vinz published some of their works through his press and Kuntze, who was working for the military government at Radio Stuttgart, aired radio plays by Andersch. (I'll also give some background on Kuntze at this point, particularly on his reunion with his wife Marianne and son Nicholas. What kind of man was he when he returned from his Odyssey in

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America?)

Gruppe 47 famously fostered the next generation of great writers, including Heinrich Boll and Guenther Grass. Grass's *Meeting at Telgte* is fondly dedicated to his mentor Hans Werner Richter (from Kearney) and (indirectly) tells the story of the founding of the group. I will focus mostly on Andersch who went on to become a renowned writer in Germany, one whose works were on the reading lists at every school in Germany. Andersch wrote on the subject he came to think deeply about in Ehrmann's classes: 'moral responsibility' and action. (I might also quote his post-war letters to Ehrmann.) He and the other writers from Kearney truly carried on the 'spirit' of democracy and became the conscience of this new country. Andersch's stories focus on individuals who have choices to take action or not to take action and he shows repeatedly how one action can change history. My book is also about men who got a second chance to change history through their actions. A follow-up study on the graduates from 1947 showed that at least sixty were working in major positions in the military government or the private sector—too many to list here, but the examples I have already given should give a sense of how these men truly shaped the future of their country.

Of all the democracy school graduates, those that went on to be educators themselves may have exercised the greatest influence on the democratic spirit of

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Germany. Kuntze went on to become a principal of a high school in Dinkelsbuehl while Alfred Neber became a history teacher in Manheim. He and Kuntze used all of the teaching methods they were taught at the democracy schools and many of the same books, plus new ones by Gruppe 47. By the fifties, German teachers across the country were learning the same methods through leadership tours (probably the brainchild of Getty graduate Karl-Heinz Hausner) which allowed them to come to the United States and study the educational system firsthand. Meanwhile, exchange programs, also initially promoted by democracy school graduates, were offered at most universities. It would be the younger generation that would come to truly understand democracy and that would then feel free to challenge the hypocrisies of the Denazification in the postwar period, to confront the Holocaust and other terrible atrocities in earnest, and to take responsibility for the future of their democratic country.

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I will end with a description of Felix Peter Tropshuh, Tropshuh's nephew. Felix is of the younger generation described above and contacted me after my story ran in *The Washington Post*. I would like to contrast his outspoken political ways with his uncle's and possibly end with a description of his trip to his uncle's grave at Concordia this summer.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR: "A Lifelong Friendship"

It was in the 60's, at a time of vocal revolution on both sides of the ocean, that Henry Ehrmann finally returned to Germany, if only for a few semesters, to teach at Free University in Berlin. I will briefly describe how he continued contact with his former students. Ehrmann died in 1994, and his obituary ran in *The New York Times*. One former student and avid *Times* reader saw the article and sent his widow Claire a "moving" condolence note. I found Wolf Dieter Zander from the business address on this note. She read it to me and added: "I know he was a financier but I doubt he still works there. He may not even be alive." I called Arnhold S. Bleichroder nonetheless and, to my shock, they put me right through and I heard: "Zandaah here!"

In his late eighties then, Zander was still going to the office and his thick hair still swept back from his temples in a gentle wave (even if it was white then). He had the same wry smile as in those old photographs and he donned well-cut suits and cuff-links just as he did before the war. He brought the program guide for his Waldorf Astoria speech to our first meeting. And now? "Well it was obviously a very limited view in that I was incarcerated," laughed Zander before he became serious and added, "If you talk to Treichl or Oppenfeld or any of us, you'll find that they will never forget their time at Getty or Concordia and that it

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played a significant role in all our lives." Zander had a few ambitious projects he wrote about in letters to Ehrmann, including a book on reeducation, but, one by one, they were waylaid by the drawn-out reconstruction process and his wife's desire to leave Austria for the United States. Hallstein emerged the star, which Zander also attributes to his lifelong friend's remarkable drive, brilliance, and the fact that he "had the organizational skills to get things done." Zander promised Ehrmann, who helped him get a Visa, that he would return to the old country, that he wouldn't "forget the future for the present," but, he never went back. Germany and Austria were too changed. And so was he. He returned, with Jane, to the country that had taught him the meaning of freedom. Oppenfeld and Ertel too would eventually leave for the United States. Ehrmann would help Meuller get a job with Henry Lee Smith in DC to escape the Denazification process he was enmeshed in, and Meuller would help create language education materials for Germany from there.

Up until his death in 2013, Zander worked at an investment firm in New York City with an old German Jewish family he had been close to since the 1950s. When I first spoke to Zander to set up the interview, he said "There's another man who was at Getty who works here." I assumed he meant a student. He meant Henry Arnhold, the intelligence man who had briefly passed through Getty to interview all the men and look for 'bad eggs.' ("There weren't any, not at

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Getty," he says.) The two met again later through business when Zander was running his pharmaceuticals company and Arnhold was a client. During one later interview that I did with both men present, Arnhold would mention his last assignment in the armed forces: in 1946, he interviewed suspected Nazis who were about to be repatriated. One man, unnerved by Arnhold's stern stares no doubt, confessed to murder without being asked anything. Then he gave up his accomplice. "They had beaten this man horribly," recalled Arnhold, "and I think they forced him to hang himself at this camp called... Concordia." Zander swung around in surprise and shouted: "I was at Concordia! I ran to the Americans..."

I will give more background on what happened to the other men, albeit briefly: Thomas Naegele is a painter who lives with his wife Rosalyn in a sprawling apartment on the Upper West Side of New York City. (That's as of a few years ago though he may have moved into a nursing home.) His paintings line all the walls and are four rows deep, from ceiling to floor. The bottom ones, roosters and other farm animals, are eye level for small children, his many grandchildren. He showed me a series of paintings he had made of Indianola and Eustis, some of which he painted at the time and some later, and all of which appeared in a traveling show that crossed Germany in 1992. He returned to his former hometown of Stuttgart for the opening. Von Oppenfeld and his wife,

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Judy, lived together in Bethesda, Maryland up until his death in 2010. He returned to the United States in 1948, and studied agriculture at Cornell, where he occasionally ran into Moulton, his old English teacher. He worked on agricultural reconstruction projects in Third World countries and later for the World Bank. He turned 90 a few months ago. Zander sent him a nice note. Von Oppenfeld responded with a long letter in which he thanked Zander for being “our mentor” at Concordia and for supporting him throughout his life. Von Oppenfeld forwarded the letter to me. He and Zander are still in touch with Burk, who stayed in Germany and became a lawyer. A few years after the war, he came across Rommel's band, still together, and playing at a Hamburg hotel. They had switched, he says, from marching songs to American standards. Treichl returned home to occupied Austria after the war and had to start over again ‘from scratch.’ On his journey home from America, he carried over fifteen Getty books, most by T.V. Smith, and one book from Concordia, *Road to Serfdom*. When I interviewed him in 2004, he still had every one of those books plus many more he had collected since. He dedicated a chapter to Getty and Concordia in his recent autobiography. After the war, he married a Jewish woman and helped her family reclaim their publishing empire, became head of the largest bank in Austria and, in later years, honorary president of the Austrian Red Cross and president of the Hayek Institute. At 91, he was still in touch with his Concordia



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buddies, Treichl is a minor celebrity in Austria, known for his generosity and his habit of speaking hard truths. "I'm very *American*," he said with a grin.

This last section shows that the spirit of the democracy school is still in the hearts of these men sixty years later, the ultimate proof that this 'noble experiment' was a success.

Possible chapter on the Japanese POW Democracy school:

During WWII, approximately 8,000 Japanese POWs were also held in United States camps across the country. There was a smaller and less ambitious version of the same democracy school designed for these POWs in Texas. A librarian at the National Archives told me about the school. I'd love to research this further. It might be a way to address the Japanese-American internment issue.

APPENDIX:

Documents from the Fort Getty school, including part or all of T.V. Smith's textbook

Letters written by Getty graduates to their professors

Transcripts from the videos of classes taught by T.V. Smith and Dieter Zander

CONTEXT:

Nothing like my article or my proposed book has been written before. Krammer's "Nazi Prisoners of War In America" (Scarborough House, 1979) gives a good historical overview of the POW experience here, including the evolution of the reeducation programs, but, while it is thorough and well researched, it is essentially an excellent textbook. Lewis Carlson's "We Were Each Others' Prisoners" (Basic Books, 1997), a collection of first-person oral history accounts from American and German prisoners of war, is informative but does not form any connected or compelling narrative. Only two books focus solely on the American education programs, and both, like those previously mentioned, are broad overviews written in an expository style, rather than as engaging personal stories. Ron Robin's "The Barbed Wire College" (Princeton University Press, 1995) is the more thorough of the two and the more academic both in style and tone. It focuses entirely on the American perspective and summarily dismisses the reeducation program as a failure, largely minimizing both the German contribution to creating the program and their long-term responses to it. Judith Gansberg's "Stalag U.S.A." (Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1977) is more optimistic in its assessment of the education programs but it is also written in an

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academic, expository style, and again mostly from the American perspective. 'A Noble Experiment' by contrast to all these works, will be a dramatic, character-driven historical narrative that focuses on the German perspective. Gansberg never interviewed Zander, for example, though she refers to a famous speech he gave on live radio to all America before he was repatriated to Germany. I actually tracked down Zander for this book and the story he told me offers a singular perspective.

It was the aforementioned book by Krammer that first introduced me to idea that not all German POWs in the United States were Nazis, a stunning revelation for me, the granddaughter of German-Jewish refugees—as was the fact that Americans trusted these supposed anti-Nazis to the degree that they trained them for jobs in postwar Germany. Indeed, I was amazed to learn that democracy schools of this kind existed at all, and that somehow the military establishment had entrusted a group of liberal-minded Ivy League academics, as much misfits in this militaristic environment as the POWs were in theirs, with the education of Germany's future leaders. All of my reading raised the burning question: What did the graduates themselves think of the program?

As I continued with my research I came across The Henry W. Ehrmann Papers at the German Emigre Collection at the University of Albany, which had

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been established several years after Ron Robin's 1995 book was published and which he would not have had access to. The collection included letters from over 100 students of the democracy schools who had written to Ehrmann upon returning to Germany and, in some cases, for years afterwards. As I read through the letters it became clear to me that these men had been deeply moved by their time at the democracy schools, and I was impressed by the way so many of them wrote of their passionate efforts to teach democratic ideals to their fellow Germans in Germany. I also came across a 1946 letter from Ehrmann to former Concordia man and Getty student Freiderich Boecker in which he told Boecker that he had just published "another learned article" on the democracy school but despaired that it still "failed to capture the intangibles" which had made the experience mean so much to them both. Their friendship, characterized by both an interest in each other's personal lives and by an ongoing exchange of plans for action in Germany, wrote Ehrmann, was truly the essence of the school. Boecker was then teaching young Germans about democracy in Frankfurt and Ehrmann had offered him a few useful suggestions from his democracy school experience (where he had taught Boecker, among other students). Robin, of course, referenced Ehrmann's 'learned' article in his (truly) learned book but failed to explore the 'intangibles' that are essential to this story.

Only a few months after going up to the archives in Albany, the Iraq war

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made me return to those German prisoners of war yet again, this time with a sense of urgency. I thought that the graduates of the democracy schools might offer an interesting perspective on ways to choose and train leaders for a democratic Iraq. I hadn't yet started to track down any graduates so my pitch to Tom Shroder at *The Washington Post Magazine* was a description of the school, some promising quotes from the letters that hinted at the graduates' feelings, and a hubristic promise to find the graduates and write the story within a few months. I wanted to find out not just whether the graduates had helped in the rebuilding of Germany, but also whether the school had made them independent 'democratic thinkers' in the long run and if their lives reflected these ideals.

At that point, I believed that my story was about this unprecedented program the Americans had designed for the Germans and how the Germans did or did not react to it. I imagined that I would find creaky Germans living in small villages in Germany, if they were living at all. Instead, indicative of the radically different story I was about to encounter, I found my first graduate, Wolf Dieter Zander, in New York City, still working and full of vitality at 88. He in turn connected me to other key graduates. The story they told began the moment the POWs first arrived in the United States and involved a mutual education that was as much about their attempts to teach the Americans as the other way around. They also claimed, and I admit some incredulity at this

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initially, that a memo they had written to the Americans had resulted in the democracy school. After some searching, I found their memo referenced in an official historical monograph of Camp Concordia, and the claim that either by the POW's initiative or "by a truly remarkable coincidence," just such a school was underway. I also found unexpected accounts of their bravery in the face of the Nazi contingent. The story I uncovered was one in which the Germans themselves were major players rather than guinea pigs. When I interviewed the Germans, I saw how deeply they had been affected by their time in America, the way their eyes teared up as they told their stories, and the way they all still called their favorite teacher at the democracy school the "tower of light." There were echoes in all their lives of lessons they had learned in America.

Thus I realized that really, this was the Germans' story, and it could only be told from their perspective. I knew the reader would already come to the story with the typical stereotypes the Americans had about the Germans back in 1943, and still have regarding Nazi-era Germans, the same stereotypes that I once had. In response, I have made the reader a stand-in for the 'Americans' throughout, allowing readers to experience the mutual education firsthand by getting to know men they would never expect to identify with. My hope is that by the time readers reach the latter part of the book—which chronicles the POWs' return to Germany and their encounter with indifferent and hypocritical

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Americans, as well as a military government that is closer to a dictatorship—they will be significantly engaged with the Germans they have come to know so well as these men struggle to uphold the true principles of democracy and shape the future of Germany.

#### RESEARCH METHODS:

While researching *The Washington Post Magazine* story, I found, in a space of only two months of intensive research, nine graduates of the democracy schools. I already know, through them and through surviving relatives, what happened to sixty more. (I have also interviewed the widows of four professors from the schools and two translators who worked at the schools.) I already know my way around the archives and can find more people given more time and assuming it is necessary. I have numerous lists from follow-up studies done by professors. I do not want to crowd the book with many more characters but I would like to find one enlisted man who went through Getty, if possible. I have checked such sources as The National Archives, the army personnel files in Germany, The Rhode Island Historical Society, the Edward Davidson Papers at Yale's Beinecke Collection, and The German Émigré Collection at the University of Albany. I have interviewed the widows of all the professors and asked them

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which students stayed in touch with their husbands. Additionally, I sent a list of names from a follow-up study to veteran's organizations in Germany, the German embassy, and several DC organizations, one of which, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, yielded Heinz Henze's name. Through the Camp Aliceville Museum, I found Ertel. It was Michael Luick, director of the organization TRACES, an organization that arranges programs and tours on German POWs in the Midwest, who put me in touch with Alfred Neber. I have already conducted over twenty original interviews with POWs, translators, intelligence men, relatives of POWs, relatives of teachers, and former members of the military government in Germany. I have cross-referenced and, where memory was insufficient to provide exact details, filled out first-person accounts with available documents and secondary source material detailing life at individual camps, which I will footnote in the book. Krammer's book, for example, lists all the books and movies that were distributed to every camp while Lowell May's book on Concordia includes reprints of Concordia University documents that list all 300 classes that were offered at the school.

First-Person Interviews:

Wolf Dieter Zander, former POW, New York City (now deceased)

Horst von Oppenfeld, former POW, Washington DC (now deceased)



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Heinz Henze, former POW, Brussels, Belgium (now deceased)

Heinrich Treichl, former POW, Vienna, Austria (now deceased)

Son of Alfred Neber, former POW, Mannheim, Germany (deceased)

Guenther Peter Ertel, former POW, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio (deceased)

Klaus Burk, former POW, Hamburg, Germany

Baron Rudi von Wechmar, former POW (Conc/Eustis), Munich, Germany

Richard Jaeger, former POW, Germany

Heinrich Stammler, former POW, Kansas City, Kansas

Thomas Naegele, New York City

Toni Richter, Hans Werner Richter's widow, Munich, Germany

Heinze Schroeder, Heinze Schroeder's son, Berlin, Germany

Nicholas Kuntze, Karl Kuntze's son, Dinkelsbuhl

Uli Lamm, Karl Kuntze's cousin, Old Tappan, New Jersey

Claire Ehrmann, Henry Ehrmann's widow, Boulder, Colorado

Jenny Moulton, William Moulton's widow

Walter Schroeder, local historian in Jamestown, Rhode Island and an expert on Fort Getty/Kearney who met Andersch and Moulton

Felix Peter Tropschuh, Tropschuh's nephew, Germany

Stephen Cochrane, 'last' military liason, OMGUS, Stuttgart, Germany

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First-Person Written Accounts:

Letters to and from Henry W. Ehrmann Archives, German Émigré Collection, University of Albany: over 100 letters from POWs to Ehrmann spanning a decade after the war (the later ones were just sent to the archive a few months ago)

Historical monographs on the democracy school programs, record group 389, National Archives

Occupied Military Government, U.S. Zone files, National Archives

Articles written by Smith and Ehrmann on the program

Karl Kuntze's diary

Karl Kuntze's letters from Breckinridge and his notes from Kearney meetings at the International Institute for Social History in the Netherlands

Autobiographies written in German by Breckinridge/Kearney men Heinz Scrhoeder and E.R. Greulich

Autobiographies written by Getty men Franz Kusterer and Gustav H. Blanke

Teufel, Karl C., History of Camp Concordia monograph, 1945, record group 389, National Archives

My Disappearance In Providence, Fictional story based on Kearney experience by Alfred Andersch

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The Cherries of Freedom, autobiographical account by Andersch of his  
desertion

Documents on Andersch and Hallstein provided by Henze and the  
Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Washington DC

Dorothy Thompson Papers/Collection, Syracuse University Library

Other Sources:

Krammer, Arnold: Nazi Prisoners of War In America (Scarborough House,  
1993)

Gansberg, Judith Stalag U.S.A. (Thomas Y. Crowell, 1997)

Carlson, Lewis: We Were Each other's Prisoners (Basic Books, 1997)

Robin, Ron: The Barbed Wire College: The Reeducation of German  
Prisoners of War During World War II (Princeton University Press, 1995)

Tent, James F.: Mission on the Rhine (University of Chicago Press, 1982)

May, Lowell A.: Camp Concordia: German POWs in the Midwest  
(Sunflower University Press, 1995)

Ziemke, Earl: The U.S. Army in the Occupation of Germany, 1944-1946,  
Center of Military History, United States Army, Washington DC, 1975

Articles by WWII journalists, including Dorothy Thompson, Dorothy  
Bromley, and Quentin Reynolds

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Walter Hallstein: The Forgotten European? Edited by Wilfried Loth  
William Wallace, and Wolfgang Wessels; Forwards by Jacques Delors, Sir Edward  
Heath, and Helmut Kohl (Palgrave Macmillan, 1998) a collection of essays about  
Hallstein's legacy, many written by friends and colleagues