RE-EDUCATION OF GERMAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN THE UNITED STATES DURING WORLD WAR II

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

The College of William and Mary

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

---

by

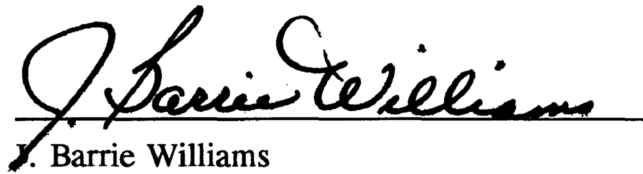
J. Barrie Williams

1993

APPROVAL SHEET

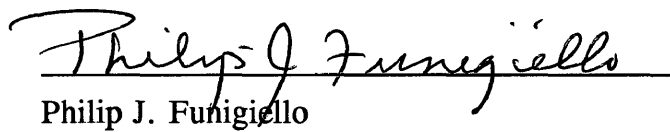
This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

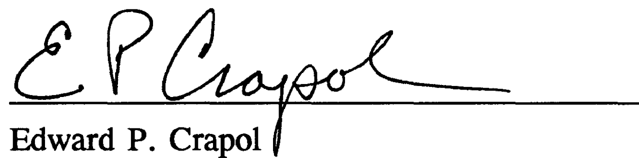


J. Barrie Williams

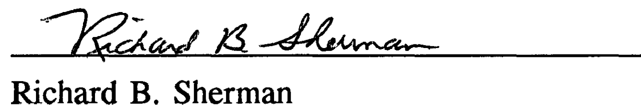
Approved, February 1993



Philip J. Funigiello



Edward P. Crapol



Richard B. Sherman

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iv

ABSTRACT v

INTRODUCTION 2

CHAPTER I. AN OVERVIEW 5

CHAPTER II. "INTELLECTUAL DIVERSIONS" 29

CHAPTER III. SPECIAL PROJECTS 58

CONCLUSION 88

BIBLIOGRAPHY 92

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer would like to thank Professor Philip J. Funigiello for his patience and guidance as director of this thesis and Professors Edward P. Crapol and Richard B Sherman for their reading and sage critique. The professional assistance of the staff at the National Archives and the U. S. Army's Office of the Chief of Military History during the research for this thesis is greatly appreciated. The encouragement, patience, and good humor of the author's family during the work on this thesis were a special boon. The author also extends a special thanks to his elder daughter, Margaret (Meg) Williams, a graduate linguist and librarian on the staff of the Library of Congress for her learned editorial advice and assistance.

ABSTRACT

The focus of this thesis is an overview of the treatment of German prisoners of war held in the United Stated during World War II and an examination of the Army's efforts to stem Nazi influence over the prisoners through an imaginative, though questionably legal, re-education program based on teaching of democracy. The lessons of American history, presented by a group of dedicated scholars, served as the cornerstone of the program which has been described as an unique experiment in political reprogramming.

RE-EDUCATION OF GERMAN PRISONERS OF WAR

IN THE UNITED STATES DURING WORLD WAR II

INTRODUCTION

"Prisoners of war do not figure as largely in the scholarly or the popular history of World War II as their numbers might warrant."[1] Millions of men were taken prisoner by all sides during World War II; exact numbers are hard to determine. Rough estimates reflect some eight million prisoners taken by the Germans, three million each by Great Britain and the Soviet Union, and four million by the United States. Of the last, 427,000 were interned on American soil: nearly 372,000 were German soldiers, 50,000 Italian, and 5,000 Japanese.[2] Hollywood has glamorized the plight and courage of Allied prisoners of war in movies such as the award-winning Stalag 17 and the adventure-packed The Great Escape. Except for two relatively recent made-for-television movies and a few focused scholarly works, little is extant on the fate of Axis prisoners in the United States.

Italy capitulated in September 1943 and soon thereafter declared war on the Third Reich. With Italy as a co-belligerent, the status of the Italian prisoners of war held in the United States changed. Though still under restrictions to insure personal safety, health, and well-being, the majority of the Italian "former" prisoners of war were formed into service battalions, given considerable freedom (work without guards, passes into nearby civilian communities, etc.), and employed in work related directly to military

---

[1] Allen V. Koop, Stark Decency: German Prisoners of War in a New England Village (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1985), 3.

[2] Ibid.

operations. The Italians, except for a small number of truly unrepentant Fascists, for all intents and purposes, ceased to be prisoners of war.[3]

The estimate of 5,000 Japanese prisoners of war noted earlier reflects a total towards the end of the war. The number seems incongruous when compared with the thousands of German and Italian prisoners in the United States. The paucity reflects the temper of the war in the Pacific theater. During the first three years of World War II, the number of Japanese prisoners in the United States never exceeded 120.[4] In reality, the nature of the enemy in the Pacific theater and the attitude of Allied forces towards the Japanese, described by some historians as bordering on rabid racism, resulted in few Japanese soldiers ever finding their way to prisoner camps.[5] "Neither Allied fighting men nor their commanders wanted many POW's," wrote historian John W. Dower. "This was not official policy . . . but over wide reaches of the Asian battleground it was every day practice. The Marine battle cry at Tarawa made no bone about this: 'Kill the Jap bastards! Take no prisoners!'"[6]

The U. S. Army was initially content to confine the German prisoners of war in secure good order and to take full advantage of their labor potential. The Army

---

[3] George G. Lewis and John Mewha, History of Prisoner of War Utilization by the United States Army 1776-1945 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1955). 93. Hereafter cited as: Lewis, Utilization History.

[4] Edward J. Pluth, The Administration and Operation of German Prisoner of War Camps in the United States During World War II [PhD. diss.](Ball State University, 1970), p. 438. Hereafter cited as: Pluth, Administration and Operation.

[5] In military lexicon, holding areas for prisoners of war in the immediate combat area, usually temporary barbed-wire enclosures, are called "cages."

[6] John W. Dower, War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 68.

discovered belatedly and much to its chagrin and embarrassment that the Nazi ideology the Allies were fighting to destroy in Europe was flourishing in many of the prisoner of war camps on America's own shores. Hardcore Nazis controlled life inside the wire in a number of camps.

The focus of this thesis is an overview of the handling of German prisoners of war in the United States during World War II and an examination of the Army's efforts to stem Nazi influence and control over the prisoners through an imaginative, though questionably legal, re-education program based on teaching the principles of democracy. The re-education program has been described as an unique experiment in political reprogramming.[7]

[7] Judith M. Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1977), 6.

CHAPTER I

GERMAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN THE UNITED STATES - AN OVERVIEW

Evolution of Prisoner of War Policy

"The United States Government, even in its infancy, accepted the customs of nations and sought to apply the concepts of international law to its prisoners of war."[1] The American wars of the late eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries (with the exception of the Indian campaigns) were fought, generally, under a mutually accepted code of honor. Prisoners were usually exchanged or paroled.

This practice changed mid-way through the Civil War when for the first time in its history, the United States Army found itself faced with the custody and administration of huge numbers of prisoners of war. Action instituted early in the Civil War formalized the exchange of Union and Confederate prisoners. Execution of a formal accord posed a problem for the Federal government since the government of the United States refused to enter into any agreement which would signify recognition of the Confederacy as a sovereign power. The government maintained that "the opposition represented a rebellion against constituted authority and had no existence under law. Hence its leaders and all who supported them were considered to be engaged in treasonable activities and

[1] Lewis, Utilization History, 1.

if captured were to be treated as traitors under the penalty of law."[2]

The Dix-Hill Cartel, signed in July 1862, effectively skirted the recognition issue and established the rules for the exchange of prisoners for both sides. Interestingly, the Cartel contained a detailed scale of equivalents for use in any exchange under which a commanding general was equivalent to 60 privates; noncommissioned officers were worth two privates; private soldiers were to be exchanged on a one-for-one basis, etc. This complicated exchange system was never successfully implemented. Ultimately, the failure of both sides to live up to the Dix-Hill Cartel resulted in large numbers of prisoners in both the North and South, who had to be fed, housed, and clothed, suffering in prolonged enforced idleness in prisoner of war camps.[3] To establish some policy for the handling of prisoners, the U. S. War Department issued General Order Number 100 in 1863 which established rules for such matters as treatment of wounded prisoners, housing, food, and recreation. General Order 100 served as a guide for later policies relating to the treatment of prisoners by United States forces.[4]

The Civil War marked the advent of modern war. With modern war came severe demands on a belligerent's manpower to support large field armies and critical war industries. Neither side made a concerted effort to take advantage of the labor pool represented by the large numbers of prisoners being held. The labor intensive nature of modern warfare, coupled with recognition of the labor potential of large numbers of

---

[2] Ibid., 27.

[3] Ibid., 29.

[4] Pluth, Administration and Operation, 4.

prisoners of war and the fact that any exchanged prisoners, though prohibited from taking up arms again, could serve in an enemy's war industry, effectively ended the large exchanges of prisoners in wars occurring after the turn of the century.[5]

"The Hague Convention of 1899 Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land" was the first international protocol which addressed specifically the treatment of prisoners of war. It outlined both the duties of captor and the prisoner. The protocol specifically provided that a captor could employ prisoner of war labor. Twenty-four nations, including the United States, adopted and ratified the agreement. It was modified to correct deficiencies in 1907. During World War I, the United States "complied fully with the provisions of the Hague Convention of 1907."[6]

World War I revealed glaring weaknesses in the Hague Convention of 1907. The most obvious one stemmed from the Convention's dependence on the nineteenth century concept of war which had not caught up with the stark realities of modern total warfare. Because of its demonstrated weaknesses, a growing demand rose for a revision of the Convention. Delegates from 47 countries met at Geneva, Switzerland, in 1929 to reconsider and revise the rules governing the treatment of prisoners of war. The meeting resulted in the signing of the "Geneva Prisoner of War Convention of 1929." Designed "to diminish the rigors of war and to mitigate the fate of prisoners," the 97 Articles of the Convention, addressing such aspects as evacuation of prisoners, prisoner of war camps, prisoner of war labor, wages, transfer, punishments, the status of sick and wounded, medical personnel, chaplains, etc., became the guiding document for the

---

[5] Lewis, Utilization History, 47.

[6] Ibid., 48

treatment of prisoners of war during World War II.[7]

World War II would reveal severe shortcomings in the 1929 Convention just as World War I had in the old Hague Convention of 1907. Nonetheless, the Geneva Convention of 1929 was the "bible" used by the United States in its pre-war planning and in the Allies' wartime administration of Axis prisoners of war. This strict adherence to the Geneva Convention resulted in what appeared to some observers as overly lenient treatment and "coddling" of prisoners of war: "It is understood that prisoners of war are coddled and pampered; in fact are being treated with extreme leniency."[8] U. S. policy in the treatment of German prisoners went beyond any convention-bound obligation to the letter of international law. The primary reason for adopting a generous treatment policy was the assumption and hope that the Germans would reciprocate in their treatment of American prisoners. Senior commanders also hoped that widespread knowledge of America's benevolent treatment of prisoners might encourage large scale German surrenders and a shortening of the war.[9]

Early in the war, War Department policy called for the transfer of all captured enemy personnel to the United States. Once any useful tactical intelligence is gleaned from prisoners, they became a burden on any combat command. Accordingly, official policy read that the transfer was ordered "to relieve our [America's] own fighting forces

---

[7] Pluth, Administration and Operation, 8.

[8] U. S. Congress. Senate. Senator Frances Thomas Maloney, Democrat from Connecticut, speaking on Treatment of Prisoners of War in the United States. 78th Cong., 2nd sess., April 10, 1944. Congressional Record, XC, 6832.

[9] Allen V. Koop, Stark Decency: German Prisoners of War in a New England Village, 21.

of the problems of guarding, feeding and housing prisoners of war in the active theater of operations and to alleviate the critical manpower shortages which existed in the continental United States."[10] Even under this policy, however, by the end of 1942, only 512 German prisoners were interned in the United States.[11]

United States forces had their first large-scale contact with the German army in North Africa in 1942. The mass surrenders that accompanied the Anglo-American victory there brought the prisoner of war problem to the forefront. Great Britain, severely taxed with the burden of caring for and housing almost a quarter million German prisoners, pushed the United States to accept custody of 150,000 prisoners to help alleviate the problem. Though initially reluctant, the United States agreed to the British proposal, stipulating that the prisoners be sent in 50,000 man increments with a month's notice given before the arrival of any increment and that no shipping would be specifically diverted to carry the German prisoners to the United States. The dam opened.[12] Traveling on otherwise empty ships, over 120,000 German prisoners entered confinement in the United States by the end of 1943; a year later there were over 300,000. At the end of the war with Germany in May 1945, the number peaked at 371,000.[13]

Security considerations guided early choices for locations of prisoner of war

---

[10] Allan Kent Powell, Splinters of a Nation: German Prisoners of War in Utah (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989), 40.

[11] Pluth, Administration and Operation, 438.

[12] Allen V. Koop, Stark Decency: German Prisoners of War in a New England Village, 17.

[13] Pluth, Administration and Operation, 438.

camps in the United States. The government feared sabotage by escaped prisoners. The Army's Office of the Provost Marshal General, charged with the responsibility for all prisoners of war, attempted to keep the camps in remote areas of the south and southwest, far from the defense industries on the East and West coasts. Many compounds were established in old Civilian Conservation Corps camps and in unused areas of military reservations.

Security ceased to be paramount with the recognition of the labor value of the prisoners. The new policy became one of calculated risk - balancing security concerns with productivity of prisoner labor. It led to the establishment of hundreds of additional small camps, usually as close to the prisoners' work sites as possible.[14] By the end of the war, over 500 camps were in operation, spread throughout almost every state in the Union.[15] The calculated risk policy, easing and modifying security measures, proved to be a fortuitous decision which would enable the country to derive maximum benefit from the labor potential represented by the large numbers of enemy prisoners shipped to the United States.

Transition to Incarceration and Daily Life in the Camps

The German prisoners of war sent to the United States during World War II may be divided into three groups: the first 140,000 were made up, generally, of seasoned soldiers, many from the Africa Korps, captured by British and American forces in North Africa in 1942 and 1943; the second group consisted of about 50,000 soldiers captured

---

[14] Lewis, Utilization History, 118.

[15] Pluth, Administration and Operation, 436.

in Italy; those in the third group, numbering about 182,000, were captured between the Allied landing in Normandy in June 1944 and the fall of the Third Reich in May 1945.[16] The contrast between prisoners in the early group and those captured in the later stages of the war was striking. Some of Germany's finest soldiers, many dedicated Nazis, were in the Africa Korps, but, towards the end of the war, Germany scraped the bottom of the barrel for manpower. Anyone who could shoulder a rifle was sent to the front including old men, young boys, and the infirm. In the words of one such "soldier": "I was drafted to an anti-aircraft battery as a young boy of 15 years . . . . I was captured on March 26, 1945 when I was 16 about four miles from my home town and was taken through France to the states . . . besides old men, we were six young boys like me."[17] A strong dedication to the war and Nazism was not as prevalent in the last group of prisoners as it was in the earliest group.

The shock of capture and the transition to incarceration are traumatic for any person. Germans taken prisoner were kept in holding camps in North Africa, Italy or France before being loaded on to empty troopships which would have otherwise returned to the States empty. Anxieties increased during the cramped cross-Atlantic voyage, a trip marked usually by seasickness, stale air, cramped quarters, boredom, and uncertainty. The voyage could take two weeks (although one group of German prisoners made the crossing in six days on the Queen Mary.) Officers and noncommissioned officers did their best to maintain discipline during the crossing. Cigarettes were usually in short

---

[16] Allan Kent Powell, Splinters of a Nation: German Prisoners of War in Utah, 40.

[17] Willi Vogel, letter relating his experiences as a German prisoner of war at Fort Eustis, Virginia 1945-1946, document on file at the Post Historian's Office, Fort Eustis, Virginia.

supply, but the prisoners found that the ship's crew was often anxious to trade for any piece of militaria. Arrival at New York, Norfolk, or Boston was a source of surprise and wonder for soldiers who had been told that the Luftwaffe had leveled all the coastal cities in the States.[18]

The reception at all ports of entry was similar. At the Hampton Roads port a team of 500 personnel was required to process each arriving prisoner of war ship. Since different prisoner groups were to be dispatched to different destinations, a boarding party met each ship at the Roads before it docked to determine the number of wounded on board, the number of protected personnel (doctors, medical attendants, chaplains), and the numbers of officers, noncommissioned officers, and members of the Kriegsmarine (German Navy). When the ship docked, prisoners disembarked at a rate of 700 per hour, wounded prisoners first. At the processing center, all prisoners had a hot shower, were disinfected along with their uniforms and belongings, photographed, fingerprinted, had their personnel files completed and then were moved quickly to waiting trains manned with a mess staff and guards for movement to their internment camps.[19] The initial processing at the port was efficient; however, contact with the American soldiers involved usually confirmed preconceived Nazi concepts of a loose, undisciplined America. Few of the American soldiers encountered spoke German and the usual

---

[18] Arnold Krammer, Nazi Prisoner of War in America (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 16-17.

[19] John Lewy, "Prisoners of War," Army Transportation Journal, April 1945, 23. "Roads," in the nautical sense, describes a protected place near shore, not so enclosed as a harbor, where ships can ride at anchor.

refugee doctor who could speak the language was open in his contempt for the Germans.[20]

Accustomed to being transported in German boxcars, the comfort of the upholstered-seat American railcars surprised the prisoners. The vastness and richness of the American countryside through which they traveled enroute to their camps were further surprises and a source of awe to many. Some thought the vistas a ruse.[21] The camps, many brand new, were another surprise for the German prisoners. The government took great care to construct the barracks and other buildings to the same specifications used for American military construction in strict compliance with the Geneva Convention.[22] One prisoner described the reaction to the accommodations: "Our mouths fell open in amazement . . . double-deck bunks, white sheets, white pillow cases - everything new! . . . . In the German army we lay on straw sacks and had a very rough blanket to cover up with."[23] It should be remembered, however, that even with all the comforts, the camps were still prisons with barbed-wire, guard towers, and searchlights - a restricted, dictated existence with no certain end.

Each prisoner was given a full issue of military clothing with the uniforms all marked with "PW" in white letters. "American commitment to the Geneva Convention extended to granting permission for the Germans to wear Nazi uniforms, decorate

---

[20] Allen V. Koop, Stark Decency: German Prisoners in a New England Village, 19.

[21] Ibid., 19.

[22] Based on today's standards, the buildings appear inadequate. However, it is interesting to note that the U.S. Army occupied barracks built exactly the same way, and at the same time, as those for the prisoners of war until the 1980s.

[23] Allan Kent Powell, Splinters of a Nation: German Prisoners of War in Utah, 53.

barracks with swastika flags, use the Hitler salute, and even, in some cases, celebrate Nazi holidays."[24]

German prisoners ate well. The Geneva convention prescribes that the food ration allotted prisoners of war should be the same in quantity and quality provided to soldiers. Most German prisoners gained weight during their confinement in the United States. The liberal rations provided the prisoners fueled protests over "pampering and coddling" prisoners. Representative Robert L. F. Sikes, speaking in the House of Representatives in early 1945, expressed the concerns of his constituents:

> They see the prisoners day after day. They see . . . frequent accounts of the good food, cigarettes, and candies enjoyed by the German prisoners of war. Elaborate menus are printed, many of them showing meat point requirements higher than those available to American citizens. There is growing resentment."[25]

Despite such periodic protests from Congress and the complaints by local citizens in the environs of some of the camps, the government maintained the food ration supplied German prisoners in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Convention throughout the war. The International Red Cross made periodic checks of the usual working ration of 5,500 calories per day. Camp authorities authorized alterations to meet prisoner tastes, as long as the cost and calorie levels met the limits prescribed. Potatoes were, by and far, a favorite in camp mess halls; it was estimated that a German prisoner would consume a pound of potatoes with a meal. One camp commander had

---

[24] Allan V. Koop, Stark Decency: German Prisoners of War in a New England Village, 20.

[25] U.S. Congress. House. Representative Robert L. F. Sikes, Democrat from Florida, speaking on Stop Pampering Prisoners of War. 79th Cong.,1st sess., February 9,1945. Congressional Record, XCI,980.

to have special permission from the Red Cross to double the potato ration and cut the meat ration as requested by the prisoners.

As soon as the war with Germany ended in May 1945, the government reduced the daily ration for prisoners to 3,000 calories. The prisoners viewed the reduction as a result of the United States no longer needing *quid pro quo* treatment of U. S. prisoners held in Germany and, unquestionably, that had contributed to the decision to reduce the rations. The official government position justifying the action cited the facts that the prisoners were being fed more than they needed (the majority had gained weight in captivity), that the country was experiencing a food shortage as a result of the massive amounts of foodstuff being shipped to Allies and the defeated population in Germany. In addition, a sense of moral outrage and desire for revenge for the horrors discovered in the liberated concentration camps and the treatment of U. S. soldiers held prisoner by the Germans had developed. Although, the prisoners protested the reduction, they did not suffer on the new diet of 3,000 calories per day. They continued to eat better than their defeated countrymen in Germany.[26]

The prisoner's food ration could be supplemented at a canteen maintained at each camp in accordance with the Geneva Convention. Purchases could be made in the canteens using coupon books issued against earnings for labor and ration cards. The canteens served as a recreation center in many camps. Most were well-stocked with personal items offered at reasonable prices: e.g., cigarettes, rationed at one pack per day, were thirteen cents; apple pie or a bottle of milk sold for ten cents; and a bottle of beer

[26] Allan Kent Powell, Splinters of a Nation: German Prisoners of War in Utah, 80-85.

was also ten cents. At the end of the war, the government stopped the beer ration, which had been available to all prisoners in the canteens.[27]

Once prisoners settled into a camp, work and free time filled their days. Generally, they worked the same hours as U. S. workers, six days per week, although they could be required to work 12 hours per day. More free time activities were available to prisoners working on military installations where they had the opportunity to become involved in sports, hobbies, libraries, educational classes, and movies to a greater extent than their fellow prisoners assigned to isolated work sites in the private sector. A number of colleges and universities in the environs of the camps taught courses to the prisoners. All German prisoners had access to American newspapers and magazines, as well as commercial radio broadcasts. The openness of the media, headlining the country's successes along with its military reversals and domestic problems, was a source of continuing amazement to most prisoners. Nazi elements in many camps attempted to censor any news heralding reversals for the German armies.[28]

Prisoner of War Labor

The government's initial efforts to take advantage of prisoner labor stumbled. Keeping policy in line with the Geneva Convention was an early hurdle. The United

---

[27] Ibid., 86.

[28] Lewis, Utilization History, 156. The College of William and Mary offered extension courses for German prisoners at Camp Ashby, Virginia; the University of Virginia taught classes at Camp Pickett, while Randolph-Macon College taught interested German prisoners at Fort Lee. See: John Hammond Moore, "Hitler's Wermacht in Virginia, 1943-1946," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, Vol. 85 (July 1977), 270.

States attempted to follow stringently the provisions of the Convention, which required all prisoners of war, other than officers, to work for the benefit of their captors. Any such work could not be related directly to war operations, nor could the health and safety of prisoners be jeopardized. Prisoners were to be paid for their labor. In the absence of any agreement with enemy powers, the War Department set the pay for working prisoners at 80 cents per day. This was based on the $21 a month paid the U. S. Army private in 1941.[29]

Determining work permissible under the rules of the Convention was another matter. A liberal interpretation of a nation's efforts in fighting total war could construe just about any undertaking by people so engaged as relating to military operations. The Army's Judge Advocate General adjudicated questionable work proposals. A plan to employ large numbers of the 150,000 German prisoners scheduled to be transferred by the British in work on the ALCAN (Alaska-Canada) Highway was squashed. Since the highway "was a military road undertaken in wartime for military reasons . . ., work directly and greatly helping the war effort of the United States", any prisoner of war labor used on it would be in contravention of the Geneva Convention.[30]

The War Department established the Prisoner of War Employment Board in 1943 to make final decisions on acceptable work assignments for the prisoners.[31] Many of its decisions bordered on "hair-splitting." For example, maintenance and repair work on military vehicles designed to carry cargo and personnel was permitted, but work on

---

[29] Lewis, Utilization History, 77.

[30] Ibid., 87.

[31] Ibid., 114.

vehicles designed to carry combat weapons was not; prisoners could work on gas masks and camouflage nets, but not repair rifle ranges and bayonet courses; they could manufacture mechanical parts that could be used in both the civilian and military sectors, but not parts that were solely for military use. The Board, while mindful of the impact of any of its decisions on U. S. prisoners held in Germany, tended to decide that "anything not specifically forbidden was allowed."[32]

Initial plans called for the employment of the prisoners of war on relatively secure military installations, filling administrative and menial jobs, thereby freeing U. S. soldiers for combat. There was no great demand for prisoner labor in the civilian sector in 1942. By 1943, however, the United States felt the manpower pinch of a global war. The demands of the armed services for manpower were great and the high wages paid by the booming defense industries lured workers away from traditional jobs. Critical shortages developed in a number of labor-intensive sectors like agriculture and forestry. Use of the prisoners of war offered a solution to the acute labor shortage.

Complications arose. Organized labor was an early stumbling block in the government's effort to use the prisoner labor pool effectively. Failing to appreciate that the use of prisoners would alleviate the manpower shortage and could materially shorten the war, some members of organized labor continued to protest prisoners' employment. To accommodate labor's concerns, the War Manpower Commission required local commanders to give local unions every opportunity to recruit free labor to fill the work requirements before approving any contracts for prisoner labor. This did not always

[32] Allen V. Koop, Stark Decency: German Prisoners in a New England Village, 24.

satisfy the unions; protests continued through the end of the war.[33]

Regardless of complications and stumbling blocks, the percentage of available prisoners of war who were employed in the United States rose continually once the decision was made to make maximum use of their potential. By 1945, 95.6% of prisoners of war who could be employed under the terms of the Geneva Convention had jobs in the private sector or on various military installations.[34] The demand for prisoner contract labor outstripped the supply available to the War Department. Those in the private sector worked in a wide range of jobs, mostly in those requiring unskilled labor. The greatest numbers worked in agriculture, food-processing, and forestry. On farms, they filled the short-fall in the domestic supply of workers, prevented crop loss, and increased productivity in a time of extreme demands for food. Many farmers had grown so dependent on prisoner of war labor that the Secretary of Agriculture requested the delay in repatriation of 14,000 prisoners in 1946 so that they could be used on essential farm work in the Spring months.[35]

The use of prisoner of war labor was cost-effective. Estimates combining the savings realized in their use as replacements for civilians and soldiers on government installations coupled with the collections for contract work in the private sector range between $170 and $274 million.[36]

---

[33] Lewis, Utilization History, 123.

[34] Ibid., 171.

[35] Ibid., 127.

[36] Ibid., 263.

Camp Security and Discipline

The American officers and enlisted forces assigned to guard German prisoner of war camps were not of high quality during the early years of the war. Officers were often assigned the duty as punishment and most enlisted guards were selected from soldiers unfit for combat duty. The quality of the guard force improved in 1945 when the Army started assigning returned combat veterans, including a large number of liberated American prisoners of war. These assignments were a defensive move by the War Department made in the face of continuing charges of "coddling" prisoners. An interesting phenomenon occurred with the change in guard personnel. There was an immediate empathy between many of these former American prisoners of war and their German charges; perhaps it was the shared experience of captivity that made the new guards less arbitrary and overbearing than those guards who had never faced combat.[37]

Discipline in the camps varied from strict to almost lax. In the early years of the war, the prisoners were over-guarded. By the end of the war, it was common practice to send large work details out with only one armed guard who might go to sleep during the day or wander off to shoot crows rather than watch after his charges. The most serious incident between German prisoners and American guards occurred on the night of July 8, 1945 at a camp at Salina, Utah when a deranged guard fired 250 rounds of machine-gun fire into the tents of sleeping German prisoners, killing nine and wounding

---

[37] A former German prisoner of war described the attitude: "The Amis [Americans] showed by their attitude that they wanted to forget and be reconciled. After all, they implied, you were only doing your duty." See: Hans von Luck, Panzer Commander (New York: Praeger, 1989), 306.

19.[38]

History is replete with stories of Allied escapes from prisoner of war camps in Germany during World War II. The chances of an Allied soldier making his way to freedom were much greater than those of any escaped German prisoner in the United States. While the Allied soldier had to traverse only a few hundred miles, usually with the assistance of resistance networks established to assist escapees, the German had to negotiate thousands of miles and an ocean between his camp and home with no assistance. Though German prisoners of war were under orders to escape, few tried. There were only 2,222 escapes registered among the 372,000 German prisoners held in the United States during the war. Most were recaptured within days of their escape. The most famous escape occurred on December 23, 1944, when 25 Germans tunneled out of the camp at Papago Park, Arizona. All were recaptured within a month.[39] The Papago Park escape drew heavy criticism, especially from Congressional critics, of the seeming laxity of the War Department's prisoner of war program:

> The theory of calculated risk should never be used in those camps where desperate and fanatical Nazis are stationed. I am informed that regardless of the fact that the camp located near Phoenix, Ariz. confines some of the worst Nazis and is even known as the Alcatraz of all camps, only one out of every four guard towers are being manned. As a result of this inefficiency, the prisoners of war were able to dig a tunnel for some 200 feet under the very eyes of the guards. It took several months to dig this tunnel. The prisoners were able to dispose of all the dirt from the tunnel within the camp without being detected.[40]

---

[38] Allan Kent Powell, Splinters of a Nation: German Prisoners of War in Utah, 1,77.

[39] Krammer, Nazi Prisoners of War in America, 119.

[40] U. S. Congress. House. Representative Richard F. Harless speaking on German Prisoners of War. 79th Cong., 1st sess., February 19, 1945. Congressional Record, XCI, 1278.

A few escaped German prisoners, always on the FBI "most-wanted" list, remained at large in the years after the war.[41]

Although escapes were an annoyance, to realize maximum benefit from the labor of the German prisoners, the government had more serious everyday problems in discipline, control, and productivity to overcome. The Provost Marshal General interpreted the Geneva Convention as permitting the detaining power to work prisoners of war and use reasonable means to force prisoners to comply with any lawful work order. Officers were not required to work. Noncommissioned officers could only be employed in supervisory roles if they waived their work exemption in writing. The interpretation of the rules allowed camp commanders to apply "administrative pressure," withdrawing privileges or restricting diets, to force compliance with any lawful order, including an order to work. This evolved quickly into a "no work, no eat" policy; prisoners refusing to work were confined on a restricted diet of bread and water. The authorities segregated recalcitrant prisoners who could not be pressured by "bread and water" or the threat of courts-martial in separate camps and forced them to work for their own maintenance. Many of the first noncommissioned officers who were assigned as supervisors, while pretending cooperation, were actually responsible for a number of work stoppages and slowdowns throughout the system. Maximum productivity resulted when these supervisors were replaced by more cooperative leaders, the prisoners trained in the job to be done - be it picking cotton, chopping pulpwood, gutting turkeys, etc.,

---

[41] The record book on escaped German prisoners of war did not close until 1982. That year, Georg Gaertner, a former sergeant in the Africa Korps who had escaped on September 21, 1945, surfaced after having lived as an escapee in the United States for over 37 years. See: Georg Gaertner with Arnold Krammer, Hitler's Last Soldier in America (New York: Stein and Day, 1985.)

and competent American supervisors, other than the guard, were provided for each project. Despite the problems, and the requirement to pay the prevailing free labor wage to the government for prisoner of war workers, competition for prisoner labor among employers was keen.[42]

Usually, the German prisoners of war feared their own chain of command more than the ire of their American captors. Content merely to maintain order in the camps, Americans rarely interfered in the relationships between Germans inside the wire in the early years of the war. "The Americans wanted their prisoners of war camps to operate smoothly, even if it meant allowing ardent Nazis to run German affairs inside the camps. Order became more important than individual rights."[43] Consequently, in a majority of the camps, dedicated Nazis seized control of the prisoner population. The seniority system in the camps encouraged Nazi control. The Africa Korps veterans, who composed the majority of the earliest prisoners of war to arrive in the United States, tended to maintain their air of confidence and arrogance. These senior Africa Korps "leaders" were not beyond using intimidation and force to ensure their control when persuasion and peer pressure failed. Prisoners who demonstrated anti-Nazi leanings or were overly cooperative with their American captors were often brought before kangaroo courts or Courts of Honor; some were beaten, forced to commit suicide or murdered outright. Between September 1943 and April 1944, at least five murders and several "suicides" were recorded in the camp system. All the victims were prisoners accused

---

[42] Lewis, Utilization History, 103, 151-153.

[43] Allen V. Koop, Stark Decency: German Prisoners of War in a New England Village, 30.

of being collaborators or informers. (The United States executed fourteen of the fifteen prisoners court-martialed and convicted in these incidents after the end of the war.)[44]

These incidents forced the War Department to recognize the problem of Nazi control, although the corrective actions instituted were less than spectacular. "The War Department response to the potential problems inside the camps came with glacial speed and inappropriate procedures."[45] The authorities' first response was to ask anti-Nazis to step forward and openly request protection, a plan which demonstrated a total insensitivity to life inside the wire and bordered on stupidity. With no significant guarantees for safety offered, few prisoners were bold enough to step forward. This led to an erroneous official conclusion that most of the Germans held as prisoners were Nazis. Under high-level pressure from Congress and the White House to reduce Nazi influence in the camps, the Army began to segregate prisoners. By 1945, over 4,500 hard-core Nazis had been concentrated in a special camp at Alva, Oklahoma. Anti-Nazis were segregated at Camp Campbell, Kentucky, and Fort Devens, Massachusetts. Serious mistakes still occurred in the government's segregation activity as when SS soldiers were occasionally assigned to camps designated to hold only anti-Nazis. It wasn't until 1945 that all camp commanders began to check all incoming prisoners for the telltale SS arm tattoo.[46]

Closely after segregation became regular practice the government began a

---

[44] Pluth, Administration and Operation, 317.

[45] Allen V. Koop, Stark Decency: German Prisoners of War in a New England Village, 33.

[46] Ibid., 34, 98.

re-education or "de-Nazification" program. The immediate goal of the program was to eliminate or at least weaken the hold of the Nazi leadership in the prisoner population. Again, the prompting of Congress added impetus to the Army's effort:

> Of far-reaching importance is the question of reeducation of prisoners of war, and there, too, we have fallen down badly . . . our Army seems frightened to death at the very idea of doing anything to dampen the fanatical nazi-ism of German prisoners in our care, despite the fact that there is not a word in the Geneva Convention which forbids propagandizing prisoners.[47]

In fact, the Geneva Convention did prohibit a captor from subjecting prisoners of war to political propaganda or reeducation. In view of this, and to protect U. S. prisoners in the hands of the Germans, initial reeducation efforts were highly classified.

---

[47] U. S. Congress. House. Representative Sikes speaking on Stop Pampering Prisoners of War. 79th Cong., 1st sess., February 9, 1945. Congressional Record, XCI, 980.

CHAPTER TWO

"INTELLECTUAL DIVERSIONS"

An unnamed Army historian describes the genesis of the unprecedented War Department program of de-Nazification and re-education during the waning months of World War II in the following manner:

> Early in 1944 representatives of the War Department and the State Department exchanged opinions informally concerning the advisability of undertaking discreet measures toward creation among German prisoners of war in American custody of the maximum possible understanding of and sympathy for American traditions, institutions, and ways of life and thought . . . . The War Department recognized the presence of 370,000 German prisoners of war as an unprecedented opportunity to develop in the German citizenry a nucleus of democratic thinking and respect for America.[1]

The visionary acumen of government planners this implies is, perhaps, unwarranted. While some military and other government officials and voices from the private sector, suggested early in the war that the German prisoner population represented a microcosm of the German people upon which an experiment in de-Nazification and re-education could be tested, the Army did not grasp the "opportunity" until the waning months of the war. A more accurate description of the re-education program's genesis is that it was born from a combination of War Department frustration over the perplexing problem of

---

[1] War Department. Special Studies Division. Re-education of Enemy Prisoners of War. Historical Monograph File 4-4.1. (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, November 1, 1945), 1. Hereafter cited as: HMF 4-4.1, Nov.1,1945.

continuing Nazi influence and power in the prisoner of war camps, adverse publicity over the Army's seeming complacency and inability to stem that Nazi influence, and the vision of some American thinkers who looked beyond the immediate goal of victory over the Axis powers to the needs of postwar Europe, and White House pressure. To the Army's credit, once it accepted the re-education mission, it approached the program with the spirit of a crusade, acting with uncharacteristic flexibility, realism, and imagination in instituting one of the most successful training programs ever created by the military. Judith Gansburg, in her book, Stalag: U.S.A., opines that: "The project remains today a unique experiment in political reprogramming."[2]

Stemming Nazi Influence - Recognizing the Problem

The Army's slow comprehension of the problem of Nazi influence in the prisoner of war camps and lethargic action to stem that influence can be attributed to a number of factors. First, for America the World War II prisoner of war experience was unique. Nothing in the government's experience had prepared it for managing a prisoner of war population of such magnitude. Its only recent experience had been during World War I when roughly 6,000 German prisoners of war, made up of captured navy personnel, crews from captured German merchant ships, and various "enemy aliens," were held in four camps in the United States.[3] In comparison, the World War II prisoner of war population exploded to over 400,000 spread throughout the United States in over 500 camps. Little planning had taken place between the wars for prisoner of war

---

[2] Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A., 6.

[3] Allan Kent Powell, Splinters of a Nation: German Prisoners of War in Utah, 14.

contingencies. As a result, the War Department moved cautiously, establishing policies and methods largely by trial and error.

A problem must be perceived and understood before it can be solved. Early in the war, the Army did not perceive Nazi power in the camps as a problem. In the Army's view, the German soldiers in the camps were out of the fight. They received low priority from an Army whose primary mission was defeating the German Wermacht in the field, not fighting a political ideology.[4] The Provost Marshal General's Office, which was responsible for the prisoner of war program, was content to make a contribution to victory by insuring that its charges remained confined securely in good order and that the country realized maximum benefit from the labor potential represented by the prisoner population.

To most Americans during World War II, all Germans were Nazis. It took the Army many months to realize that "German" and "Nazi" were not synonymous and that there were many dedicated anti-Nazis among the prisoners of war who were just as militant in their beliefs as the Nazis.[5] Nazi leadership in many camps came from members of the Afrika Korps who made up the majority of the prisoners first shipped to the United States in 1943. The authorities did not realize at first that the early

---

[4] A scathing critique of the Army's management of the German prisoner of war program and its blindness to the threat of Nazism in a November 1944 Atlantic Monthly article underlines the military's attitude in quoting two American officers: "We're not here to fight Fascism. We're here to defeat the enemy .... It is not our business to change these men's habits or beliefs or re-educate them. This company has a job to do and we simply do it in the way which will bring the best results." See: James H. Powers, "What To Do With German Prisoners of War - The American Muddle," Atlantic Monthly, vol. 175, no. 3, November 1944, 49.

[5] Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A., 57.

shipments of prisoners from North Africa had also included large numbers of German soldiers who were not members of the dedicated Afrika Korps, but who were instead members of the 999th Probationary Division, a unit Hitler had formed with men considered dangerous to his regime. As a special penal unit, the 999th Division had its share of common criminals; however, the majority of its members were political dissidents - Communists, Social Democrats, etc. For these men service as cannon fodder for the Afrika Korps had been a ticket out of a concentration camps. At the first opportunity, most members of the 999th surrendered to Allied forces. The Allies, however, took no action to separate them from the mass of prisoners that resulted from Rommel's collapse in North Africa.[6]

Conflict arose in the camps housing both the Afrika Korps Nazis and these anti-Nazis. When the toll in dead and injured started to rise, the Army began to comprehend that something was amiss in their camps. The problems appeared to be caused by the anti-Nazis, but, on investigation of a number of the incidents of violence, it became apparent that the anti-Nazis were victims not perpetrators.[7]

While a lack of understanding of the problem contributed to the Army's lack of initial success in separating the anti-Nazis from their Nazi tormentors, its strict adherence to the dictates of the Geneva Convention as a means of insuring reciprocal treatment of American prisoners of war held in Germany must also be blamed. The Geneva Convention required that a prisoner of war disclose only his "name, rank, and serial

---

[6] Allen V. Koop, Stark Decency: German Prisoners of War in a New England Village, 35-38.

[7] Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A., 58.

number" during interrogation by his captors. Consequently, the War Department was hesitant in probing too deeply into a prisoner's political beliefs unless an individual prisoner volunteered the information. James H. Powers, in his November 1944 Atlantic Monthly article "What To Do With German Prisoners - The American Muddle," chastised the Army for its naivete and timidity in politically screening German prisoners:

> Examinations generally take place at tables so near together that any prisoner wishing to make it plain that he is an anti-Nazi faces another hurdle. If his fellows hear him making any such declaration, he is a marked man. To make matters worse, the examination disregards the issue of his being a Nazi or an anti-Nazi. Interpreters are not permitted to solicit this information from a prisoner. If he wants to be segregated, he must volunteer the information - though he frequently does not know that he must. Such procedure obviously follows an assumption that it doesn't matter much what a prisoner's political views are.[8]

The Army's early efforts in segregating anti-Nazi and Nazi prisoners produced minimal success. When prisoners could be identified as anti-Nazis, they were sent to one of three camps reserved for them: Fort Devens, Massachusetts; Camp Campbell, Kentucky; and Camp McCain, Mississippi. Nazi extremists were shipped to Alva, Oklahoma. By September 1944, when the prisoner population reached nearly 325,000, only 3,392 enlisted men with Nazi sympathies were at Alva. Official estimates, at the time, indicated that at least 50-60,000 enlisted soldiers with Nazi-leanings slipped through the Army's inefficient screening and remained active in the camps.

An unexpected burst of political violence in a number of camps caused official consternation. Beatings and murders between October 1943 and February 1944 galvanized the War Department into renewed action. In July 1944, a new, more

[8] Powers, Atlantic Monthly, 48. At the time the Powers article appeared, the War Department's program of re-education/de-Nazification was starting after a conclusion that the prisoners' politics did, in fact, matter.

ambitious segregation directive appeared under which officer prisoners were to be separated from enlisted prisoners and confined according to two broad categories: pro-Nazis at Alva, Oklahoma, and non-Nazis at Camp Ruston, Louisiana. All German non-commissioned officers were to be segregated in seven camps spread throughout the Service Commands' respective areas of responsibility. This July 1944 policy guided the Army's segregation actions through the end of the war. The new policy's shortcoming remained in its execution since decisions were left in the hands of inexperienced camp commanders. Many camp commanders looked upon their anti-Nazi prisoners with disdain while viewing their disciplined and obedient prisoners, who were usually Nazis, with admiration. All segregation action and transfers were to take place without disruption in the maximum use of prisoner of war labor. Since good order and discipline insured the effectiveness of the labor program, many camp commanders disregarded the requirement to rid their camps of Nazis.[9] Camp commanders frequently used the Provost Marshal's directive to rid their camps of trouble-makers, regardless of political sympathy.

Although the Army was stung by the public outrage over Nazi brutalities in the prisoner of war camps, it appeared unconcerned to many observers. To them, the solution to the problem appeared to be a concentrated re-education effort designed to expose the prisoners to the power of political democracy. Victory over Fascism was just a matter of time in their view and democracy's worth would be evident by the reality of that victory. These same Americans believed that even Nazis would come to understand the obvious benefits of democracy if they were properly educated. The push for

---

[9] Arnold Krammer, Nazi Prisoners of War in America, 174-188.

re-education was strengthened by a belief that post-war Germany would be a political vacuum in which, if democracy did not fill the void, Communism surely would. An outspoken advocate of re-education was Gerhart Seger, editor of the German-American newspaper, Neue-Volkszeitung. Seger's opinions appeared in the New York Times on February 24, 1944, in an article entitled "Editor Says Nazis Kill Captives Here": "Nazi organizations - active in American prison camps - executed five non-conformists prisoners and threaten post-war democracy in Germany . . . The only answer to the problem . . . is a program of re-education."[10]

A committee of prestigious Americans under Seger's leadership formed in the late spring of 1944 to push a re-education program. Among the members were: Dr. Monroe Deutch, vice-president of the University of California; Dr. Henry Smith Leiper of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ; Louis Lochner, former chief of the Associated Press Bureau in Berlin; Congressman Howard J. McMurry of Wisconsin; Dr. George N. Schuster, president of Hunter College; Dorothy Thompson, syndicated columnist; and Thomas Mann, world famous German author living in exile in the United States.[11] In addition, Professor Warren A. Seavy of Harvard Law School led a team of Harvard researchers who throughout the summer and fall of 1944 tried to convince the War Department of the logic and benefits of a re-education program for the prisoners of war.

After Seavy's re-education proposal appeared to fall on deaf ears at the War Department, the Harvard group released its entire correspondence with the War Department on the subject to the New York Times on November 30, 1944. The expose

---

[10] New York Times, February 24, 1944, 9.

[11] Krammer, Nazi Prisoners of War in America, 191-192.

in the article heightened Americans' frustration over the government's apparent narrow-minded stubbornness: "He [Stimson] doubts that any such program is workable [and] . . . believes it would only arouse suspicion and hostility."[12] Letters to the editor advocating and supporting a re-education program appeared with greater frequency thereafter. Unknown to those exasperated over the government's intransigence, the War Department was at work on a classified re-education program for the German prisoners in the spring of 1944, albeit not voluntarily, but at the prompting of the White House.

As early as March 1943, seeking any method to break the Nazi hold on the camps, the War Department decided that a re-education program, in which the prisoners would be exposed to the facts of American history and the workings of democracy, might be in order. The Provost Marshal General, however, considered the plan "inadvisable" and shelved it without action.[13]

In early 1944, Dorothy Bromley of the New York Herald Tribune and columnist Dorothy Thompson, frustrated over the government's lack of concern and action on the Nazi problem, took the problem to Eleanor Roosevelt who was shocked and dismayed over the lack of progress by the Army in controlling the Nazi prisoners. According to Judith Gansburg, Mrs. Roosevelt took the unusual step of inviting Major Maxwell McKnight, Chief of the Administrative Section of PW Camp Operations, to dinner at the White House and then questioned him directly about the situation: "I've been hearing the most horrible stories about all the killings that are going on in our camps with these

---

[12] New York Times, November 30, 1944, 5.

[13] Krammer, Nazi Prisoners of War in America, 194.

Nazi prisoners. I was told that you would be able to tell me whether there was truth to these stories."[14]

McKnight deferred an answer until he could confer with his superior, the Assistant Provost Marshal, Brigadier General Blachshear Bryan. Told to hold nothing back, McKnight had a frank discussion with Mrs. Roosevelt a few days later during which he detailed the problem. Appalled, she assured McKnight that: "I've got to talk to Franklin. Right in our own backyard, to have these Nazis moved in and controlling the whole thought process! What do you think that does to us?"[15] Mrs. Roosevelt did, indeed, "talk to Franklin" and the President talked to the Secretaries of War and State. In a letter dated March 30, 1944, Secretary of State Cordell Hull wrote the Secretary of War:

> I believe that the problem of creating among the German prisoners in our hands the most favorable possible attitude toward the United States and its institutions is worthy of serious and immediate consideration on the part of our two Departments. In my opinion, it is a most important part of our problem of post-war security.[16]

Secretary Stimson replied on April 8, 1944, agreeing with the Secretary of State; he stressed that any re-education should remain at all times under military control and reemphasized the objective to be obtained: "Our objective should not be the improbable one of Americanizing the prisoners, but the feasible one of imbuing them with respect for the quality and potency of American institutions."[17]

---

[14] Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A., 61.

[15] Ibid., 62.

[16] HMF 4-4.1, November 1, 1945, Hull to Stimson, March 30, 1944.

[17] Stimson to Hull, April 8, 1944 in ibid.

Both agreed that the program should be classified because of its possible impact on American prisoners of war in German hands should the German government become aware of it and because of the possible adverse actions from the German prisoners who were to be subjected to "re-education," especially the Nazi element still rampant in some camps. The Army Chief of Staff assigned the re-education mission to the Provost Marshal General on May 22, 1944.[18]

A scrupulous application of the provisions of the Geneva Convention characterized the Army's management of the prisoner of war program during World War II.[19] The press and Congress chastised the Army for "coddling" the prisoners, seeming not to understand that the government's strict adherence to the Convention was intentional and was being publicized in the hope of insuring reciprocal treatment of American prisoners in enemy hands. In the view of a number of War Department officials, the re-education program as envisioned would be a clear violation of the Convention, which prohibited a capturing power from forcing propaganda on prisoners. Planners examined and reexamined the Geneva Convention for a possible loophole. They finally settled on Article 17 which states that, "So far as possible, belligerents shall encourage *intellectual*

---

[18] Memorandum for the Commanding General, Army Service Forces, Subject: Reorientation of German Prisoners of War, May 22, 1944 in ibid.

[19] The Provost Marshal General, Major General Archer L. Lerch, underlined this fact in a May 1945 article in the American Mercury: "The War Department has followed strictly the terms of this treaty in all orders and directives that it has issued governing the treatment of prisoners of war. The Geneva Convention, I might emphasize, is law." See: Major General Archer L. Lerch, "The Army Reports on Prisoners of War," American Mercury, vol. 60, no. 257, May 1945, 537.

diversions [emphasis added] and sports organized by prisoners of war."[20] Their reasoning was that since the Geneva Convention encouraged "intellectual diversions" and did not spell out the "what" or "how" such activity was to be "organized by prisoners of war," nothing prevented the War Department from selecting the proper subjects and media! In typical obfuscatory fashion, the Army's re-education program became the "Intellectual Diversion Program." This liberal interpretation of the Geneva Convention added importance to the secrecy veiling the program.[21]

Special Projects Branch

The Provost Marshal General established the Special Projects Branch in the Prisoner of War Division of his staff in the late summer of 1944 to operate the re-education program which was officially inaugurated on September 6, 1944. In the preceding six months of planning, the program crystallized sufficiently to allow a definition in more practical terms:

> The prisoners would be given facts objectively presented but so selected and assembled as to correct misinformation and prejudice surviving Nazi conditioning. The facts, rather than being forced upon them, would be made available through such media as literature, motion pictures,

---

[20] War Department. Special Studies Division. The Prisoner of War Re-education Program in the Years 1943-1946 (Draft). Historical Monograph File 2.3-7. Washington,D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, September 1952, 3. Hereafter cited as: HMF 2.3-7, September 1952.

[21] The government carefully protected the sensitivity of the program before it was declassified in early June 1945. It is interesting to note that the Provost Marshal General makes no mention of the "intellectual diversion program" in his May 1945 American Mercury article other than: "Or perhaps Hans is ambitious, so he attends one of the classes taught by a fellow prisoner. It may be an English class. Or a class in mathematics, American literature, American history, art." See: Lerch, American Mercury, May 1945, 541.

> newspapers, music, art, and educational courses. Two types of facts were needed: those which would educate the Germans concerning the power and resources of America and its democracy and those which would convince them of the impracticability and viciousness of the Nazi position.[22]

The goal was to present a large variety of facts so convincingly, that the German prisoners would understand and perhaps believe historical truths and values as generally conceived by Western civilization and to develop an appreciation and respect for the American people and their values. Further, it was hoped that upon repatriation the prisoners might form that hoped-for nucleus of democratic thought in a new Germany which would reject militarism and totalitarian control.[23] Behind these goals of the re-education program, although unstated, was the sober reality of a possible confrontation between democracy and communism for dominance of post-war Germany.

Arnold Krammer states that the men assembled in the Special Projects Branch to run the experimental program "would make any university proud." To head the Branch the Provost Marshal selected Lieutenant Colonel Edward Davidson, a nationally known poet, teacher, author, and 1930's Guggenheim Fellow who had served on the faculties of the Universities of Colorado and Miami before the war. Walter Schonstedt, a German novelist who had fled the Nazis, joined the staff as an interpreter and advisor. In quick order, Davidson recruited Dr. Howard Mumford Jones, the eminent Harvard professor and President of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; Dr. Henry Lee Smith Jr., a language and dialect expert; Robert Richard, an Air Corps officer and former professor at the University of Colorado; and Robert L. Kunzig, an attorney and instructor at the

---

[22] HMF 4-4.1, November 1, 1945, 3.

[23] Ibid.

Army's Information School at Washington and Lee University. Dr. William G. Moulton, a famous linguist with experience in military training programs and fluency in German, and Dr. (Colonel) T. V. Smith, a former congressman from Illinois and professor at the University of Chicago, rounded out one of the most remarkable staffs ever assembled during the war.[24]

One of the earliest actions of the Special Projects staff was the creation of a special camp where the assembled group could brainstorm new programs in complete secrecy and where selected German prisoners could be assembled to assist and participate in the program. A former Civilian Conservation Corps camp near Van Eatten, New York was opened to house the group at the end of October 1944. The camp became known as "The Factory." Five months later, a more accessible, geographically favorable location came available and The Factory transferred operations to Fort Phillip Kearney, a former Coast Artillery Post in Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay.[25]

For duty at The Factory the Army assembled 85 specially qualified German prisoners of war who had been under observation for a number of months by their respective camp commanders and Army intelligence for duty at The Factory. These former professors, writers, linguists, and dedicated anti-Nazis were all volunteers who received no promises of special treatment or early repatriation.[26] Fear of reprisals after the war worried a number of these volunteer prisoners. The Army took steps to maintain their anonymity, concealing the existence of The Factory by maintaining its mailing

---

[24] Krammer, Nazi Prisoners of War in America, 65-66.

[25] HMF 4-4.1, November 1, 1945, 12.

[26] Ibid.

address as Fort Niagara, New York, an ordinary anti-Nazi prisoner of war camp.[27] The prisoners assembled at The Factory included both officers and enlisted ranks. The officer prisoners, in an effort to practice the democratic ideals which they hoped to teach to others and to create an atmosphere where the group could work as equals, started by renouncing their Wermacht rank.[28] Because of their special assignments and careful background investigations, The Factory prisoners enjoyed more freedom than regular prisoners of war. There were no guard towers or barbed wire at Fort Kearney. The prisoners and their American supervisors from the Special Projects Branch, all educated and cultured men joined together for the same purpose, developed an unique mutual respect, sense of cooperation and comradeship that would come to be referred to as the "Kearney spirit."[29]

The Commanding General of the Army Service Forces announced the "Intellectual Diversion Program" to his subordinate commanders throughout the United States in a secret letter on November 9, 1944. The letter, which explained the purpose and goals of the program, provides an interesting insight into the Army's approach to the program at the action level. Maximum use of prisoner of war labor remained an Army priority:

---

[27] Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A., 67.

[28] Each prisoner assigned to The Factory signed an oath which included the following declaration:"I want to live in an altruistic working community together with the other inmates of this compound; the utilization and disposition of each of us should be done in accordance with our individual talents and accomplishments. The military rank will be acknowledged within the limits of the Geneva Convention, but the right for special privileges will be waived as far as our community is concerned." See: National Archives, Record Group 389, Provost Marshal General (PMG), Special Projects Division, Administrative Branch, Decimal File, 1943-1946, Box 1616. Hereafter cited as: RG 389, PMG.

[29] HMF 4-4.1, November 1, 1945, 12-13.

"A properly conducted reorientation program need not interfere with the priority of work projects."

Only materials approved by the Provost Marshal's Special Project Division would be used. Considered key was the conduct of the program at camp level where the program's action agent would be specifically procured and trained officers:

> to be known as the Assistant Executive Officer of the camp. His sole duties are to foster the program within all compounds of each prisoner of war camp and its branches and to assist and advise the camp commander in all matters pertaining to this mission . . . . He should assist the Intelligence officer in identifying ardent Nazis and Gestapo agents, and other incorrigibles whose segregation . . . becomes necessary to the accomplishment of the program . . . . Officer personnel . . . will be procured, trained, and assigned . . . by the Provost Marshal General.[30]

The authorities planned to use any available surrogate to insure success:

> War Prisoners' Aid of the International Young Men's Christian Association, the International Red Cross, and other welfare agencies now well established with prisoner of war camps as far as possible will continue to be employed as channels for the introduction of Intellectual Diversion program materials into camps. The security classification of the program prevents disclosure of its purposes to these agencies.[31]

While the Special Projects Division wrestled with the problem of locating and training officers for the key Assistant Executive Officer positions, The Factory staff organized to provide the materials for the program. The Factory's German prisoners divided themselves into the following sections:[32]

> FILM SECTION: Reviewed films, translated synopses for films, transcribed radio programs, and recommend policies for the post-war use

---

[30] Ibid.

[31] RG 389, PMG, Box 1631. Letter, CG, Army Service Forces to subordinate Commands, Subject: Intellectual Diversion Program, 9 November 1944.

[32] HMF 4-4.1, November 1, 1945, 13-15.

of radio and films.

TRANSLATION BUREAU: Translated surveys taken among the prisoners from German into English and pamphlets prepared by the Office of War Information and Special Projects Division from English into German.

CAMP ADMINISTRATION SECTION: Handled general supervision and welfare of the prisoners and was headed by the camp spokesman.

REVIEW SECTION: Analyzed, evaluated and made recommendations concerning all materials submitted by other branches of the Special Projects Division and other interested government agencies.

CAMP NEWSPAPER SECTION: Maintained continuous review of all camp newspapers, made recommendations about content and editorial policy and gathered material from the papers of possible interest to Army intelligence.

NATIONAL MAGAZINE SECTION: Prepared a periodical entitled Der Ruf (The Call) for the German prisoner population.

Der Ruf (The Call)

One of the most important missions assigned The Factory was the publication of Der Ruf, an eight-page biweekly publication for distribution among the prisoner population.[33] The policy of the paper, as established by the Special Project Division officers supervising the project and its prisoner of war editors was:

> to create a prisoner of war magazine for the broadest audience possible, to provide exact news of all important military and political events and post-war problems, and to print news from the homeland and good reading material in order to foster realistic thought and constructive interests and feelings, stimulate the desire for real cultural expression among the prisoners and to reflect their point of view as far as possible,

---

[33] American prisoners of war held in Germany were subjected to Nazi propaganda in a weekly newspaper called, O.K. - The Overseas Kid, the only journal of current events in English made available in the camps. See: "William L. Shirer Writes in the N.Y. Herald Tribune," Reader's Digest, January 1945, 44.

> give prisoners moral support and open a larger intellectual horizon for their benefit, make prisoners conscious of the tasks which await them in the future and to foster traditions based on the principle of right, independent thinking, personal freedom, and in a broader sense - the Four Freedoms.[34]

Dr. Gustav Rene Hocke, a prizewinning German writer and novelist, was editor-in-chief of Der Ruf at Fort Kearney.[35] Since the editors' prisoner status kept them from pursuing stories like true journalists, the Office of War Information became the paper's "eyes and ears" for background data, reference, and special items of news. That agency cooperated fully in the publication of the paper. The paper was an excellent re-education vehicle, tackling contentious issues from the outset. Nazi prisoners often chided America's treatment of blacks as being no better than Hitler's treatment of the Jews. The first issue contained a lengthy section which discussed the economy of the

---

[34] HMF 4-4.1, November 1, 1945, 17.

[35] Although no promises of special treatment were made to any of the volunteer prisoners at The Factory, Hocke received some special considerations after the war because of his unique history and contributions to the re-education program. Hocke fled the Gestapo in 1940. Settling in Rome, only to be forced into joining the German Luftwaffe as a civilian interpreter in Sicily, he was interned by the Allies as a prisoner of war in September 1944 and shipped to the United States. He asked to be segregated as an anti-Nazi and offered his cooperation, ultimately being selected for The Factory. Hocke's wife, an Englishwoman, had been in England since 1939. After a great deal of letter writing, including his wife's plea to Bess Truman, Hocke was transferred to British control in early 1946 to edit the British version of a prisoner of war newspaper, and be with his family. The Geneva Convention requires a capturing power to return a prisoner to the country of his nationality or the country in whose army he served. A victorious United States made an exception in Hocke's case. See: Letter: Hocke to father-in-law, Professor Leonard Turner, September 28, 1945; Letter: Mary Hocke to "Mrs. Truman, The White House, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.", 14.10.45; Letter: Apostolic Delegate to Brig. Gen. B.M. Bryan requesting special consideration for Hocke, November 2, 1945; Teletype order, Provost Marshal General to CG, First Service Command transferring Hocke to British control effective "0830 hours on 18 January 1946", 11 January 1946. RG 389, PMG, Box 1616.

Southern states, their history, geography, and the roots of slavery.[36]

Der Ruf was a sophisticated German-language publication, printed on high quality paper and liberally illustrated. The first edition appeared in the camp canteens on March 6, 1945; it was priced at a modest five cents per copy. Considerable debate occurred among members of the Special Projects Division officers over whether the paper should be sold or given away free before deciding that the prisoners would be less suspicious of something they had to purchase. Only 11,000 copies were printed for the first edition, but, by the fifteenth edition, 75,000 copies were being printed to meet prisoner demand. Publication ended with the 26th issue on April 1, 1946.[37] The paper paid for itself, not only monetarily, but as a major vehicle in the re-education program.[38]

Prisoner reaction to Der Ruf assisted the Assistant Executive Officers in gauging Nazi strength in their respective camps and tabbing Nazi sympathizers for segregation. With the first issue, Nazi elements actively attempted to prevent the paper's distribution. Over time, their efforts became less pronounced and prisoner reaction to the paper became an excellent means of judging the shift in attitudes as a result of the re-education program.

The Factory element charged with monitoring camp newspapers noted the positive impact of Der Ruf and the subtle efforts of the re-education program in surveys conducted on camp newspapers. An early survey of about 80 camp newspapers in March

---

[36] Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A., 74.

[37] RG 389, PMG, Box 1616. Memorandum, Subject: Liquidation of Factory, dated 21 January 1946.

[38] HMF 4-4.1, November 1, 1945, 19-20.

1945 revealed that almost half should be classified as Nazi or violently Nazi in both tone and content. A distinct transition in a number of the papers' editorial policy and content occurred over the next six months. By the fall of 1945, a similar survey of the same 80 newspapers showed a shift in prisoners' attitudes reflected in the papers they produced. The new survey showed only three newspapers as camouflaged Nazi or militaristic while 24 espoused democracy, 18 were strongly ant-Nazi, 32 non-political, and three religious.[39] A number of elections sponsored by local camp newspapers and Der Ruf substantiated the positive trend in attitudes.[40]

The Film Circuit

At the beginning of the re-education program, government authorities estimated that the prisoner of war activities most susceptible to influence were those recreational

---

[39] HMF 4-4.1, November 1, 1945, 25. The fact that Germany surrendered unconditionally to the Allies in May 1945 may have also contributed to the change in attitudes reflected in the follow-on survey.

[40] A prisoner requested election on the type government preferred for post-war Germany conducted at Camp Clayborne, Louisiana, in November 1945 showed the following results:

Limited Monarchy	8	1.4%
Democracy	387	68.9%
Socialism	44	8.0%
Communism	9	1.7%
Invalid ballots	89	15.6%
Did not vote	25	4.4%
	-----	---------
TOTAL	562	100.00%

See: Letter reporting results of prisoner requested election conducted at Camp Clayborne, Laesione, 19 November 1945, in RG 389, PMG, Box 1616.

activities "that move more or less in the realm of social ideas." In probable order of popularity among prisoners were: the motion picture program recreational reading, radio programs, and theatrical performances.[41] The Special Projects Division, recognizing the power of the motion picture as an information medium, wasted no time in establishing a regular film circuit and seizing control of the distribution of films to the prisoner of war camps.

Before the "Intellectual Diversion" program, the American-made movies rented by the prisoners with canteen funds had been generally selected by a Nazi minority to embarrass the United States. The camp spokesman, who selected the movies for viewing by his fellow prisoners, often opted for films which underlined gangsterism, corrupt morals, and the decadence of American life in order to persuade his fellows of the truth of Nazi allegations. Among the movies most often selected were titles like: Lady Scarface, Millionaire Playboy, Miles from Alcatraz, Parole, Dead End, Legion of the Lawless, Wolf Man, and Too Many Blondes.

To counter this, the Special Projects Division put together a list of motion pictures which combined excellent documentaries along with a catalog of Hollywood productions which could be used to underline America's military and technical power for the prisoners and imbue in them a respect for American values and leaders. Among the documentaries on the new list were: Cow Boy, Steel Town, T.V.A., Rockefeller Center, Aircraft Carrier, Arctic Passage, and Medicine on Guard. Hollywood films on the approved list included: Abe Lincoln in Illinois, Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Back to

---

[41] Letter, CG, Army Service Forces to subordinate commands. Subject: Intellectual Diversion Program, 9 November 1944 in ibid, Box 1631.

Bataan, God Is My Co-Pilot, Song of Bernadette, and the Story of Alexander Graham Bell. Gone were the movies glorifying gangsterism, films containing racial slurs, and depression or slum pictures.

Attendance at movies was voluntary, with prisoners paying 15 cents for a show. Assistant Executive Officers reported attendance and audience reaction to each movie. After V-E Day, movies with strong anti-Nazi sentiments were introduced into the system. Prisoners watched the Why We Fight series and Hollywood productions like: Confessions of a Nazi Spy, The Hitler Gang, Watch on the Rhine, and Hitler's Children. In an attempt to subject the prisoners to a sense of collective guilt, the War Department made attendance at special films showing Nazi atrocities and deprivations of the concentration camps mandatory. On balance, the results of the re-education film program were excellent. Between June 1945 and January 1946, the Special Projects Division recorded over eight million paid admissions. Like Der Ruf, while making a major contribution to the re-education goal, the movie program was self-sufficient, generating a profit of over $1 million.[42]

The New World Bookshelf

German prisoners of war organized instructional classes in the camps from the earliest days of their captivity. While some of the classes provided the opportunity to

---

[42] Krammer, Nazi Prisoners of War in America, 209-211. An initial stumbling block for the movie program was the resistance of Hollywood moguls who resented the use of their films to "coddle" German prisoners. A number, being Jewish, did not look with favor on anything German. A call from the Secretary of War to the Warner brothers, explaining the nature of the classified re-education program, prompted active cooperation. See: Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A., 82.

build credits which would be accepted in the German educational system, most were run by the Nazi control groups and were designed to cement Nazi political philosophy. To the Special Projects Division, the extensive classroom network already in operation presented a perfect opportunity for democratic indoctrination. Through the Assistant Executive Officers, the Division hoped to seize control of the classrooms.

Their first step was to censor all books and reading material available in the camps. Most of the books provided the prisoners by the German government through the International Red Cross were tinged with Nazi propaganda. To stem this source, books arriving from Germany were intercepted and examined in the Customs House in New York prior to release. Objectionable tomes somehow got lost in transit to the camps! The Assistant Executive Officers, after conducting an inventory of their camp libraries, submitted lists to The Factory's Review Section which checked the political content of each book. Referring to a catalog of books approved and disapproved by The Factory, the Assistant Executive Officers were able to "sanitize" and reorganize their camp libraries. With the undesirable weeded out, The Factory worked to develop large quantities of anti-Fascist reading material to fill the void.[43]

Next, The Factory commissioned a series of purchasable paper-back books for sale in the camp canteens. The series, eventually totalling 24 titles, was known as the Bucherreihe Neue Welt (New World Bookshelf). The first books printed in the series included works of German authors who had been banned by Hitler: e.g., Thomas Mann's Achtung Europe (Attention Europe), Der Zauber Berg (The Magic Mountain, Volumes I and II), and Lotte in Weimar (Lotte in Weimar); Franz Werfel's Das Lied von

---

[43] Krammer, Nazi Prisoner of War in America, 206-207.

Bernadette (Song of Bernadette), and Heinrich Heine's Meisterwerke in Vers und Prosa (Masterworks in Verse and Prose). German translations of Stephen Vincent Benet's America, Wendell Wilkie's One World, and works by Joseph Conrad and Ernest Hemingway followed. The series was immensely popular among the prisoners.[44]

In addition to the publication of the literary works on the New World Bookshelf, The Factory published a number of German language pamphlets on its own. One which was immediately popular as a souvenir and text for study was entitled, Kleiner Fuhrer durch Amerika (A Brief Guide Through America). The pamphlet describes the geography, natural resources, history, and institutions of the United States. Dr. Howard Mumford Jones, its author, wrote three additional pamphlets for sale in the camp canteens: Eine Einfuhrung in das Amerikanisch Schulwesen (An Introduction to American Schools), Eine Einfuhrung in die Amerikanisch Verfassung und Verwaltung (An Introduction to American Government), and Kurze Geschichte der Vereinigten Staaten (A Brief History of the United States). Published with both German and English

[44] Other books in the series included: Der Freibeuter (Freebooters) by Joseph Conrad, Redetzkmarsch (The March of Radetzky) by Joseph Roth, Die Rauberbande (The March of Outlaws) by Leonhard Frank, Die Schoensten Erzaehlugen (Best Tales) by Deutsche Romantiker, Der Hauptmann V. Koepenick (Captain Von Koepenick) by Karl Zuckmeyer, Briefe Deutscher Musiker (Letters of German Musicians) by Alfred Einstein, Im Weston Nichts Neuss (All Quiet on The Western Front) by Erich Maria Remargue, Die 40 Tage des Musa Dagh I und II (The 40 Days of Musa Dagh I and II) by Franz Werfel, Der Streight um den Sergeanten Grisha (The Struggle for Sergeant Grisha) by Arnold Zweig, Liebe und Tod auf Bali (Love and Death in Bali) by Vicki Baum, Ein Bauer aus dom Taunus (A Peasant from Taunus) by Carl Zuckmayer, Menschliche Komoedie (The Human Comedy) by William Saroyan. RG 389, Box 1613, Interim Report of the Orientation Branch, 28 February 1946. Willi Vogel, a former German prisoner at Fort Eustis, Virginia, appended a xeroxed copy of the cover of a canteen-purchased book - Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass - to a letter in which he recounts his experiences as a prisoner of war at Fort Eustis. See: Letter, Willi Vogel to Mrs. Shepard, Fort Eustis Historian's Office, July 17, 198(illegible), on file at the Historian's Office, Fort Eustis, Virginia.

texts, these books served a dual purpose in providing information to a growing number of interested prisoners and improving their English which was stressed after V-E Day in all dealings with prisoners of war. By the fall of 1945, the Special Projects Division, working closely with the camp Assistant Executive Officers, filled the prisoners' thirst for reading material with books and pamphlets, selected and designed specially to create democratic ideas and thought.[45]

"Intellectual Diversions" Program

Armed with Der Ruf, an excellent and popular movie program, and specially tailored reading lists provided by the Special Projects Division and The Factory, each Assistant Executive Officer had to find the right moment and method to move for control of the classes in his respective camp. His first task was to identify and isolate the Nazi leadership in the camp, a task made easier by victory over Germany in May 1945 which

---

[45] RMG 389, PMG, Box 1649. Memorandum for Director, Special Projects Division, PMGO: Subject: Reorientation Program for German Prisoners of War, 31 May 1945. In view of the prisoners wont to chide authorities over racial practices in the United States, Dr. Jones attempts to address the problem in a balanced fashion in his pamphlet. The section entitled "Minorities" states, in part:

> According to the Constitution, all minorities should enjoy the same rights as the original immigrants who, coming mostly from Great Britain, have lived in this country in their descendants for centuries. Such principles were put into practice slowly. Up to about 1885 the Indians were considered a danger. Many of them died in campaigns of annihilation ... a definite change has taken place .... Although slavery was abolished after the Civil War, the Negroes have nevertheless not acquired full economic and political equality in all parts of the country .... Negroes have made decisive progress .... However, there can be no doubt that, so far as the equality of the colored people is concerned, there is much to be done ... conflicts between colored and white people are not yet resolved.

in ibid, Box 1634 (File 350-General). See: Draft, A Little Guide Book to the United States by Howard Mumford Jones.

sped the downfall of Nazi leadership in most camps. Working with co-operative prisoners who often rose to leadership in the compounds, the Assistant Executive Officer was able to organize and rearrange classes to emphasize the subjects needed for successful "intellectual diversion." English became a mandatory subject. While civics and geography gained popularity as elective courses, the most important means used to teach democratic thought was American history:

> American history was considered the best vehicle for teaching democratic life - not teaching history as history, but by teaching history as a strategy of democratic living. The national story was told in its most dramatic and moral form: dramatic to keep the interest despite language problems, and moral to give them faith that what they learned would be applicable to the German condition.[46]

The Special Projects Division recruited universities and colleges near the camps to support the program with additional courses in order to add excitement and expose the prisoners to the excellence of American higher education.

The "Intellectual Diversions Program" continued through the final repatriation of the prisoners in 1946. Its long range impact has never been judged and it is doubtful that any scientific assessment can be made. Nonetheless, it was a noble experiment which touched the lives of almost every prisoner of war held in the United States during World War II. With the program firmly in the hands of the system's Assistant Executive Officers, the Special Projects Division and The Factory turned attention and energy to a concentrated re-education effort for approximately 25,000 anti-Nazi prisoners of war selected for early repatriation to assist the United States Military Government in occupied Germany.

---

[46] Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A., 94-95.

CHAPTER THREE

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Project II and Project III

With victory in Europe on the horizon in early 1945, the Army realized that reliable, trained Germans would be required to augment military government to administer the U. S. zone of occupation effectively. Recognizing the potential in the prisoner of war population to meet these requirements, the Provost Marshal's Special Projects Division chaired a meeting in late February 1945 among representatives of the Army staff and a group of 12 prisoners of war (members of The Factory representing various professions) to determine how best to take advantage of that potential. The recommendations from that meeting prompted establishment in July 1945 of the "United States Army School Center", consisting of an Administrative School at Fort Getty, Rhode Island, referred to as Project II, and a Police School at Fort Wetherill, Rhode Island, known as Project III. The proximity of Forts Getty and Wetherill to The Factory at Fort Kearney, on Narragansett Bay, eased coordination of operations.[1]

---

[1] War Department. Special Studies Division. Re-education of Enemy Prisoners of War, Projects II and III. Historical Monograph File 4-4.1 (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1 March 1946). 1,3,6. - Hereafter cited as HMF 4-4.1, March 1, 1946. The Army established a third school (Code-named "Sunflower") to train desirable prisoners of war still held in Europe in administration in Querqueville, France during the summer of 1945. See: RG 389, Box 1654 (Project I and II - Europe), History of Sunflower Project, Chateau Tacqueville, undated.

Prior to the formal opening of Projects II and III, the Special Projects Division conducted an experiment in administrative training during the late spring and early summer of 1945 at Fort Kearney under the direction of Dr. Howard Mumford Jones. Dr. Jones served as the experimental school's director and principal instructor in American History and Institutions. Dr. Henry W. Ehrmann taught German History; Major Burnham N. Smith, a former professor at Brown and Columbia, handled classes in Military Government; and Major Henry L. Smith Jr. and Dr. William Moulton shepherded instruction in the English language. Guest lecturers appeared periodically during the experiment to augment the faculty's efforts.[2]

The curriculum designed for the eight-week experimental school sought to inculcate in the students a general appreciation of the principles of democracy, to provide an outline of the organization, functions, and plans of military government in occupied Germany, and to improve and hone English language skills. The lessons learned during the experiment with 101 prisoner-students provided the cornerstone curriculum of the formal Project II and III classes which began on July 19, 1945. Absorbing the ten officer and civilian instructors of the experimental school, the Center's staff and faculty expanded to an authorized strength of 58 officers, 115 enlisted men and 12 civilians for

---

[2] RG 389, PMG, Box 1654. Report on The Experimental Administrative School for Selected German Prisoners of War, undated. 1-2. Professor Arnold Wolfers of Yale delivered three lectures on German political history and his impressions on American life; Professor Robert Ulich of Harvard lectured on what needed to be done in German education; and Professor Karl Vietor, also of Harvard, lectured on Goethe and the cosmopolitanism of Germany in Goethe's time.

Ten prisoners from the experimental class were shipped to Europe on June 25, 1945 to assist at the Administrative School being established at Querqueville, France. See: Ibid, Box 1632 (File 350, General) Memorandum, PMG to ACofS,G1, Progress Report, Reorientation of German Prisoners of War, September 1945, 11.

operations.[3]

Teams of Special Project Division staff fanned out during the summer of 1945, visiting all base camps and 250 branch camps in the system to select suitable prisoner personnel for training in Projects II and III. The teams interviewed prospective candidates based on recommendations of their respective camp commanders and intelligence officers. Prisoners of war from the Factory assisted in the selection process. Student candidates were tested individually at their own camps and then in groups at Fort Devens, Massachusetts before being posted to Administrative School at Fort Getty or Police School at Fort Wetherill. The testing process, supervised by Dr. Henry W. Ehrmann, who had fled Hitler's Germany and served as a civilian expert on the Special Projects Division staff and principal instructor in German history, had a threefold purpose. The tests were designed to assess each candidate's general knowledge, intelligence level, and political attitude, and to check the veracity of a candidate's own statements about his education and political beliefs, and to determine whether the selected prisoner should be trained in administration or police work. Of the 17,833 prisoners screened between 19 June and 17 August 1945, only 816 were accepted as suitable for administrative training and 2,895 for the police school.[4] A profile of those selected reflects a group with strong capabilities: 43% were university graduates, 25% were

---

[3] HMF 4-4.1, March 1, 1946. 2, 6.

[4] Ibid., Box 1632 (File 350, General). Memorandum: PMG to ACofS, G1, Subject: Progress Report, Reorientation of German Prisoners of War, September 1945, 11.

The answers given on the written tests during the screening process were used later by the schools' staff and faculty as a double-check on students' honesty and intelligence. See Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A., 121.

former businessmen or white-collar workers, and 10% former German civil servants.[5]

Experience at Fort Kearney during the experiment underlined the importance of training in English as a basis for the production of men capable of cooperation with military government in Germany. Dr. Jones highlighted this fact in his report on the experimental school, stating that, "Central to the whole school is training in English. Unless this is carefully done, teaching is crippled. Almost invariably prisoners unsatisfactory in other respects were in the first instance unsatisfactory in English."[6] Interestingly, at about the same time, the importance of English in post-war Germany was recognized by the Army in a Provost Marshal General directive stressing:

> It is extremely desirable that every German prisoner of war in the United States be taught to speak, read, and understand the English language. Although this provision is not made mandatory upon the prisoners, every available effort will be made within the camps to see that English is taught and that the prisoners are forced by circumstances to learn English.[7]

Based on the language training experience gleaned from the classes for the 101 prisoner-students in Dr. Jones's Kearney experiment, the Language Department for Projects II and III was compelled to organize in a more elaborate fashion than other faculty departments. Depending on their degree of proficiency in English,

---

[5] Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A., 122.

[6] RG 389, PMG, Box 1654. Report on The Experimental Administrative School for Selected German Prisoners of War, undated. 7.

[7] Ibid., Box 1634 (file 350 - General). Memorandum for Director, Special Projects Division, PMGO. Subject: Reorientation Program for German Prisoners of War, dated 31 May 1945. The policy directive further underlines that the basic educational program in each camp, in addition to English, is to consist of United States history, United States civics, and commercial geography of the United States. "Correspondence courses from universities except those pertaining to the English language and American history will be discouraged."

prisoner-students were separated into groups of eight or nine men under the tutelage of one or two language instructors. Each prisoner received two hours of formal instruction and engaged in two hours of study each day during the course. Formal instruction followed an imitative technique "based on the principle that the most effective way to learn any language is to imitate as exactly as possible what a native speaker says."[8] Students who completed the Project II and III courses successfully, might still be unable to read or write English well, but they could carry on a fairly complicated conversation with ease.[9] Further underlining the importance of English language training, 50 percent (192 hours) of the total course academic hours consisted of language training.[10]

The classes in Military Government suffered, early on, from a lack of materials and especially from a lack of immediate, first-hand information and experience from Germany. Policy fluidity in the occupied zone often made the materials studied by the prisoner-students and the instruction presented from the platform outdated or superseded before the students mastered the content. Prisoner-students poured over the weekly reports from the military government detachments in the American zone, since these provided their first real look at the situation in defeated Germany. Another stumbling block faced by the Military Government instructors was the discovery that most of the

---

[8] HMF 4-4.1, March 1, 1946. 8. The imitative principle produced some interesting results. Years after World War II, a traveler might encounter a German whose spoken English was marked by a Mississippi drawl. The incongruous drawl could be attributed often to the fact that the German had learned English as a prisoner of war picking cotton in Mississippi or from an American Army instructor from Mississippi.

[9] Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A., 131.

[10] RG 389, PMG, Box 1633 (File 350, General). Curriculum Listing, Class #2, Police School, September 1945.

prisoners were, to an amazing degree, ignorant of the political, legal, and financial structures of their own country. Addition to the faculty of officers with recent military government experience improved instruction as the Project II and III effort matured.[11]

Except for the guard towers and barbed-wire restricting the prisoner-student's movement and the uniforms each wore with the letters "PW" emblazoned in white paint, the schools at Forts Getty and Wetherill appeared no different from the myriad schools operating to train, field, and sustain the massive U. S. Army of 1945. The system used to teach the prisoners English followed the same steps used to train American soldiers as linguists and many of their classes in military government used the same materials employed to train US Army personnel for duty in occupied Germany.

The uniqueness of the Project II and III effort is appreciated when one looks at the Army's approach to the assigned mission to train the selected prisoners in the principles of democracy. At a time, almost 50 years later when the history profession debates the merits of ethno-centric/gender-centric courses and "politically correct" teaching, it is enlightening to look at how the scholars assigned to teach democratic thought to the German prisoners in Projects II and III sought to accomplish their assigned task and what facets of the American story they considered essential in imparting the spirit of American democracy. One must appreciate the magnitude of their task. The modern-day scholar/teacher faces students who, while they might be indifferent for the most part, have a command of the English language and have grown up in an atmosphere of democracy and freedom. The scholars teaching democratic ideals to the

[11] RG 389, PMG, Box 1654. Report on the Experimental School for Selected German Prisoners of War, undated. 4.

prisoner-students faced men whose comprehension of the nuances of spoken and written English varied greatly. Further, although, the prisoners selected for training were overtly anti-Nazi, this did not make them pro-democracy. They had little experience in democracy and freedom since most had grown to maturity in a traditionally authoritarian society that had flirted with a vestige of democracy during the tumultuous years after World War I, only to be hypnotized by Hitler, the Fuhrer mystique, and the totalitarianism of National Socialism. Faced with the contradiction of teaching the spirit of freedom to men guarded inside barbed-wire compounds, and facing students whose culture harkened, pridefully, to Frederick the Great's observation that "The only freedom for the Prussian was the *libertas oboedientiae* - the freedom to obey,"[12] teaching democratic ideals was no easy undertaking.

The first step was establishing an atmosphere of free, democratic cooperation between the officers, enlisted men, and civilian personnel of the school instructional staff. The ideals of the school necessitated some disregard of the formalities of military rank and the gulf between prisoner and captor.[13] The casualness by which the officers and teachers regarded their rank and their commitment to placing the mission and professional expertise above rank protocol, impressed the status-conscious German prisoners and contributed to an end of elitism inbred in the German Army.[14] They were suspicious, and being intelligent men, were quick to recognize propaganda. As expressed

---

[12] Walter L. Dorn, Competition For Empire 1740-1763 (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1940). 62.

[13] HMF 4-4.1, March 1, 1946. 7.

[14] Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A., 125.

by Dr. Jones, success depended greatly on an engendered spirit of trust at the school:

> Once accepted at the school, the prisoner must be thoroughly trusted. There is no middle ground between confidence and mistrust if the school is to succeed. Suspected prisoners, if any should slip through the screening process, must be quietly sent away without impairing the general feeling of friendliness and good will.[15]

The duty of the School Center, as envisioned by the instructors, was to provide the atmosphere in which students might sense and appreciate the attitudes and convictions which Americans associate with democratic ideals and actions. Exposing the prisoners to democratic attitudes and convictions was an especially difficult task because it involved intangible factors. The consensus of the staff was that, although democracy cannot always be taught, its spirit can be absorbed. The faculty strove to build student confidence in themselves and in the staff. To plant the seed of freedom and a taste of the American attitude towards liberty of expression, the staff sought to reproduce the free and informal classroom atmosphere of an American school or university. The right to hold individual opinions was emphasized; analysis and criticism were encouraged during group discussions.[16]

Teaching democratic principles by making a direct assault on German preconceptions in the name of democracy seemed injudicious. The staff attacked the same end by indirection, teaching both German and American history. Dr. Jones described the approach:

---

[15] RG 389, PMG, Box 1654. Report on the Experimental School for Selected German Prisoners of War, undated, 7. Despite the spirit of trust sought, the faculty was not beyond using "student-informants" to report on after-hours discussions among the prisoners on the effectiveness of classes presented. See: Ibid., 21.

[16] HMF 4-4.1, March 1, 1946, 16.

> In view of Nazi perversion of German history and of the history of western Europe, it was decided to teach German history, at least since the Peace of Westphalia, with a view to examining its democratic tendencies and assessing their strength and their weakness, for the thesis cannot be defended that Germany alone is incapable of democratic growth . . . it was decided to erect a second course discussing characteristic American institutions like the constitution, the party system, American education, labor unions, and the like, in their historical setting. Here the theme was that the United States, with many and grievous faults, yet afforded the world the prospect of democracy that had succeeded. In the spirit of "look now upon this picture, then on this," the parallel courses aimed to arouse an interest in the democratic philosophy, defined as individual self-respect and a sense of common brotherhood.[17]

Dr. Henry W. Ehrmann, along with four German-speaking instructors and two prisoner assistants, taught the German history classes. These classes, conducted in German, were the focus of the first four weeks of each training cycle. Interestingly, the instructors employed American rather than German methods of teaching history, stressing politico-economic and social developments rather than the history of wars and dynasties. The course stressed the two main aspects of German history: the reactionary-authoritarian and the liberal-democratic trends. The lectures attempted to give the students a clearer understanding of the origins of the dictatorial regime they had lived through, devoting particular attention to the destruction of historical myths and the concepts responsible for arrogant and chauvinistic attitudes. Germany's democratic traditions were underlined in an attempt to convince the prisoners that, while assisting the Military Government authorities in building a democratic Germany, they could revive some of the traditions of their own national history and not be compelled to import ideas

---

[17] RG 389, PMG, Box 1654. Report on the Experimental School for Selected German Prisoners of War, undated. 5.

and institutions from the outside.[18]

Time limitations dictated the Treaty of Westphalia and the rise of Brandenburg-Prussia as the starting point for the lectures on German history. Lecturers described The Revolution of 1848 as one of the catastrophes of German history, a noble, though belated effort on the part of the middle classes to assert themselves by achieving liberty and unity.[19] The course focused the greater portion of its content on a particularly precise account of World War I and the reasons for Germany's defeat and the history of the successor German republic. In discussing Germany's democratic experience, stress was laid on the condition of local self-government, labor relations, and the slow, but steady, improvement of Germany's international position between 1919 and 1933. The lectures attributed the eventual failure of the Weimar Republic to the breakdown of the technicality of compromise on which German democracy, like any other, had to rely for the solution to conflicts.[20] The instructors had to overcome the prisoner-students' general reluctance to deal with German history. Many preferred to center their discussions around spiritual and intellectual developments (German idealism, philosophic problems) rather than on the less enjoyable features of German social and

---

[18] Ibid., 10, 17. Despite the intellectual prowess of most of the prisoners selected for training, the entrance tests showed a striking lack of knowledge of basic German history. Fifty percent of the candidates for the Administrative School were unable to identify the Paulskirche in Frankfurt, symbol of the Revolution of 1848, or Rudolf Virchow, Bismark's liberal antagonist. Over half did not recognize the name of Hugo Preuss, father of the Weimar Constitution. See: Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A., 126.

[19] RG 389, PMG, Box 1654. Report on the Experimental School for Selected German Prisoners of War, undated, 18.

[20] HMF 4-4.1, March 1, 1946. 11.

political history.[21]

Dr. (Colonel) T. V. Smith led an instructional staff of four officers and six discussion group leaders teaching the follow-on four week course in American history and the principles of democracy. Recognizing that democracy does not take hold unless men admire it, the staff put together a mixture of classes calculated to appeal to Germans - politics, institutions, sociology, linguistics, and philosophy - in an effort to "dazzle" the prisoners with the magnificence of the democratic way of life. "Democracy was presented not as a political system free from difficulties but as a system which had been successful in fulfilling man's aspirations for a free and happy life and as a real challenge to the German people."[22]

The instructors presented all lectures on American history in English. Howard Mumford Jones, the School Center's director of education, noted the communications problems inherent in teaching a course in American history to a foreign audience:

> An American who wants to explain democracy to the Germans sometimes finds himself a little baffled. He can, of course, begin with the Declaration of Independence and go to the Constitution and the Gettysburg Address. He can do this in English or he can do it in German. Somehow it seems better, whenever possible, to use the English texts: the Constitution in German translation suffers a weird sea-change into political metaphysics, once it passes into the penumbra of the awful German language. But if he sticks to the English texts, he finds he has to explain an eighteenth-century or a biblical vocabulary to readers of limited English.
>
> If he then turns to some handbooks on citizenship published by the government or by some of the admirable agencies that try to help the

---

[21] RG 389, PMG, Box 1654. Report on the Experimental School for Selected German Prisoners of War, undated, 20. Many of the prisoners confessed to being "fed-up" with the problems concerning their own country. They considered it much more important to learn as much as possible about the United States and perfect their English.

[22] HMF 4-4.1, March 1, 1946. 12.

> newcomer, he finds these are not designed for his needs. Most of these handbooks were meant for adults of meager literacy, and some of the writing is, or has to be, infantile. Germans have been accused of many faults, but illiteracy has never been one of them.[23]

Instructors had to be mindful that the prisoner-students were learning English simultaneously with their classes in American history. This slowed the process initially. Lectures were often thrown off schedule by the lecture-discussion method. The value of lively discussion was felt to be superior to the value of any straight lecture presentation. When a given topic proved of sufficient interest to excite discussion, the instructors sacrificed the formal lecture.

A major consideration which guided the construction and presentation of the course was a realization that most American histories are written for Americans, containing a thousand allusions of interest to Americans but of no real meaning to Europeans. Bearing in mind that the course was not primarily a course in American history, but a course in re-orienting a defeated enemy, the staff focused the lecture series on the development of characteristic American institutions in their time and place, rather than a chronological history. In Dr. Jones's words: "Whole areas of the history of the United States were swept over in a fashion that would make orthodox historians gasp."[24]

---

[23] Howard Mumford Jones, "Writers and American Values," New York Times Book Review, August 5, 1945, 12. Dr. Jones's critique of American writing has a ring of truth 47 years later. He went on to state: "Some Americans have, indeed, tried to clarify and simplify the cannons of the democratic way of life...it is...unfortunate...our intellectual advance guard has too often been concerned with the intricacies of the literary process than with substantive results...it has not eloquently produced what it needs to produce, a series of masterly and simple statements of the American way of life today."

[24] RG 389, PMG, Box 1654. Report on the Experimental School for Selected German Prisoners of War, undated, 25-26. The first text employed in the course was a translation of James Truslow Adams's The Epic of America (Der Aufsteig Amerikas vom

While the course outline called for 20 two-hour lecture/discussion sessions, language problems and the time given over to discussion often prevented completion of the full 20 lecture series for any of the classes in Projects II and III. Students received printed English outlines prior to each class session along with advance reading and study assignments. A condensed version of the American Constitution was also distributed for study and appraisal. Ten-minute quizzes, in English and in German, opened many of the sessions. Hour-long tests, at least as severe as college examinations, were given periodically. The staff conducted voluntary evening reviews and discussions for those students seeking additional help. The prisoners usually spent their Saturday afternoons preparing special reports and papers assigned during their classes.[25]

The American history classes began with a presentation on the geography of the United States. Dr. Jones designed the geography lecture specifically to impress the prisoners with the vastness and resources of the country; the first lecture's maps aided the learning of English. Lecture 2 focused on the great New World empires, comparing the feudalism of the French and Spanish colonies with the relative modernity of the British colonial system. Lecture 3 covered the English colonies in more detail, tracing the slow and painful growth of the political institutions and customs reflected in the American Constitution. Lecture 4 discussed the events leading to the American

Land der Indianer zum Weltreich).

Nevins and Commanger's Pocket History of the United States, an Office of War Information booklet entitled An American Handbook, and the three Jones-authored pamphlets - An Introduction to American Schools, An Introduction to American Government, and A Brief History of the United States - were added. See: Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A., 128.

[25] RG 389, PMG, Box 1654. Report on the Experimental School for Selected German Prisoners of War, undated, 5.

Revolution, pointing out that the Revolution was partly a function of the modernization of western Europe and partly a function of the new frontier. Lecture 5 analyzed the Declaration of Independence from a philosophical view rather from the aspect of than the document's political import. Lectures 6 and 7 which were analyses of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights proved to be by far two of the most successful units of instruction. Both sessions focused on the contrast between eighteenth-century assumptions and twentieth-century development and practices. The eighth lecture traced the country's development through the Presidency of Andrew Jackson, contrasting eighteenth-century America with the tumultuous world of the American frontier. Lecture 9 looked at the American party system emerging into its modern function under Jackson and followed the development of the party system into the twentieth-century.[26]

The next two lectures in the series, covering issues leading to and the conduct of the Civil War, prompted the most pointed and threatening questions in the American history course. Students always mentioned the contradiction between democratic ideals and freedom and the facts of slavery, racism, and racial segregation and often, defiantly questioned the instructors. The reality of overt racial prejudice and discrimination in most areas of the country was not lost on the German prisoners who were quick to point out the discrepancy between American pretense and practice.[27] The subject of the status

---

[26] Ibid., 26.

[27] Lloyd Brown, a black soldier, recalled his treatment in Salina, Kansas, during World War II:

> As we entered, the counterman hurried to the rear to get the owner, who hurried out front to tell us with urgent politeness: "You boys know we don't serve colored here."
>
> Of course we knew it. They didn't serve "colored" anywhere in town

and treatment of blacks in American society plagued the re-education effort, not only at Forts Getty and Wetherill, but also throughout the camp system. Most instructors found it extremely difficult to answer the prisoners' pointed questioning. T. V. Smith, a southerner and leader of the American history instruction team for Projects II and III, related his method of answering the prisoners' discomforting questions on American racial policy and practice:

> I was content (1) to point to its history, (2) to parade the progress that the Negroes have made since slavery, and (3) to ask for suggestions from them as to how we Americans can move faster and more securely in solving our major "minority problems." There was never any pretense on my part that "democracy" is not fascism to our Negroes in certain sections and at certain times.[28]

Lecture 12 covered Reconstruction and the Gilded Age. Here "historical" history folded into an examination of institutional development. Discussion of the Gilded Age, presented as a time of weakness which the republic survived, led naturally into Lecture 13 which was a thorough study of American education. The modern educational system

---

> .... The best movie in town did not admit Negroes .... There was no room at the inn for a black visitor, and there was no place ... where he could get a cup of coffee.
>
> "You know we don't serve colored here," the man repeated...
>
> We ignored him, and just stood there inside the door, staring at what we had come to see--the German prisoners of war who were having lunch at the counter.
>
> We continued to stare. This was really happening. It was no jive talk. The people of Salina would serve these enemy soldiers and turn away black American G.I.'s.
>
> If we were *untermenschen* in Nazi Germany, they would break our bones. As "colored" men in Salina, they only break our hearts.

See: John Morton Blum, V Was For Victory (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1976), 191.

[28] Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A., 129.

in the United States was presented as an important legacy from the despised Gilded Age. Lecture 14 covered the rise of big business, climaxing in "Fordism" and Lecture 15 discussed the American labor movement. Lecture 16 in the series addressed the immigration problem which again, usually, aroused uncomfortable discussions on racial and religious tensions.

Usually crowded out of the course were the lectures on the historical relationship between the United States and Germany, intolerance, and contemporary American life. Regardless of how far an instructor proceeded through the prepared lectures, the concluding lecture was usually one entitled "Misunderstanding the United States." Here, the lecturer addressed the sources of European misinterpretation of American thought and policy and suggested ways of making better estimates of the drift of American opinion.[29]

The Police School (Project III) abbreviated the courses in German and American history to enable its faculty of 11 officers and one civilian to concentrate their efforts toward imparting to their students an understanding of the organization and operation of police forces in a democratic state, the duties of a police officer in a democratic community, and the techniques and skills of police duty. The exposure of the students to democratic thoughts and ideals in the history classes undoubtedly contributed to their understanding of the role of the police in a democracy which the instructors were trying to engender.[30] Of the 384 hours of training prescribed for the student-prisoners selected

---

[29] RG 389, PMG, Box 1654. Report on the Experimental School for Selected German Prisoners of War, undated, 25-26.

[30] HMF 4-4.1, March 1, 1946, 14.

for police training, only 32 concentrated on German and American history. The major focus of the school was English language training (192 hours), followed closely by classes in police work (Basic Police - 80 hours, Police Administration - 6 hours, Legal Subjects - 26 hours, Criminal Investigation - 18 hours).[31]

Because the prisoners selected for training at Fort Wetherill (Project III) were expected to become policemen, to assist the Military Government, they were more carefully screened than those selected for the Administrative School (Project II). Upon arrival at Wetherill, each took a polygraph examination. After having the lie-detector explained and being encouraged to be truthful, the machine operator asked each prisoner a series of 20 questions ranging from "Were you ever a member of the Nazi Party?" to "Do you advocate Communism for Germany?" Students, especially those rejected for the course after arriving at Fort Wetherill, were vociferous in their condemnation of the polygraph. A number were rejected after their lie-detector tests indicated they were covering past cooperation with the Nazi regime. A goodly number failed for having "Communist leanings."[32]

---

[31] RG 389, PMG, Box 1633 (File 350). Class #2, Police School, september 1945.

[32] Gansburg, Stalag: U.S.A., 132-133. American fixation on the stigma of "Communist leanings" began to stir in the euphoria of the Allied victory in Europe. The instructors at the schools were faced with handling delicate political questions from the prisoners: " The question of Soviet Russia is continuously on the minds of the prisoners...for the majority it is one of fear and suspicion. From the very fact that the school is training only students for the American zone of occupation, the students gain the impression that they may...form the spearhead of an anti-Soviet campaign of the Western Allies in a conflict many of them consider unavoidable." The instructional staff decided to handle the prisoners' fears as openly as possible, stressing that a major conflict between Soviet Russia and the Western Allies was neither necessary nor even likely. See: RG 389, PMG, Box 1654. Report on the Experimental School for Selected German Prisoners of War, undated, 23.

A number of the dedicated instructors working the re-education program for the

Of the 3,711 prisoners originally selected for training in Projects II and III, 1,166 successfully completed the training. Upon graduation, each class was shipped home to Germany. Not all secured positions in military government. A measure of the success of Projects II and III's ideological aims was never made. Nonetheless, the training undoubtedly stirred the imagination, aroused the hopes, and developed some sense of individual and group responsibility among the prisoner students.[33]

Fort Eustis - "The Six-Day Bicycle Race"

The uncertainties and anxieties of life as a German prisoner of war in the United States became even more pronounced after the end of the war on May 8, 1945. Outrage over the harsh treatment of Allied prisoners at the hands of the Nazis and the brutality of the extermination camps renewed demands for a crackdown on German prisoners. With the concern over retribution against U. S. prisoners past, the government cut rations, curtailed the canteens, and increased work quotas. The months between the end of the war and repatriation were hard times for most prisoners. The harsher treatment added to the depression many felt over the loss of the war and the guilt of having survived, most quite comfortably, when so many of their comrades and relatives had perished. Anxiety over the fate of relatives was almost overpowering for some. Earlier in the war, the prisoners had been allowed correspondence from home; the catastrophic destruction and displacement of peoples during the last months of the war ended virtually

---

Special Projects Division, tarred with the "Communist leanings" brush, were investigated by Army Counter-Intelligence. See: Gansburg: Stalag: U.S.A., 171-173.

[33] HMF 4-4.1, March 1, 1946, 15-17.

all contacts with families. Uncertainty over their own futures plagued most prisoners. Rumors were rampant in all of the camps: They would be sent home immediately. They would be turned over to the Russians, etc., etc.[34]

The repatriation schedule was determined by the availability of civilians to perform the work being done by the prisoners, the reduction in labor demands with the surrender of Japan, the capability and willingness of the Allied military government to absorb the returning prisoners (many of whom were unrepentant Nazis) into the defeated German population, and the availability of shipping to return them to Europe. The seemingly endless delays in the prisoners' departure for home were extremely frustrating.[35] For about 25,000 specially selected prisoners, however, early repatriation became a reality as a result of a third re-education "special project" conceived by the Provost Marshal's staff.

The Department of State made an agreement with France in the summer of 1945, to turn over the German prisoners interned in the United States as labor battalions to aid in the reconstruction of that country. The men of the Special Projects Division believed that returning the more cooperative and anti-Nazi prisoners to France as laborers would negate any positive results obtained through the re-education program; those prisoners could better be used in constructing a democratic Germany rather than slipping into

---

[34] Allen V. Koop, Stark Decency: German Prisoners of War in a New England Village, 105.

[35] Lewis, Utilization History, 172.

resentment and bitterness rebuilding war-damaged France.[36] After coordination with American military government in Germany, the Army decided in December 1945 to select approximately 25,000 German prisoners who were favorably inclined toward democracy for direct repatriation back to Germany after a special re-orientation course.

A quick survey of available camp facilities pointed to Fort Eustis, Virginia, as the site best suited for the training. The partially vacant prisoner of war camp at Eustis had a capacity to house, feed, and process approximately 8,000 prisoners, well above the 2,000 expected weekly during the training. Fort Eustis offered the added advantage of being close to East Coast ports of embarkation. Projects II and III were terminated and virtually the entire Special Projects team from Forts Getty and Wetherill transferred to Fort Eustis. Colonel Alpheus Smith, a former professor at Northwestern University, assumed command of the new Special Projects Center, continuing the role he held at Forts Getty and Wetherill. Twenty-five officers and 50 enlisted men (mostly German linguists), hand-picked from the best Assistant Executive Officers and their enlisted assistants experienced in the re-education program at various camps, augmented the Special Projects team in preparing to receive the first 2,000 prisoners for training on January 4, 1946.[37]

---

[36] War Department. Special Studies Division. Re-education of German Prisoners of War, Eustis Project. Historical Monograph File 4-4.1 (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 4 April 1946). 1-2. Hereafter cited as: HMF 4-4.1, April 4, 1946.

[37] RG 389, PMG, Box 1626. Memorandum from Acting Provost Marshall General to ACofS,G1, Subject: Special Screening of Cooperative German Prisoners of War, undated, 1-2. In ibid.,Box 1613. Adjutant General letter establishing Special Projects Center, Fort Eustis, Virginia, 19 December 1945. Dr. Howard Mumford Jones did not accompany the Project II and III staff to Fort Eustis. He left the program at Fort Getty.

Time constraints did not allow the detailed screening and testing process which had been used in selecting the prisoner-students for Projects II and III. The nine Service Commands received proportionate quotas and guidance for their camp commanders' selection of 25,000 "special prisoners" for the Eustis re-orientation program. The selection guidance indicated that those prisoners selected had to fall into one of the following categories:

> (1) Prisoners . . . who have been persecuted for religious, racial, or political reasons by the Nazi regime, especially those interned in concentration camps or prisons for those reasons; (2) Former members of labor organizations opposed to Nazism; (3) Former members of parties or organizations who conducted opposition against the Hitler regime; (4) Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish (if any) prisoners . . . who continued membership in their established church; (5) Prisoners who have shown a cooperative attitude, have given proof that they are democratically inclined and have not expressed hostility towards the allied purpose in Germany.[38]

A prisoner's chances for selection were improved by having completed a camp-level re-education program, being physically healthy, and able to understand English. Any prisoner with a record of active Nazi involvement, e.g., Allgemeine-SS,

---

Jones, while a brilliant scholar, must have been temperamental. "Colonel Alpheus Smith and Dr. Jones came in yesterday and we had several conferences. Dr. Jones has resigned regularly once a week since you left, but I think he is too much interested in the program [and] that we can persuade him to stay." See: In ibid., Box1626 (File 314.7). Letter: MG Archer Lerch to LTC Edward Davidson, 25 July 1945.

[38] Ibid., Box 1626. Letter, Office of the Adjutant General to Commanding Generals, First through Ninth Service Commands, Subject: Screening of Cooperative Prisoners of War, December, 1945, 5-7.

The letter, early-on, states: "This screening has the highest priority and will be given precedence over all prisoner of war programs except the work program (underline added)."

Waffen-SS, Gestapo, *et. al.* was automatically excluded.[39]

Each prisoner selected by his camp commanders filled out a lengthy questionnaire designed by The Factory to reveal those who knew the most about Germany's democratic traditions and to uncover any hidden Nazi beliefs. The completed questionnaires, carried by courier to Fort Kearney, were screened and evaluated by a team at The Factory. The screening team members, many former concentration camp inmates with extensive experience with Nazis and Nazi organizations, skilled in detecting subterfuges used by Nazis to conceal their political attitudes and backgrounds, worked around the clock to complete the task. Based on their screening and evaluation, the records of selected prisoners were divided into three groups: White (confirmed anti-Nazi, acceptable), Grey (undecided), and Black (obdurate Nazi, unacceptable). After categorization, the records and questionnaires were couriered to the Special Projects Center at Fort Eustis. When a shipment of selected prisoners arrived at the Center, they were marched immediately

---

[39] Ibid., 7-8. Specifically excluded were all prisoners who were former members of: Allgemeine SS (Schutzstaffel), Waffen-SS (Combat SS), Sd (Sicherheitsdienst), SA (Sturmabteilung), Gestapo (Geheime Staatspolizei), Grepo (Grenzpolizei), RSHA (Reichssicherheitshauptamt), GFP (Secret Field Police), HJ (Hitler Jugend, officers only), NSKK (Nationalsozialistische Kraftfahr-Korps), NSFK (National Socialist Aviation Corps), RAD (Compulsory Labor Service, officers only). Any member of the Nazi Party, Elite University Student Corps, career officers, regardless of rank, all officers above the rank of Major, graduates of any Nazi military academy, along with members of the German Christian Movement (Deutsche Christen Bewegung) and the "Neo-Pagan" Movement (Deutsches Glanbensbewegung) were also excluded automatically.

The War Department exclusion categories were virtually the same as those developed from independent psychological screening of selected prisoners of war in early 1945. See: RG 389, PMG, Box 1630 (File 337.0). Memorandum: Report of Conference with Mrs. Eugene Meyer, 10 September 1945.

Despite the detailed screening instructions, a number of prisoners who should have been excluded because of their Nazi beliefs faked their way through the Eustis program. See: Robert Lowe Kunzig, "360,000 P.W.'S - The Hope of Germany," The American Magazine, vol. 145, no.5, November 1946, 135.

to a processing center where the three categories were separated. "Whites" entered the Special Projects compound to begin the re-orientation course; "Blacks" were dispatched to the regular prisoner of war compound at Fort Eustis; and the "Greys" were segregated for a more detailed interview by intelligence personnel at an auxiliary compound. Those "Greys" whose re-interview indicated anti-Nazi beliefs joined a re-orientation course and gained early repatriation while those "Greys" who turned "Black" found themselves back in the regular prisoner of war routine with no hope of accelerated release. Only 8.7% of all the prisoners sent to the Special Projects Center were rejected.[40]

The 12 six-day training cycles ran from January 4, 1946; the last one ended on April 5, 1946. In that three month period, 23,147 prisoners went through the re-orientation training cycles at Fort Eustis, roughly 2,000 men at a time.[41] The "six-day bicycle race," as the prisoners referred to the course, was a marvel of logistics, coordination, and timing. At any given period during the training, 4,000-plus prisoners were either in-processing, attending classes, or preparing for departure. Having learned from some of the inefficiencies of Projects II and III, the Special Projects team refined the Fort Eustis operation to insure that the Germans departed with a sense that the organizations in a democracy could function with precision and efficiency.

The staff streamlined and condensed the 34 lectures in German and American history. Nine 35-mm films, selected to support the contents of the lectures, were integral

---

[40] HMF 4-4.1, April 4, 1944, 6-9.

[41] RG 389, PMG, Box 1613 (Fort Eustis-File 4). Schedule of Training Cycles, Special Projects Center, 11 February 1946.

to the training program.[42] The six-day cycles revolved around the following 12 presentations:

1. The Democratic Way of Life.
2. The Constitution of the United States.
3. Political Parties, Elections, and Parliamentary Procedures.
4. Education in the United States.
5. American Family Life.
6. The American Economic Scene.
7. American Military Government.
8. Democratic Traditions in Germany.
9. Why the Weimar Republic Failed-I.
10. Why the Weimar Republic Failed-II.
11. The World of Today and Germany.
12. New Democratic Trends in the World Today.

Colonel Alpheus Smith opened each cycle opened with an address which set the purpose and tone for the six days of training to follow. Quentin Reynolds, after touring the Special Projects Center, reported hearing a prisoner commenting on Smith's presentation:

---

[42] Ibid., Box 1613 (Fort Eustis-File 11). Interim Report of the Orientation Branch, Special Projects Division, Fort Eustis, Virginia, 28 February 1946, 3.

The Special Projects staff evidently learned from experience. A review of the outlines and scripts for the 12 lectures shows that any reference to race relations, which might elicit pointed questions from the prisoners, have been omitted.

The films were: Abe Lincoln in Illinois, The River, Tuesday in November (in German), American Romance, Power and the Land, The Seventh Cross, TVA (in German), Toscanini (in German), Displaced Persons in Europe.

> He didn't pull his punches, much to our surprise, that American democracy wasn't perfect. But he said that the trouble wasn't with democracy; the trouble was with some Americans. Some self-styled American leaders and their followers, he said, ought to start practicing democracy. Then he told us about the great benefits that Americans have, and he told us that a few bad Americans, a few bad things in America haven't spoiled democracy and can't spoil it, and finally he said that democracy was the best thing there is in human society. He's got something there.[43]

The prisoners' days at the Special Project Center were busy, almost hectic; all scheduled activities before 5:00 p.m. were required. Each day of the cycle, the prisoner-students, divided into two groups of a thousand each, attended two lectures, at least one film, and two discussion group sessions based on the subjects of the day's lectures. The Personal Problems staff presented a special lecture on current conditions in Germany and reserved time during the evenings for those prisoners who wanted to discuss problems, mainly fears about repatriation. Prisoners in the pools awaiting a new class cycle or debarkation processing were occupied by a series of additional movies and 35-mm film strips, a music program with over 50 recorded hour-long music programs covering a gamut of tastes (e.g. Oklahoma Album, Popular Songs in German, Music of the Opera, Radio Symphonies of America, German Chamber Music, Shostakovitch Symphony No.5), and organized athletics.[44]

Each class was sent home immediately upon graduation. For some unexplained

---

[43] Quentin Reynolds, "Experiment in Democracy," Collier's, May 25, 1946, 41.

[44] Rg 389, PMG, Box 1613 (Fort Eustis - File 11). Interim Report of the Orientation Branch, Special Projects Division, Fort Eustis, Virginia, 28 February 1946, Tab E, Exhibits 1,2,3; Tab F. The Special Project Center library stocked an array of current American and German periodicals, 1200 English language books on history and government, and 1200 German language books ranging from histories to fiction. The well-stocked canteen carried copies of all the books in the Buecherriehe Neue Welt (New World Library) series for sale.

reason, considering Fort Eustis's proximity to the ports of Hampton Roads and Norfolk, most were moved by train to New York City where they boarded Victory ships. Each group was escorted by a member of the Special Projects Division staff or a former Assistant Executive Officer to insure that, as "special prisoners," they were kept separate from regular PW's, and cleared through France to Germany expeditiously.[45]

The Factory ceased operations in January 1946. Many of its German prisoners, who had worked with great diligence and dedication supporting the re-education program, transferred to Fort Eustis to support the re-orientation program there. Project II and Project III work at Forts Getty and Wetherill terminated in March 1946. Der Ruf's last published issue was #26, predated 1 April 1946. The last class in "the six-day bicycle race" graduated on April 4, 1946. With the closing of the Special Projects Center at Fort Eustis on April 8, 1946, the re-education program for German prisoners of war held in the United States during World War II ended.[46]

---

[45] Ibid., Box 1627(Escort Reports - File 319.1).

[46] Ibid., Box 1613. Memorandum, Subject: Liquidation of Factory, 21 January 1946.

CONCLUSION

The handling, care and treatment of enemy prisoners of war have been integral to every war the United States has fought. On balance, this country has always tried to comply with accepted customs and international law dealing with prisoners of war. The holding of approximately 372,000 German prisoners of war in the United States during World War II, by the very magnitude of the task, was an unique experience. Although there had been some pre-war planning in anticipation of the problem, and although the Geneva Convention of 1929 provided a framework within which to operate, American policies governing the administration of the prisoner of war program evolved through trial and error. The government may be faulted for being slow to recognize the power of the Nazis in the camps and for its early stumbling attempts to counter their dominance of the prisoner population. But it should be noted that the Army's full concentration was focused on fighting the war across two oceans and its initial willingness to accept a trade-off of continuing Nazi influence for good law and order in the camps was understandable. By the end of the war the program was running smoothly.

After overcoming early obstacles and internal security fears the United Stated made maximum use of the labor potential of the German prisoners of war. Prisoner labor helped offset manpower shortages encountered in the United States after 1943. Especially in the agricultural sector, prisoner labor made a major contribution to the successful prosecution of the war. Furthermore, the program was a bargain for the American taxpayer: revenue generated from the prisoner of war fund - movies, canteen

sales, etc. - covered the full costs of the program. In fact, the program turned a profit.[1]

In comparison to the treatment of U. S. prisoners of war in the hands of the Nazis, German prisoners may have been "coddled."[2] The United States' strict compliance with the Geneva Convention did not insure reciprocal treatment of our prisoners by German authorities. Nonetheless, it was the morally correct policy. While some of the harsh treatment of American POWs may be attributed to Nazism's brutal philosophy, their treatment mainly reflects the shortcomings of the Geneva Convention of 1929 in the context of total war. Furthermore, in the later stages of the war the German people and soldiers ate little better than the Allied prisoners of war. It is unrealistic and idealistic to expect a belligerent power fighting for its very existence, to feed, clothe and house enemy prisoners of war in a fashion better than it could provide its own people.

The prisoner re-education program showed vision; however, its effectiveness has never been measured. Surveys of prisoners graduating from Projects II and III and the Fort Eustis Special Projects Center reflect a preponderance of favorable opinion about

---

[1] RG 389, PMG, Box 1613. Memorandum, Subject: Central Prisoner of War Fund, 9 January 1946.

[2] An ex-prisoner described his captivity in the United States:

> Our treatment was first class. I was even able to continue my geological studies and take my exam before a Swiss commission. We didn't have to work, it was on a voluntary basis. I did work and earned so much money that I was able to buy all the books for my studies and have suits made at the tailors.

See: Hans von Luck, Panzer Commander, 281.

the training and inculcation of democratic precepts.[3] The prisoners' positive statements must be considered in the light of their early repatriation and a possible unwillingness to express any view which would prompt their captors to delay release. A survey of ex-special prisoners who could be located in the Baden-Württemburg area of the American zone of occupation in 1947 showed a significant revelation:

> German prisoners of war returning from America showed more insight into current German problems and had more commendable attitude toward the necessity for political re-orientation of a nazi-steeped Germany than the German population as a whole. However, the schooling in democratic principles that most of these men received before being repatriated was in real danger of being forgotten as the returned soldiers were confronted by a hard and unsympathetic environment in which fellow-citizens approached their problems from an individualistic rather than a social viewpoint.[4]

The re-education program ("intellectual diversions") was technically a violation of the Geneva Convention as the United States was teaching the democratic political philosophy. But since the Allies won the war, who was to call this a violation? On the other hand, disregard for the Convention may have haunted the United States during the 1950's with the "brain-washing" of American prisoners held by the Communists during the Korean War.

In great measure, the success realized from the re-education program is a credit to the dedication, professionalism and vision of the men of the Special Projects Division, the special German prisoners of war who manned The Factory, and the dedicated scholars and Assistant Executive Officers in the outlying camps who sought to instill the

---

[3] RG 389, PMG, Box 1613 (Fort Eustis - File 11). Interim Report of the Orientation Branch, Special Projects Division, Fort Eustis, Virginia, 28 February 1946, Tab C, Exhibits 1 and 2.

[4] HMF 2.3-7, September 1952, 130.

principles of democracy in a defeated enemy. As Dr. Moutlon, a key member of the Special Project Division's re-education staff stated after the war: "It was a *constructive* thing to do in something as *destructive* as a war."[5]

[5] Gansburg, Stalag: U. S. A., 180.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Vogel, Willi to Mrs. Shepard, Fort Eustis, Virginia Historian's Office; July 17, 198(illegible). Letter from former German prisoner at Fort Eustis 1945-1946; includes copies of prisoner documents issued to Vogel. Document on file at Post Historian's Office, Fort Eustis, Virginia.

Government Documents

From the National Archives, Modern Military Branch:

Record Group 389, Provost Marshal General (PMG), Special Projects Division, Administrative Branch, Decimal File, 1943-1946, Boxes 1593-1655.

From the Office of the Chief of Military History:

War Department. Special Studies Division. The Prisoner of War Re-education Program in the Years 1943-1946 (Draft). Historical Monograph File 2.3-7. Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, September 1952.

War Department. Special Studies Division. Re-education of Enemy Prisoners of War. Historical Monograph File 4-4.1. Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1 November 1945.

War Department. Special Studies Division. Re-education of Enemy Prisoners of War, Projects II and III. Historical Monograph File 4-4.1. Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1 March 1946.

War Department. Special Studies Division. Re-education of Enemy Prisoners of War, Eustis Project. Historical Monograph File 4-4.1. Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 4 April 1946.

Other Published Sources

Lewis, George G. and John Mewha, History of Prisoner of War Utilization by the United States Army 1776-1945. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, U.S. Department of the Army, Pamplet 20-213; 1955.

U. S. Congress. Congressional Record, vol. 90, 78th Cong., 2nd Sess., Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office; 1944.

U. S. Congress. Congressional Record, vols. 91, 79th Cong. 1st Sess., Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office; 1945.

Wheeler, William Reginald (ed.). The Road to Victory: A History of Hampton Roads Port of Embarkation in World War II, 2 vols. Newport News, Virginia: U.S. Army Surface Forces; 1946.

Secondary Sources (Books and Journals)

Botting, Douglas. From the Ruins of the Reich. New York: Meridian, 1986.

Blum, John Morton. V Was For Victory. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1976.

Dorn, Walter L. Competition For Empire 1740-1763. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1940.

Dower, John W. War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War. New York: Panthenon Books; 1986.

Gaertner, Georg with Arnold Krammer. Hitler's Last Soldier in America. New York: Stein and Day; 1985.

Gansberg, Judith M. Stalag: USA. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company; 1977.

Hohne, Heinz, The Order of the Death's Head. New York: Ballentine Books, 1966.

Jones, Howard Mumford, "Writers and American Values," New York Times Book Review, August 5, 1945.

Koop, Allen V. Stark Decency: German Prisoners of War in a New England Village. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England; 1988.

Krammer, Arnold, Nazi Prisoners of War in America. New York: Stein and Day; 1979.

Kunzig, Robert Lowe, "360,000 P.W.'S - The Hope of Germany," The American Magazine, vol. 145, no. 5, November 1946, 135.

Lerch, Archer L., "The Army Reports on Prisoners of War," American Mercury, vol.60, no. 257, May 1945, 537.

Lewy, John. "Prisoners of War." Army Transportation Journal, I. 3 (April 1945), 22-23.

Luck, Hans von, Panzer Commander. New York: Praeger, 1989, 306.

Moore, John Hammond. "Hitler's Wermacht in Virginia, 1943-1946." The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography; 85; (July 1977), 259-273.

Pluth, Edward J. The Administration and Operation of German Prisoner of War Camps in the United States during World War II [PhD. diss.]: Ball State University; 1970.

Powell, Allan Kent, Splinters of a Nation: German Prisoners of War in Utah. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press; 1989.

Powers, James H., "What to Do with German Prisoners of War - The American Muddle," Atlantic Monthly, vol. 175, no. 3, November 1944, 49.

Speakman, Cummins E. Re-education of German Prisoners of War in the United States During World War II. Unpublished Masters Thesis. University of Virginia, 1948.

VITA

J. Barrie Williams

A native of Athens, Georgia, J. Barrie Williams graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York with a BS in 1958. He earned an MS at Shippensburg University, Pennsylvania in 1976 and is a graduate of the U. S. Army War College. His military career, which included two tours of duty in Vietnam, encompassed varying command and staff assignments of ever-increasing responsibility. He completed 28 years of active Army services in 1986 in the rank of Colonel. Accepted into the Masters program at the College of William and Mary in 1990, he is presently a PhD candidate at the College.