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Restoring the light : ministry to German prisoners of war in America during the Second World War

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RESTORING THE LIGHT: MINISTRY TO GERMAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN AMERICA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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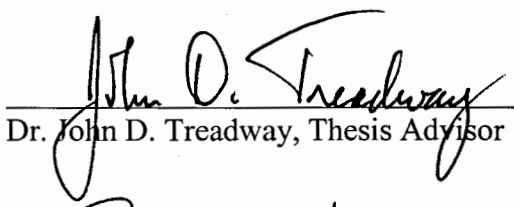
Abstract:

In 1942, the United States committed itself to the retention of German prisoners of war on American soil. Over 350,000 German soldiers lived and worked in several hundred camps throughout the contiguous United States. These prisoners required not only food and shelter, but spiritual care as well. The Geneva Convention of 1929 granted prisoners of war the right to worship according to their faith. The United States government not only permitted, but also encouraged, ministry to the prisoners in its care. Relying on the assistance of international relief organizations and national church bodies, the Office of the Provost Marshal General arranged for Lutheran pastors and Catholic priests to counsel and minister to the captive Germans. This thesis examines that ministry from several perspectives: the Office of the Provost Marshal General, the Catholic Church in America, the two major Lutheran synods in America, and the prisoners and clergy themselves. Each organization had its own agenda and purpose in providing for the spiritual needs of the prisoners. In addition to the work of these organizations, individual chaplains and civilian clergy devoted time and effort to counseling and preaching. Their experiences and recollections added a personal perspective to this multi-faceted undertaking.

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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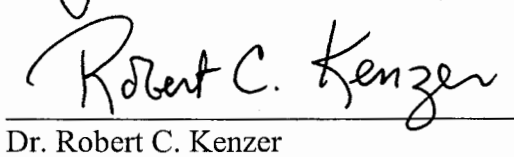

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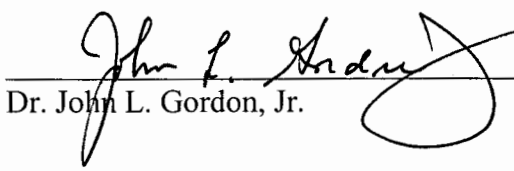

Dr. John L. Gordon, Jr.

RESTORING THE LIGHT:

MINISTRY TO GERMAN PRISONERS OF WAR

IN AMERICA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

by

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ii

TABLE OF CONTENTS. iv

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS. vi

INTRODUCTION 1

Chapter:

1. THE OFFICE OF THE PROVOST MARSHAL GENERAL AND THE INTELLECTUAL DIVERSION PROGRAM 9

    The Special Projects Division

    Internal Strife at the Special Projects Division

2. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE WAR RELIEF SERVICES BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WELFARE CONFERENCE 29

    War Relief Services

    The Catholic Church and the YMCA

    Serving the Prisoners of War

    Education of Prisoner Theologians

    Controversy

    After the War

3. THE LUTHERAN COMMISSION FOR PRISONERS OF WAR 51

    Book Distribution

    Building Germany's Spiritual Future

    Internal Disunity

Competition and Cooperation

After Repatriation

4. INTERNATIONAL RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER MISSIONARY EFFORTS 80

War Prisoners' Aid of the YMCA

Other Denominations

5. CHAPLAINS, CIVILIAN PASTORS AND PRISONER CLERGY 92

Clergy Controversies

A Welcome Comfort

Attendance at Services

CONCLUSION 114

BIBLIOGRAPHY 119

ABBREVIATIONS

AEO	Assistant Executive Officer
LC-MS	Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod
LCPOW	Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War
NCWC	National Catholic Welfare Conference
NLC	National Lutheran Council
OPMG	Office of the Provost Marshal General
POW	Prisoner(s) of War
SPD	Special Projects Division

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1944, Lance-Corporal Alois Heinzl was captured in France by the Allies. Having been previously wounded on the Eastern Front, he was advised by a doctor to take a train to France. It was commonly known among the German army that German prisoners of war would receive better treatment from the British or the Americans than from the Russians. After his capture, Heinzl (prisoner number 31G-74923) was taken to England where he spent a week doing voluntary work in a prison camp, before sailing in what he described as a "floating city" of over 200 ships bound for the United States. When he and the other prisoners disembarked thirteen days later at a detainment camp in New York City, they were processed and given, in Heinzl's opinion, fair treatment by their American captors. He noted especially the three meals a day they received as compared to two meals a day on the ship. After a railroad journey lasting several days, Heinzl arrived at what would be his home for the remainder of the war, Camp Ogden, Utah.[1]

Between 1943 and 1946, over 350,000 young German soldiers shared Heinzl's experience. Captured in North Africa and Europe, then shipped across the Atlantic, these prisoners were further sent by train to various points throughout 40 of the 50 states. The prisoners were interned, for the most part, in remote locations near industries and farms, where they could provide much needed labor. The irony that they replaced a workforce that was overseas, fighting the very Axis armies to which they belonged, was not lost on the prisoners. The POWs were, for the most part, happy to work. Their only other option

[1] Alois Heinzl, interview by author, 9 May 2001, Droß, Lower Austria, tape recording.

was to spend endless days with nothing to occupy the indefinite period of time before repatriation.

During these years of captivity, many monumental military occurrences took place, but POWs on both sides experienced a strange sort of deviation. The world was still at war, but these men were removed from what had been their sole purpose for the last few years. Relieved from fighting, yet not permitted to go home, they were vulnerable to loneliness and depression. The potential for lethargy was one thing the United States government tried to combat in its prisoner of war program. The prisoners had little to occupy their time outside of labor detail and had no idea when they would be sent home. Even more menacing to the American captors was the potential for uprisings or escape attempts, schemes that could easily materialize when a group of enemy soldiers had too much time on their hands. Finding leisure occupations for the POWs, although seemingly frivolous in wartime, was actually a matter of security as well as fair treatment.

One particular aspect of the care and treatment of German POWs worthy of attention was the fulfillment of their spiritual needs. Part of the Geneva Convention of 1929 required that prisoners be permitted to worship as they chose. The United States government intended to adhere to this stipulation and enlisted the assistance of leading national church bodies as well as international relief organizations, to provide for the prisoners' spiritual needs.

Since the perception of their captors was that many of these men had not encountered religion for over a decade, the POW camps were a crucial field for mission

work. Churches and clergy in the United States, which witnessed the influx of German prisoners into their communities, could not resist the apparent call to bring these "Nazis" back to Christ. Whereas Nazism and Fascism were associated with atheism and agnosticism, many people in the United States coupled democratic principles with Christianity. An added incentive for the government and the army to support and encourage efforts to minister to POWs was the hope of effecting a change in the prisoners' hearts and minds.

Many historians of the POW program hesitate to refer to the POWs as "Nazis." When dealing specifically with German and Austrian soldiers from Hitler's army, it would be an imprudent generalization to label all of the POWs as Nazi supporters. Their American captors made the initial mistake of assuming that, if not all, then at least the great majority of, their prisoners were followers of Hitler and the German National Socialist Workers [Nazi] Party. As the POW program continued, however, many officials were surprised to conclude that only a very small minority of the captives was what could be termed "die-hard Nazis." There were, in point of fact, several thousand opponents of Nazism among the prison population, who gradually became more comfortable expressing their opposition as their incarceration in the United States continued. The vast majority of the soldiers held a somewhat indifferent opinion of "der Führer," having fought for Germany, but not willing to go to their grave proclaiming Hitler's greatness. Indeed, as the POWs were exposed to a free press and the truth about Germany's disappointing defeats toward the end of the war, they began to lose

confidence in Nazism. Many of them at this time turned toward faith in a different, more constant, supernatural power.

The primary providers of spiritual care and worship services to German POWs were the Catholic Church and various Lutheran church bodies in the United States. Each of these two denominations set up a special committee to coordinate their efforts with the War Department and the Army. Although other denominations were ready and willing to minister to the POWs, interviews with the inmates indicated either a Lutheran or Catholic leaning, where there was a religious background. Historically, these are the two primary denominations in Germany. In addition to these bodies, several international (interdenominational) organizations were active in providing for the needs of POWs around the globe. These committees were instrumental in transmitting specific religious requests to the government and the participating churches.

Those who worked most closely with the prisoners, the chaplains and civilian clergy, exhibited the clearest understanding of mission work with prisoners of war, for they were the ones in the proverbial trenches. Their day-to-day experiences counseling POWs and preaching to them not only gave the prisoners comfort, but was a rewarding experience for the clergy as well. Pastors and priests encountered the enemy, not on the battlefield, but rather on the mission field. Meeting the Germans in this way resulted in a greater understanding between both parties and ensured future cooperation in the restoration of religion to Germany.

A number of historians have researched various aspects of the POW program. The most preeminent contributor to this field of study has been Arnold Krammer, whose

book, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (1976) remains the dominant history of the entire program. Krammer thoroughly examined the prisoners' incarceration in the United States from capture to repatriation. As the most complete account of the POW experience, Krammer, necessarily, touches only lightly on the religious aspect.

Other authors and students of this topic have focused their efforts on more particular aspects of the POW experience, from the Reeducation program to the various labor and employment programs. Some historians have chosen to localize their research, writing about the POW experience in one camp or one state, such as Allen Kent Powell's *Splinters of a Nation: German POWs in Utah* and Allen V. Koop's *Stark Decency: German Prisoners of War in a New England Village.* The ministry to POWs has itself been examined insofar as the role of the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War, which was researched in Steven Victor Dahms' Master's thesis "The Work of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and its Pastors and Congregations among German Prisoners of War in the United States During World War II," at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. However, Dahms admitted his failure to research the role of the government in the records at the National Archives. To consider only the Lutheran perspective is to ignore the bureaucracy controlling the entire effort and the large percentage of prisoners who were ministered to by Catholics.

Several factors have made it difficult to give a complete account of the POW ministry. First and foremost, there was no single cohesive program. While several organizations cooperated in their efforts, each body had its own agenda and set of goals. The church bodies worked with the government insofar as they were required to go

through the Office of the Provost Marshal General for admission to the camps and permission to serve the prisoners. The government worked with the church bodies because they were willing and able to take over this tremendous task and therefore relieve the Army of a responsibility it was not equipped to carry out. The international organizations were representing the interests of all belligerents and sought to enforce the Geneva Convention as it concerned POWs. Finally, civilian clergy were motivated by all manner of factors. Most felt called to this special mission. Some took the opportunity primarily for extra income.

Each of these organizations had different goals for the POW ministry, which makes it challenging to evaluate the success of the program. For the Army and the Office of the Provost Marshal General, the spiritual care of the prisoners was, at best, secondary to other POW programs. As far as the Geneva Convention was concerned, the captors had only to permit prisoners to worship as they chose. While the government realized the benefits of spiritually motivated POWS, plans for secular reeducation in the ways of democracy often overshadowed any religious edification.

Naturally, the church bodies and clergy were chiefly interested in providing this spiritual guidance. Both the Lutherans and the Catholics viewed the POW ministry as a missionary endeavor, similar to those in the farthest corners of the world. They devoted time and funds to the POW program and enlisted the support, both prayer and monetary, of their members nationwide. Ministers concerned themselves with the mental and emotional well being of the prisoners as well as the spiritual. In addition to preaching to the POW congregations, many ministers made themselves available for counseling. They

sought to combat the pervading agnosticism brought about by years of Nazi propaganda. Reintroducing God to faith-starved men by example and by witnessing was a primary goal, as was contributing to the spiritual future of a post-war Germany.

The participation of various parties makes description of the program problematic, but the diversity of the camps and the prisoners themselves made the program inconsistent and nearly as difficult to analyze as it was to conduct. The variables faced by those ministering to POWs ranged from the diverse political and religious views of the prisoners to the whims of the commanding officers. First, as previously mentioned, the prisoners were not all Nazis, but they were by no means unified in their political or religious beliefs. Some of the more vocal Nazis had to be silenced, as well as vehement anti-Nazis who leaned towards socialism and communism, ideologies equally reprehensible to the Americans. Communist prisoners were no more likely to support religious intervention than Nazis. The ministers focused their efforts on the middle ground, which happened to be the majority.

By the end of the war, over 400 camps existed in the United States. Some housed thousands of prisoners while smaller satellite camps held only dozens. The commanding officers each had a unique entity to control. Meeting the spiritual needs of the prisoners was often ranked below the arrangement of labor details, responding to other concerns of the prisoners or, quite simply, managing the day-to-day operation of the camp. Understandably, religion was often left out of the equation. On the other hand, many commanding officers recognized its usefulness in keeping the POWs under control and contented.

Whatever their motivation, hundreds of men in the Army, the government and the civilian clerical population joined forces to coordinate a prison ministry like no other in the United States. At times, these committees and organizations were plagued by disagreements and controversies, usually concerning the security of the whole POW endeavor. The underlying goal of the POW ministry was to restore faith in Christ to young men from a civilization that had abandoned all faith in a supernatural God and instilled it instead in Adolf Hitler. In the minds of these "missionaries," restoring these men to the light of God's love for his people, meant removing them from Hitler's control and preparing them to lead Germany into its post-Nazi future.

CHAPTER I

THE OFFICE OF THE PROVOST MARSHAL GENERAL AND INTELLECTUAL DIVERSION PROGRAM

In late 1942, under pressure from the British government, the United States agreed to accept prisoners of war to relieve the strain on Great Britain's severely taxed resources.[2] The United States had not held prisoners of war since World War I and even then it was not a substantial number. There was no definitive policy regarding POWs except the Geneva Convention of 1929, which was thus far untested. Had the United States government guessed in 1942 that it would eventually receive nearly half a million POWs, it might have reconsidered agreeing to the prospect. Nevertheless, plans were put underway to accept the influx of captives.

The War and State Departments readied themselves for the POW program. In the War Department, the Office of the Provost Marshal General supervised the administration of the camps and the prisoners. The State Department created the Internees Section under its Special War Problems Division to deal with the international aspects of retaining enemy prisoners. The Internees Section was responsible for consulting with the Swiss Legation, the liaison for all belligerent countries, as well as the Red Cross and the War Prisoners' Aid of the International YMCA, regarding treatment of the prisoners.[3] Through these liaison agencies, the Internees Section of the State

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[2] Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (New York: Stein and Day, 1976), 1-2.

[3] John Brown Mason, "German Prisoners of War in the United States," *American Journal of International Law* 39, no. 2 (1945): 199-200.

Department would be made aware of the specific needs and requests of POWs, which it would pass on to the Office of the Provost Marshal General (OPMG).

In addition to requiring the basic necessities of life and a certain degree of comfort for the prisoners, the Geneva Convention of 1929 made reference to the religious and intellectual aspects of prisoners' lives. Article 16 read: "Prisoners of war shall be permitted complete freedom in the performance of their religious duties, including attendance at the services of their faith...."[4] Following the Geneva Convention, as it did to the letter, the United States government intended to give prisoners the opportunity to worship. In addition, the Swiss Legation made the State Department aware of requests by prisoner spokesmen for religious services in the camps.[5] Not only was it required, but the government also began to believe that some good might come from exposing Nazi soldiers to Christianity after years of a national-socialistic belief system. Certainly, it was believed, no harm could come from it.

The first clergy to serve German POWs were most likely to be Army chaplains. To be faced with this most unusual type of congregation must have been disconcerting to men who had undoubtedly believed they would be serving American GIs. Eventually a system of rules and regulations for chaplains was developed, but the first POW chaplains, like the OPMG itself, were really operating without clear instructions. As more chaplains took up this responsibility, they were able to advise one another of what to expect and which methods worked best. Among the files of the Office of the Provost Marshal

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[4] Department of State, "Prisoners of War: Convention of July 27, 1929 Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War," Treaty Series no. 846, *Treaties and other International Agreements of the United States of America: Multilateral, 1918-1930* vol. 2: 942.

[5] Mason, "German Prisoners of War in the United States," 201.

General at the National Archives is an unsigned text entitled, "The Prisoner of War Camp Chaplain." This draft suggests guidelines for making POW ministry successful and fruitful. The author places the utmost importance on fluency in German for the camp chaplain. From personal experience, the author noted that prisoners came to services in droves when they first heard that someone was in the camp with whom they could speak in their native tongue.[6]

Chaplains in prisoner of war camps operated under a slightly different system of regulations. They were expressly forbidden to discuss politics or, for that matter, anything that did not pertain to religion, Scripture, or the prisoners' religious beliefs. No minister could accept from, or deliver to, a prisoner any kind of document. Those who supervised prisoner clergy were required to approve their sermons and be wary of ministers who used religious services as opportunities for thinly veiled Nazi propagandizing.[7]

The government was initially reluctant to use anyone other than Army chaplains or prisoner clergy in this ministry, as it was generally believed unwise to permit civilians to enter POW camps. As late as July 1943, William R. Arnold, Chief of Chaplains, declined an offer by the Reverend Ralph H. Long, Executive Director of the National Lutheran Council, to provide civilian Lutheran pastors to camps desiring religious

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[6] "The Prisoner of War Camp Chaplain," Draft of guidelines, Decimal File 000.3, RG 389, National Archives, Box 1627, 1-2. This article on the responsibilities and duties of POW camp chaplains was filed with other papers of Maj. John Dvorovy concerning religious service to the prisoners of war in the National Archives. Given Dvorovy's position as the Special Project's Division's liaison officer with the Office of the Chief of Chaplains and as a former Chaplain to POWs, it is likely that he authored this essay.

[7] Headquarters Army Service Forces, Office of the Adjutant General, "Prisoner of War Special Projects Letter No. 16," Decimal File 461, RG 389, National Archives, Box 1652, 2.

service. Chaplain Arnold reported that prisoner clergy under the supervision of Army chaplains were meeting the needs of the prisoners. According to Arnold, the Army chaplains were given the option of requesting additional assistance, either military or civilian. He stated, "Reports to date indicate the adequacy of the spiritual service that is being given under the present system and while your offer of help in this respect is deeply appreciated, there appears to be no need for a deviation in the present program."[8]

In a letter dated September 1943, Walter B. Zimmerman, an assistant to the Chief of Chaplains, assured Chaplain Irwin E. Heckman, a concerned chaplain in Alabama, that one chaplain would serve "for each 1500 personnel in all Prisoner of War Camps"[9] It is not clear if this "1500 personnel" referred to prisoners or American servicemen or a combination of the two. Nevertheless, it was a high ratio of men to clergyman. In the early stages of the POW program, the prisoners were interned at existing military prisons or bases. If the initial intention was for the base chaplains to serve the POWs, in addition to their usual base congregations, the Office of the Chief of Chaplains soon found this impossible. By the end of 1943, the United States held over 120,000 German prisoners within its borders.[10] As additional prisoners arrived and more camps were built (some in remote locations), the already strained chaplaincy was spread too thin.

Coupled with the sharp increase in the prisoner population was the lack of Army chaplains who were fluent, or at least proficient, in German. Most German-speaking

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[8] William R. Arnold to Rev. Ralph H. Long, 20 July 1943, Ralph H. Long Papers, Archives and Records Center, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (hereafter, ELCA), Elk Grove Village, Illinois, Box 1.

[9] Walter B. Zimmerman to Chaplain Irwin E. Heckman, 28 September 1943, Ralph H. Long Papers, Archives and Records Center – ECLA, Box 1.

[10] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War*, 271.

members of the armed forces were snatched up early for more crucial war efforts, such as Intelligence. The poor distribution of prisoner clergy and the strain on chaplains as well as the remote locations of certain base camps, soon required that civilian clergy be approached to minister to some POW camps.

The civilian pastor or priest would eventually become an integral part of ministering to the prisoners of war, but many Army officials were concerned about allowing civilians access to the camps. Before national church bodies began organizing committees to work with the government and secure access to the camps for their clergy, the decision of whether or not to grant access was left up to the camp's commanding officer (CO). The experiences of civilian pastors regarding access to camps throughout the country were varied. Few of the surviving clergymen directly contacted could recall any restrictions placed upon them by either the government or the supervisory church body. In a 1988 letter to Steven V. Dahms, Rev. Martin Schabacker recalled being able to meet freely with the prisoners in small groups or individually.[11] The OPMG did place all clergy serving POW camps under certain restrictions. Like the Army chaplains, civilian clergy were forbidden to transmit messages or other items from the prisoners to the outside and were ordered to refrain from preaching about anything but religion. As a rule, civilian pastors were only permitted to enter the chapel or other buildings where services were held, unless accompanied by camp personnel.[12] Leniency regarding these

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[11] Martin Schabacker to Steven V. Dahms, 29 March 1988, Letter provided to the author by Rev. Schabaker.

[12] "Section 208.04 – Religion," Excerpt from typescript POW manual, Edward Davison Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Box 9.

and other restrictions depended very much on the attitude of the commanding officer.[13] In some camps, the CO was perfectly willing to accept the assistance of the pastor on any terms, while in others the CO was wary of outside interference with the prisoners and greatly restricted the pastor's movements.

The Special Projects Division

Each issue to come before the War and State Departments regarding prisoners of war required careful consideration. The United States adhered more strictly to the Geneva Convention of 1929 than perhaps any other belligerent.[14] The government believed that the better the United States treated German POWs, the better off American prisoners would be in the hands of Germans. In *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, Arnold Krammer argues that this tactic worked, as American prisoners in Germany, although not given the almost luxurious treatment of their counterparts in America, were not openly abused.[15]

The prisoner of war program was a relatively new experience for the United States and was often, in its early stages, chaotic as the various departments attempted to develop a chain of command. Once the basic needs of the prisoners (shelter, food, clothing and the like) were provided for, it became clear that some provision for emotional, spiritual and intellectual needs would have to be organized. Article 17 of the Geneva Convention, along with the aforementioned Article 16, both fell under Part III,

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[13] T.W. Strieter, "A Brief History of 'The Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War'," Ralph H. Long Papers, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, 20.

[14] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War*, 27.

[15] Ibid., 257.

Section II, Chapter 4, entitled "Intellectual and moral needs of prisoners of war." Article 17 read: "belligerents shall encourage as much as possible the organization of intellectual and sporting pursuits by the prisoners of war."[16] This blanket statement opened a doorway for one of the most important programs in the POW endeavor.

The opportunities before the United States government with several hundred thousand Germans under its control were not lost on those who sought ways to combat the effects of Hitler's Nazi propaganda. Many government officials, as well as civilians, felt that some effort should be made to teach the Germans about democracy before returning them to Germany. Under the name "Intellectual Diversion," which alluded to Article 17, the United States developed a comprehensive reeducation program to ensure that a sufficient number of Germans were exposed to the democratic way of life. To oversee this endeavor, the OPMG created a committee, dubbed the Special Projects Division (SPD), with the ambiguity of the title serving to guard the secrecy of the effort. Few people believed it was wise to propagandize German POWs openly, lest Hitler reciprocate with American prisoners.[17]

The SPD staff was drawn from a primarily academic pool. The head of the Division, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Davison, was a poet and university professor with previous experience in the Morale Services Division.[18] He appointed colleagues from the academic community to help him design the reeducation program. Captain Walter

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[16] U.S. Department of State, "Prisoners of War," 942.

[17] Ron Robin, *The Barbed Wire College: Reeducating German POWs in the United States During World War II* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 9.

[18] Ibid., 44-45.

Schoenstadt was hired as curriculum director. Davison, who knew very little German, depended heavily on this German-born novelist. Schoenstadt was a German exile who had been naturalized just months before his prior employment with the Morale Division of the Army. A former communist who experienced an almost spiritual conversion to democracy, Schoenstadt had been writing "Know Your Enemy" pamphlets for servicemen before his transfer to the SPD.[19]

Davison's right-hand man was Major Maxwell McKnight, a Yale Law School graduate who had already been working in the POW Division.[20] Some of the other academics in the Division included: Howard Mumford Jones, a Harvard dean, put in charge of organizing American Studies; Henry Ehrmann, formerly a political prisoner in Germany, who had escaped and had been teaching at the New School for Social Research; and T. V. Smith, a former Illinois state senator and congressman and faculty member at the University of Chicago.[21] This brain trust developed and approved all intellectual and educational programs for the POWs in the United States. Not unaware of the great academic opportunity before them, they rushed to change the minds of as many German prisoners as possible before returning them to their homeland.

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[19] Arthur L. Smith, *The War for the German Mind: Reeducating Hitler's Soldiers* (Providence, Rhode Island: Berghahn Books, 1996), 41.

[20] Robin, *The Barbed-Wire College*, 45.

[21] Ibid., 49-53.

The primary goal of the SPD can be summed up in a few sentences taken from a press release about Col. Davison: "In the program developed by Davison, German prisoners were not taught democratic traditions. They were merely exposed to them. Prisoners were encouraged to read and think with open minds."[22] Realizing that forceful indoctrination might produce rebellion or rejection, the SPD sought subtle ways of presenting democracy in an appealing and non-threatening manner. This applied to religion as well. No prisoner was forced to attend church services, but the SPD developed creative ways of encouraging the POWs to participate in their programs.[23]

The Special Projects Division created lists of approved and recommended books and media to be distributed in the camps. Books, periodicals, and films were selected based on their merits as democratically oriented materials. Items that portrayed America in a positive light, as well as promoting freedom and tolerance, were especially welcome, as were books that Hitler had expressly banned for being contrary to Nazism. The camps received subscriptions of major U.S. newspapers to provide the POWs with access to a free press. The SPD even developed its own POW newspaper, entitled *Der Ruf* ("The Call"), written and published in German by prisoners. Classes in democracy and history, both American and German, were planned, as well as a film series. Of course, anything suggesting or promoting communism or socialism was rejected. Eventually the SPD developed several democracy "boot camps," so to speak, in which the most promising POW students could learn democratic principles and how to promote them upon their

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[22] "Davison," 14 June 1945, Press Release about Edward Davison from the Office of War Information, Edward Davison Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University, Box 10, 3.

[23] See Chapter 5, p. 110.

repatriation. The goal of the Special Projects Division, however, was to expose each and every POW to American democracy continuously.[24]

The OPMG had divided the country into nine regions or Service Commands.[25] With prisoners in over 40 states, any comprehensive nationwide program would require men spread throughout the country in camps to carry out the plans of the SPD. To oversee the Intellectual Diversion Program in each region, the Special Projects Division recruited over 100 men and designated them as Assistant Executive Officers or AEOs, further preserving the ambiguity of the program. The AEOs were responsible for approving educational and recreational materials in each camp and working with the camp officials to promote democracy. In addition, the AEOs were responsible for planning and scheduling all Intellectual Diversion activities. As far as religious services were concerned, the AEO was instructed not to schedule any conflicting activities in an effort to encourage attendance.[26]

The SPD determined that religion should at least play a cursory role, in that many people viewed democracy and Christianity as analogous doctrines. Therefore, a chaplain was appointed to act as a liaison between the Office of the Chief of Chaplains and the SPD.[27] Major John Dvorovy, a Missouri Synod Lutheran, took his mission in this role very seriously. As the SPD was designed to promote educational programs in all camps,

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[24] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, Ch. 6 *passim*.

[25] T.W. Strieter, "A Brief History," 13.

[26] Judith M. Gansberg, *Stalag: U.S.A.: The Remarkable Story of German POWs in America* (New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell, 1977), 111.

[27] "Religion," from draft of report of the Special Projects Division, Edward Davison Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University, Box 9, 586.

so Dvorovy was appointed to supervise and encourage religious services and instruction. When the OPMG began allowing civilian clergy, Dvorovy also served as a valuable liaison between the major national church bodies and the SPD. One of his most significant accomplishments was the tracking of all POW clergy and the rearrangement thereof to more effectively provide religious service to all camps.

As late as February 1945, the constant transfer of Army chaplains overseas was troubling to camp commanders trying to provide their servicemen and prisoners with spiritual services. A phone message for Col. Davison related that the 5th Service command had lost four chaplains through transfers to overseas duty. The matter was turned over to Major Dvorovy (referred to in the note as "Padre"), who apologetically explained that the situation was becoming troublesome throughout the country, as the priority for the Army was still to provide for American men abroad.[28]

One of the ways in which Dvorovy handled this problem was to see to the even distribution of POW clergy. Hitler was largely responsible for the fact that several hundred pastors, priests or theologians were to be found among the German prisoners. The Geneva Convention of 1929 made provisions for the treatment of what were referred to as "protected personnel." Article 9 of the "Amelioration of the Condition of the

[28] Telephone message taken for Col. Davison, 12 February 1945, Edward Davison Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University, Box 9.

Wounded and the Sick in Armies in the Field," reads:

> The personnel engaged exclusively in the collection, transport and treatment of the wounded and sick, and in the administration of medical formation and establishments, and *chaplains attached to armies* [italics mine], shall be respected and protected under all circumstances. If they fall into the hands of the enemy they shall not be treated as prisoners of war.[29]

Article 12 goes on to state that such persons cannot be held prisoner and should be sent back as soon as possible.[30] According to John Brown Mason, however, "The German Army provides only one chaplain for each division, as against between one and three for an American regiment.... Germany does not exempt ministers and priests from the draft but uses them, ordinarily as sanitary personnel...." [31] Many of these men were drafted, without regard to their status as religious objectors. Although there were few German Army "chaplains" to be found among the prisoners, there were numerous German clergymen among the general prisoner population. Had these men been designated "chaplains" by the German Army, they would have been returned shortly after capture. Instead, they were sent to the United States as enlisted men, removed from combat and able to serve their fellow prisoners' spiritual needs.

Because the men were placed in camps randomly based on the time of their arrival in port, the prisoners were dispersed in such a way as to leave some camps without any clergy while others might have over twenty.[32] Efforts were made by Major

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[29] U. S. Department of State, "Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field (Red Cross Convention)" 27 July 1929, *Treaties and other International Agreements of the United States of America: Multilateral, 1918-1930*: 972.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Mason, "German Prisoners of War in the United States," 201 note.

[32] Ibid., 201.

Dvorovy to rectify the situation. By sending out surveys to each camp, he discovered how many pastors and priests were interned, where they were located, and what their political ideologies were. By requesting a classification of their political beliefs (i.e., pro-Nazi, anti-Nazi, indifferent), Dvorovy could also, at least on some small level, quiet some of the Nazi influence in some of the camps. He could then transfer clergy from a camp in which there were twenty or more, to camps that had none. If a camp or base was deprived of an official Army chaplain, Dvorovy felt it should at least have one or two German prisoners with backgrounds in the ministry to serve their fellow inmates.

The political leanings of POW clergy were a matter of concern for more than just Dvorovy. Chaplain F. D. Svoboda, who served at the New York Port of Embarkation, had occasion to meet most of the prisoners right off the boat. He felt it necessary to caution his colleagues serving in other camps about the German POW clergy. Two points he made are especially worth mention:

> 1) The mere fact that German soldier or officer was a clergyman in civilian life does not in my opinion entitle him to become a pastor for the PWs.
>
> 2) I have yet to find a German pastor who in some way has not been influenced by clever propaganda of the Nazis.[33]

Obviously, some of the POW clergy were Nazis. Many chose not to participate in religious services in their camps. Others might have used the opportunity to preach National Socialism along with the Gospel. Major Dvorovy's job was to ensure that true Christian men served the POWs, whether they be Army Chaplains, civilians or POWs.

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[33] [F. D. Svoboda], "Enclosure to the February Monthly Report of Chaplain F.D. Svoboda," n.d. Ralph H. Long Papers, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2.

All evidence indicates that the Major took this responsibility seriously, but his goals did not always coincide with those of his colleagues.

Internal Strife at the Special Projects Division

Extensive research on the reeducation program indicates that the Special Projects Division was not always a smooth operation. Ron Robin noted in *The Barbed Wire College*, that political infighting was not uncommon among the staff members. In May 1945, Colonel Davison prepared to go on a trip to survey conditions in Germany. As he left, the Division was facing problematic working relationships and transfer of the entire office from New York to Washington. In a meeting on May 26, Davison discussed the troubles with his men. He reminded them that, "...there have been some disagreements, personality differences, and even some bickerings in the Division. This should never have happened.... It must stop and stop for good. If it doesn't I shall have to initiate the severest kind of action."[34] He encouraged the staff to act as a team and remember that others were "shedding their blood and losing their lives."[35]

Part of the problem, according to Ron Robin, lay with Major Dvorovy. The academics in the Division welcomed Major Dvorovy's religious input and efforts, but religion was not the primary focus of their agenda. Robin indicates that Dvorovy may very well have felt out of place amongst the academics, which could have resulted in his betrayal of several colleagues.[36] In August 1945, Major Dvorovy confided in an

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[34] "Notes for Meeting of all Officers," 26 May 1945, Notes for Staff Meeting of the SPD, Edward Davison Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University, Box 9, 1.

[35] Ibid., 2.

[36] Robin, *The Barbed-Wire College*, 56-57.

intelligence officer at Fort Getty, Rhode Island, that he believed Lt. Col. Alpheus Smith to be an inappropriate choice for the head of the democracy school at Fort Getty. He asserted that "the 'leftist' leanings of Lt. Col. A. W. Smith and Major Henry L. Smith are becoming quite apparent," and that Major M. S. McKnight, the SPD's second in command, displayed "sympathies (which) are pro-communism in scope and that he 'leans over backwards to toward the left.'"[37]

Ron Robin suggested that Dvorovy made such accusations to gain favor in the eyes of superiors in the Office of the Provost Marshal General, referring to him as a "marginal and disgruntled officer [who] had never been able to convince his fellow officers to accept religious activities as a bonafide tool for reeducation."[38] His attempts at causing dissension were hampered only by the return of Colonel Davison from Europe. Whether Dvorovy was motivated by his dwindling role in the SPD to stir up trouble is not clear. He did not seem to have many supporters in the Division, or in other branches of government for that matter. John Brown Mason, a State Department official at the time, is quoted by Robin as saying:

> With all due respect for the Chaplain...there is some question in my mind as to the desirability of picking a Lutheran minister of the Missouri synnod [sic] for this particular job as that Church is characterized by a strict orthodoxy which is foreign to the religious feeling of most German Protestants (the Evangelical Church in this country is the type of church the Germans are used to.)[39]

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[37] Wm. R. Homiller, "Memo to Acting Director, PW Special Projects Division, PMGO," 2 August 1945, Edward Davison Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University, Box 9.

[38] Robin, *The Barbed-Wire College*, 143.

[39] Ibid., 56.

The SPD did not place much emphasis on religion after its initial interest in the relationship between religion and democracy. In the four special reeducation camps, Fort Kearney, Fort Wetherill, Fort Getty and Fort Eustis, as in all the camps, ministers provided religious services, but religion never became a part of the official reeducation curriculum. In an article on the democracy program at Fort Eustis, Virginia, featured in *The American Oxonian*, Edwin Casady confirmed that Catholic and Protestant services were provided, but the single sentence devoted to this fact in the nine-page study illustrates the significance given religion in the SPD's major efforts.[40] On the other hand, at each graduation ceremony for the school at Fort Getty, Major Dvorovy read a prayer written by Stephen Vincent Benet. The prayer entitled, "Prayer for United Nations," asks God's assistance in creating a more peaceful world and promoting the brotherhood of all mankind.[41]

Within all the other camps, religion was of course encouraged. A summary report of SPD activities indicated that conferences were held for chaplains serving POW camps for each Service Command in the spring of 1945 "for the purpose of orienting prisoner of war camp chaplains in the Intellectual Diversion Program."[42] The same report related that religious activity in POW camps increased dramatically from the winter of 1944, with church attendance increasing 30 percent between October 1944 and February 1945. The report attributed the increase in part to Germany's collapse, the segregation of Nazis from

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[40] Edwin Casady, "The Reorientation Program for PWs at Fort Eustis, Virginia," *The American Oxonian* 34, no. 3, (July 1947): 152.

[41] "German translation of Stephen Vincent Benet's 'Prayer for United Nations,'" 5 March 1946, typescript copy of English version of prayer, Edward Davison Papers, Beinecke, Yale University, Box 10.

[42] "Religion," draft of report of the Special Projects Division, Edward Davison Papers, 587.

anti-Nazis and the "realization that life devoid of true Christian religion is empty and without purpose."[43]

In addition, a progress report of the SPD program from the First Service Command (New England) addressed the issue of church attendance and religion within that region. The author of the report, Capt. Roger M. Damio, advocated the encouragement of religion in the camps because he believed Christianity shared many of democracy's values. He also saw first-hand how successful visiting missionaries had been in engaging the prisoners in worship.[44]

Dvorovy continued to press for attention to religion in the reeducation program, but none of his later actions surpassed the work of transferring POW clergy. He wrote a letter to Brigadier General B. M. Bryan, Assistant Provost Marshal General, in October 1945 requesting that all prisoner clergy, estimated at approximately 300 men, be sent to Fort Getty to undergo the program of American democracy. He believed the education of these men would benefit the recovering Germany, as they would clearly be attending to a large portion of the population upon their repatriation.[45] What better way to pass on American ideals to numerous Germans? It was certainly in keeping with the main purpose of the reeducation program; that being the instruction of a captive audience in the hopes of rebuilding Germany on democratic principles. In all likelihood, however, no effort was made to send all the chaplains to Fort Getty. The OPMG was not keen on

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[43] "Religion," draft of report of the Special Projects Division, 587.

[44] [Capt. Roger M. Damio], "Special Projects Activities in First Service Command, Section A: Factual Presentation of Data and Statistics Pertinent to the Special Projects Program," Report of Intellectual Diversion Program in the First Service Command, Decimal File 319.1, RG 389, National Archives, Box 1628, 7-8.

trying to round up all the clergy for any such purpose, as indicated by the attempts at approximately the same time to form a seminary camp for all the prisoner clergy.[46]

Much of Dvorovy's work is overshadowed by the whole reeducation program. It appears he had many valuable ideas for restoring faith to German POWs and Germany as a whole, many of which never came to fruition. In a letter to Dr. Lawrence "Lorry" B. Meyer, President of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the Rev. T. W. Streiter passed on several passages of a letter from Dvorovy. Dvorovy first reported that he proposed placing Lutheran Day School teachers in camps "during the summer months" to teach various subjects from Civics to Geography. He asked that the idea be kept confidential for the moment pending approval, but somewhat gleefully added "General Bryan seemed to be impressed by the idea!" He went on to suggest the possibility of sending such German speaking Lutheran teachers to Germany after the war.[47] There is no indication that either proposed program was carried out.

It is not clear if religion was a successful part of the Intellectual Diversion Program. The aforementioned progress report of Special Projects activities in the First Service Command indicates that the AEOs in that region had different ideas about the significance of religion in their mission. Some AEOs felt that they were responsible only for making sure that a clergyman was available to the prisoners, while other AEOs actively collaborated with the ministers. The unspecified author of the report indicated

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[45] John Dvorovy to Brig. General B.M.Bryan, 23 October 1945, Decimal File 000.3, RG 389, National Archives, Box 1595.

[46] See Chapter 2, p. 43.

[47] T.W. Strieter to Dr. L. Meyer, 22 June 1945, quoting letter from John Dvorovy, Lawrence B. Meyer Collection, Concordia Historical Institute, Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri., Box 79.

that such collaboration was representative of "advanced thinking for our secular times..." in that "working together can accomplish a great deal more than the sum of their independent efforts."[48] The author clearly valued the place of religion in the mission of the program and asked the question: "Why then is religion not courted as assiduously by the democracies as it is persecuted by the totalitarian states?"[49]

The level of influence religion had in the various camps throughout the country seems, therefore, to be related to the attitudes of the camp officers. Where a commander or AEO believed religion to be only of minor significance in the overall program, it was given minimal attention and, therefore, bore little fruit. Where, on the other hand, officers and commanders were supportive of chaplains, pastors and their efforts, religious life in camps flourished. As the report noted, "In the First Service Command, it was vigorously promoted.... Prisoners of war were encouraged to attend religious services...not as an end in itself but as a means of relearning the principles of Christianity and of identifying them with the principles of democracy."[50]

The POW ministry, therefore, was begun with the encouragement of the government, specifically the Special Projects Division of the OPMG. As the SPD began to develop the Intellectual Diversion Program, however, and as repatriation of prisoners drew closer, the focus on religion was limited to Major Dvorovy and a few AEOs who believed in its importance. These men bolstered their connections with civilian clergy

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[48] [Capt. Roger M. Damio], "Special Projects Activities in First Service Command, Section C: Digest of B by and with the comments of the Special Projects Officer, Decimal File 319.1, RG 389, National Archives, Box 1628. Judith Gansberg, *Stalag U.S.A.*, 168.

[49] Ibid., "Special Projects Activities."

[50] Ibid.

and the national church bodies they represented and continued the promotion of ministry in the prisoner of war camps.

CHAPTER 2

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE WAR RELIEF SERVICES BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WELFARE CONFERENCE

And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, but as it is written: 'To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand.'

Romans 15:1

Throughout Europe and the rest of the world, the Catholic Church was an active participant in war relief activities. In America, one of the earliest concerns of the Catholic Church, even before the United States' entry into the war, was providing sufficient priests for the military chaplaincy abroad and at home. The Catholic Church, like other American religious bodies, began recruiting for and promoting military chaplaincy among its clergy. Already by 1941, lists were compiled of the number of chaplains within each diocese and the number of applicants to the chaplaincy. By early 1942, bishops were writing to their superiors to request that priests be sent to help with the influx of servicemen into their communities. The Bishop of St. Augustine, Florida, wrote of "over twenty military establishments in this Diocese, of which only four now have chaplains."[51] He was deeply concerned that if more priests were not sent to minister to the servicemen, the Church would miss a golden opportunity. The men, he observed,

[51] Bishop Joseph Hurley to Archbishop Edward Mooney, 23 February 1942, National Catholic Welfare Conference Collection, Record Group 10, Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., (hereafter NCWC RG 10, CUA), Box 57.

"badly need the constant presence and counsel and ministration of a priest; they slip away from us unless a priest is on the job...."[52]

Fulfilling the need for chaplains on the front and in the States put a strain on all denominations. A War Department Press Release dated March 23, 1944, reported losses among Army chaplains during the previous year. Nineteen died in battle, nineteen were wounded and another thirty-three were taken prisoner.[53] Losses such as these made the demand for chaplains even greater, especially when one considers the strain put on the servicemen. The press release went on to report the average monthly duties for each chaplain as follows: 19.4 religious services attended by 1,160, 14.1 visits to hospitals, 4.1 "functional occasions" in civilian communities, and 118.6 instances of personal ministry. All in all, Army chaplains conducted 1,350,991 services for 80,798,577 people in 1943.[54] Those figures do not include other branches of the military.

Well into 1945, the Military Ordinate, the Catholic Church's liaison organization with the Armed Forces, expressed concern over its contribution to the chaplaincy. Although meeting its allotted quota of 25 percent of all chaplains, the Catholic Church lagged behind other denominations, which had exceeded their quotas. In a letter dated March 10, 1945, John F. O'Hara of the Military Ordinate indicated to Monsignor Howard J. Carroll that he wanted to see the Catholic Church meet the newly permitted 35% increase over the Catholic quota, meaning over 700 new chaplains. He referred to a report showing that Catholics stood at 109% of their quota, behind Jews with 135%,

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[52] Bishop Hurley to Archbishop Mooney, 23 February 1942.

[53] War Department, "Battle Casualties High Among Army Chaplains," 23 March 1945, Press Release, NCWC RG 10, CUA, Box 57, 1.

[54] Ibid., 2.

Missouri Lutherans with 116%, Baptists with 113% and Congregational-Christians with 111%.[55]

With such extraordinary efforts required to ensure ministry to American servicemen, one would think that there would be sufficient chaplains to serve POWs. The difficulty lay in the army placement of chaplains according to its own determination of necessity. A chaplain of one denomination serving at a base facility in the United States might be sent overseas to fulfill a specific need, leaving a chaplain of "the wrong" denomination in his place. This was especially problematic when it came to German and Italian prisoners of war. If a Catholic chaplain was sent overseas to the front, a Baptist, Methodist, or even Jewish chaplain might be sent to replace him at the base. For the base community, this was not a serious problem, but if a POW camp were located at the base in question, chaplains of such denominations would be of little use to the largely Catholic and Lutheran Germans and Roman Catholic Italians.

Even when Lutheran or Catholic chaplains were stationed at such bases, they were not always able to serve the prisoners adequately, due to the language barrier. The Catholic chaplains could of course, at the very least, perform a Latin Mass for either Germans or Italians, but the language barrier still hindered personal counseling with the POWs. Lutheran chaplains, although more likely to have some knowledge of the German language, were not always fluent or even proficient enough to preach a sermon and counsel the German prisoners. For this reason, Brigadier General B. M. Bryan asked

[55] John F. O'Hara to Msgr. Howard J. Carroll, 10 March 1945, NCWC RG 10, CUA, Box 57, 2.

the Chief of Chaplains to consider retaining German-speaking chaplains at POW camps rather than assigning them to overseas posts.[56]

Nevertheless, Catholic priests were among the first civilians to approach the camp commanders and the government about caring for the prisoners' spiritual well being. Many priests simply showed up at the camps and requested access. Sometimes the camp commanders would ask the local diocese to find someone willing to serve in this capacity. Needless to say, the influx of hundreds, even thousands, of prisoners into one's community did not go unnoticed. Many priests consulted their superiors to ask what could be done, what should be done and what, if anything was being done to care for the POWs. Several bishops, like Laurence J. Fitzsimon, Bishop of Amarillo, Texas, questioned the National Catholic Welfare Conference about the existence of a national committee or organization entrusted with the coordination of these activities. Bishop Fitzsimon suggested, in a letter dated 2 August 1943:

> ...that some national move be made in behalf of our War prisoners and that there be created, within the structure of the N.C.W.C., a special department that will coordinate our efforts for better efficiency.... After acceptance, all that concerns the spiritual welfare of the War prisoners should be placed on a national basis, with every Diocese cooperating in some form or other.[57]

This is precisely what the National Catholic Welfare Conference was in the process of arranging.

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[56] Brigadier General B.M. Bryan, 18 January 1945, Memorandum for the Chief of Chaplains, Decimal File 000.3, RG 389, National Archives, Box 1595.

[57] Laurence J. Fitzsimon to Archbishop Edward Mooney, 2 August 1943, NCWC RG 10, CUA, Box 58, 2.

War Relief Services

The War Relief Services Branch of the National Catholic Welfare Conference took responsibility for overseeing ministry to POWs of the Catholic faith. This branch was incorporated on June 1, 1943. The Catholic Church originally developed the War Relief Services Branch to represent Catholic interests in the President's National War Fund, an organization created in 1942 to coordinate all fundraising efforts in the country for war relief. The Administrative Board of the NCWC felt that a Catholic agency should take part in such an endeavor to represent the particular interests of Catholics worldwide. War Relief Services-NCWC was admitted to the National War Fund in April 1943.[58]

Although, at the local level, priests discovered these potential POW congregations early, the Catholic Church, at the national level, was slow to realize the need for religious attention among POWs. As late as April 1943, even though the NCWC was in the process of forming War Relief Services, the Bishops' War Emergency and Relief Committee answered a request for religious supplies for German and Italian POWs with this response:

> There are very few internment camps in operation in this country for German and Italian prisoners. In each case, chaplains attached to these internment camps are familiar with the religious welfare agencies and will no doubt make requisition upon them for religious material necessary to properly serve the internees.[59]

Even though, at this time, the Bishops' War Emergency and Relief Committee granted several other appeals for funding, the Committee designated more substantial amounts for

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[58] War Relief Services-N.C.W.C., "National Catholic Welfare Conference Progress Report 1943," NCWC RG 10, CUA, Box 72, 1-2.

[59] Bishops' War Emergency and Relief Committee, "Report on Matters Affecting the Bishops' War Emergency and Relief Committee," 4 May 1943, NCWC RG 10, CUA, Box 71, 13.

the Military Ordinate and the Chaplain's Aid Association for their work among American soldiers and servicemen. The fact that the Committee gave $1,000 "to cover needs for several months" to give religious material to POWs, indicates the underestimation of the prisoner of war situation in the spring of 1943, when compared with the $60,000 and $15,000 appropriated for the Military Ordinate and the Chaplain's Aid Association, respectively.[60]

Once the number of prisoners began to increase steadily and priests and bishops throughout the country began requesting assistance for POW ministry, the Catholic Church could no longer ignore the need for concerted efforts. Just a few months after the incorporation of War Relief Services, on September 29, 1943, the Board of Directors "authorized the Executive Director to supply religious articles for prisoners of war in the amount of $30,000; to reimburse civilian Chaplains up to the amount of $12,000, and to assist Priest-soldiers in the amount of $10,000."[61] The Bishops' War Emergency and Relief Committee fulfilled such requests for funding.

Unlike the Lutheran organization, the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War, War Relief Services was not devoted solely to prisoners of war. It assumed control over all American Catholic relief efforts for evacuated persons, refugees and prisoners throughout the world. This included work among children, students and refugees in China, the Middle East, England, Switzerland, and Portugal to name a few, in addition to American and Axis POWs in Germany, Japan, and the United States.[62] Agencies such as

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[60] Bishops' War Emergency and Relief Committee, "Report on Matters", 12.

[61] War Relief Services, "Minutes of the Board of Directors, War Relief Services-National Catholic Welfare Conference," 29 September 1943, NCWC RG 10, CUA, Box 72, 2.

[62] War Relief Services, "Progress Report 1943," 5-6.

the International and American Red Cross and the YMCA notified War Relief Services of specific "recreational, educational and occupational needs" of prisoners on both sides.[63]

For the most part, War Relief Services provided religious and educational materials for POWs. Although the NCWC also reimbursed priests for service to prisoners through funds made available by the Bishops' War Emergency and Relief Committee, there was little effort made on the national level by the Catholic Church to place civilian priests in camps throughout the country. Correspondence with the NCWC indicates that this was carried out on the diocesan level. Bishops throughout the country expressed concerns about placement of priests in these camps. The time, money, and energy required to serve the prisoners put a strain on many dioceses. The Bishop of Pueblo, Colorado, J. C. Wieeging, noted that the 3,600 prisoners of Camp Trinidad would most likely require a full-time priest, which neither he nor the Jesuit Fathers in Trinidad could afford.[64] He also expressed anxiety that the Lutheran prisoners were already being served by a full-time Lutheran chaplain. He claimed that "the non-Catholic element, especially among the officers, is not very Christian. In fact quite the contrary. They are thoroughly imbued with pagan Hitlerism. But the Catholic enlisted men are very amenable to religious influences."[65]

Bishop Francis C. Kelley of Oklahoma City and Tulsa appointed Father Stephan A. Leven in May 1944 to minister to the newly arrived prisoners in that area. He

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[63] War Relief Services, "Progress Report 1943," 7.

[64] [J.C. Wieeging] to Rev. Michael J. Ready, 23 August 1943, Letter, NCWC RG 10, CUA, Box 58.

[65] Ibid.

recorded his experience in the Catholic periodical *America*. Father Leven had no trouble gaining access to the camps. He presented the prisoners with several donations on behalf of "the Holy Father," including radios for each camp and tobacco and cigarette papers.[66] To those among Leven's readership who might have had difficulty believing that any of the "Nazi" prisoners were Christians, he pointed out, "There is a large segment in American religious life for whom 'profession' rather than church attendance is the norm of religious affiliation."[67] Leven did grant that attendance among prisoners of war varied from camp to camp depending on the political tone and other factors. He also assured his audience that, in his experience, the Catholic services were better attended than the Protestant. This competitive spirit was very evident in the correspondence of both the Lutheran and the Catholic agencies serving the POWs.

Cooperation *between* Lutherans and Catholics on the national level was minimal. Although, within each camp, pastors and priests might be on friendly terms and Catholic and Lutheran prisoners often attended one another's services, the denominations did not cooperate in any administrative sense in the endeavor to minister to prisoners. A sort of jealousy can be inferred from much of the correspondence, as seen in Bishop Wieeging's letter. Much of the Lutheran correspondence as well, reveals interdenominational tension.

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[66] Stephen A. Leven, "A Catholic Chaplain Visits Our German Prisoners," *America* 144 (June 24, 1944): 320.

[67] Leven, "Catholic Chaplain Visits German Prisoners," 321.

The Catholic Church and the YMCA

Not only did the Catholics not cooperate with the Lutherans on a national level (and vice versa), they also had great difficulty collaborating with the YMCA. During World War II, the Young Men's Christian Association promoted interdenominational participation in war relief efforts throughout the world. American Catholics, however, were wary of cooperating with this organization. The Catholic Church primarily took issue with the history and foundation of the YMCA. Of the twelve founding members, three were Congregationalists, three were Methodists, and the rest were members of the Church of England. The absence of a Catholic founder suggested to the Catholic Church in America that the YMCA was essentially a Protestant organization. An office memorandum dated June 20, 1944, from Monsignor Patrick O'Boyle, the Executive Director of War Relief Services, to Monsignor Michael J. Ready, illustrates this suspicion of and contempt for the YMCA: "I think the attached will prove very interesting, it is information showing the relationship between the International Y.M.C.A. and the Protestant Churches. Obviously, the Y.M.C.A. is not a non-sectarian organization."[68] Although the attachment was not included in the file, it is apparent that Catholics were searching for proof that the YMCA was essentially a Protestant society.

A 1955 study entitled "Catholics and the Y.M.C.A." represents the culmination of such fears, and although this was published a decade after World War II, it answers many

[68] Monsignor Patrick O'Boyle to Monsignor Michael J. Ready, 20 June 1944, Office memorandum, NCWC RG 10, CUA, Box 58.

of the questions regarding Catholic refusal to join forces with the YMCA. The report states clearly:

> If this organization has a religious purpose, and if the organization is not a Catholic religious organization, then obviously it is not for Catholics, we may not become members of it, or have our children become members (even of their youth groups), we may not serve on their boards, and we should not contribute, as individuals to their buildings or programs.[69]

Another post-war encounter further supports this fear of the YMCA's un-Catholic nature. A meeting between an unnamed Catholic official and a Mr. Nicholson, vice-chairman of the American Red Cross in charge of Insular and Foreign Operations, provided another indication of the Catholic view of the YMCA. The two men had come together in the interest of discussing revisions to the Geneva Convention. Mr. Nicholson first mentioned the role of the International YMCA in arranging services in POW camps. The Catholic official responded:

> Whereas the latter organization is non-sectarian in the minds of many non-Catholics (Mr. Nicholson nodded assent) it is not so considered by the Catholic Church and thus we would prefer that religious services be arranged either by P.O.W. camp authorities or representatives of the Catholic Church.[70]

The Minutes of the Administrative Board – NCWC from the April 14, 1942, meeting indicate that the activities of the YMCA in prisoner of war relief efforts coupled with the Catholic fear of that organization, may have been an inducement to form a Catholic agency for war and POW relief. After being visited by YMCA officials seeking

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[69] "Catholics and the Y.M.C.A.," December 1955, Typewritten study of relationship between the two organizations, NCWC RG 10, CUA, Box 83, 2.

[70] "Revisions of the Geneva Convention," NCWC RG 10, CUA, Box 58, 3.

the support of the Catholic Church in such relief efforts, the Minutes state that "...the Chairman was authorized to explore the possibility of implementing the interest of the Board in War Prisoners in a way that would involve no embarrassing cooperation with the...Y.M.C.A."[71] Of course, at this early date, the service to POWs in question was probably to Allied prisoners in Axis POW camps, but the groundwork was laid nonetheless. In the end, the cooperation between the Catholic Church and the YMCA in regard to prisoners of war was minimal. The Catholics assented to having the YMCA transmit requests from camps for materials to War Relief Services. The role of the YMCA in Catholic relief efforts was therefore limited to liaison between the Catholics and the camps, a connection that became increasingly unnecessary in the United States as Catholic officials were eventually granted access to the American camps. The Catholics, however, depended greatly on the YMCA and the International Red Cross for contact with American Catholics in Axis camps.

Serving the Prisoners of War

The primary service to POWs throughout the world carried out by the Catholic Church was the provision of reading and other materials both religious and secular. German and Italian prisoners in America requested Bibles, prayer books and other literature in their own languages. The Catholic Church attempted to locate inexpensive versions of such religious materials, which they could have published in bulk.[72] To some

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[71] National Catholic Welfare Conference, "Minutes of the Administrative Board," 14 April 1942, NCWC RG 10, CUA, 5-6.

[72] John F. O'Hara to Archbishop Stritch, 9 February 1943, Letter quoted in "Report on Matters Affecting the Bishops' War Emergency and Relief Committee," 4 May 1943, NCWC RG 10, Box 58, 12-13.

extent the Catholic Church was successful. Rosaries and German and Italian prayer books were sent in large quantities to the camps. The Catholics had slightly more difficulty in producing and distributing this material than their Lutheran counterparts. Whereas, the main Lutheran church bodies were able to call upon parishioners for donations of German prayer books, Bibles, hymnals, and secular German literature and music, the Catholic Church was not as successful at collecting and stockpiling donations en masse.

Abbot Francis Sadlier, writing from Saint Leo, Florida, to Monsignor Carroll, included a list comparing the contributions of literature to Camp Blanding, Florida, by the Catholics to those of the Lutherans with the YMCA. While the Catholic Church had provided a total of 1120 copies of two titles ("Mein Soldatenmessbuch"- soldier's mass book; "Gott mit uns"- perhaps a devotional book), the Lutherans and the YMCA had provided 4707 copies of 12 titles. As an added chastisement, the Abbot concluded his letter with statistics for the population of Catholics in America versus Lutherans in America, namely 25,000,000 Catholics vs. 15,000,000 Lutherans, a ratio of 5:3.[73]

One curious request came from the German prisoner spokesman at Camp Alva in Oklahoma. He explained to the NCWC that Camp Alva, being a relatively new camp, had no library or sporting equipment. The prisoners, all officers (and therefore, not required to work), were in desperate need of leisure activities and the supplies to facilitate such time consumption. To make matters worse, most of the prisoners had been

[73] Francis Sadlier to Monsignor Howard J. Carroll, 16 July 1945, Letter, NCWC RG 10, CUA, Box 58.

transferred from camps that all libraries and sufficient equipment. Colonel Koester, the spokesman, requested "books of entertaining contents" and scientific books, in addition to sports equipment. What is initially unusual about this request is that religious materials were nowhere mentioned in this letter to a Catholic organization.[74] When one considers, however, that Camp Alva was activated to hold the most dedicated Nazis, the absence of religious interest seems more reasonable. It is not clear if the NCWC ever filled this request.

Of course, the contributions of the Catholic Church must not be minimized. The "Summary of General Report, War Relief Services-National Catholic Welfare Conference" dated November 14, 1944, reported that between August 1, 1943, and September 30, 1944, "a total of 248 tons of religious, educational, occupational, and recreational materials have been shipped to the various camps."[75] Certainly the Catholics were not neglecting the prisoners. The abundance of Lutheran contributions could be attributed to the fact that many American Lutherans still had a great deal of German material in their homes. For many Lutherans, the German language was still a part of everyday life. Therefore, the response to the request for secondhand materials was overwhelming. In addition, as the Lutherans were unable to do very much for the Italian prisoners, the Catholics were, by default, the primary providers of religious material for those POW congregations.

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[74] [Colonel Koester] to National Catholic Welfare Conference, 11 January 1944, letter from camp spokesman at Camp Alva, Oklahoma, NCWC RG 10, CUA, Box 58.

[75] War Relief Services, "Summary of General Report, War Relief Services – National Catholic Welfare Conference," 14 November 1944, NCWC RG10, CUA, Box 72, 2.

In addition to providing literature and devotional material, the mere presence of visiting priests was of great comfort to the prisoners. Many sought the Church's intervention with special problems relating to their incarceration. Both the Catholics and the Lutherans were willing to intervene with the OPMG when a problem was brought to their attention. For instance, imprisoned German clergy often despaired of their condition and sought religious assistance. Bishop Frank A. Thiel of Concordia, Kansas, appealed to his superiors regarding one Father Reginald Huber, O.S.B., who was being treated as an enlisted soldier. Father Huber lamented that he did not enlist, but was drafted as an ordinary soldier. Because he was not immediately recognized as protected personnel, Father Huber was required to work with the other enlisted men on labor detail, which severely hampered his efforts to minister to his fellow prisoners. Another German soldier in the same camp identified himself as a Franciscan cleric, who wanted to continue his studies while incarcerated. Both men requested that they be "paroled" to a Franciscan monastery in the United States for the duration of their incarceration.[76] The Catholic Church took up the issue with the Chief of Chaplains, William R. Arnold. Chaplain Arnold informed the Church that prisoners could not be repatriated or released to institutions in the United States but that the government was "now giving special attention to those classed as protected personnel and is also giving consideration to the possibility of their repatriation."[77]

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[76] Frank A. Thiel to Michael J. Ready, Letter regarding two German Catholic POWs, NCWC RG 10, CUA, Box 58, 1-2.

[77] Wm. R. Arnold to James M. Lawler, 3 September 1943, NCWC RG 10, CUA, Box 58.

Several other bishops and priests requested the repatriation of prisoner clergy to Germany or their removal to American monasteries. It seems there were always special cases. Because Hitler's methods of raising an army often bordered on impressment, many soldier priests and pastors felt wrongly imprisoned, especially those from countries other than Germany. William Nolken, a member of the Society of the Priests of the Sacred Heart in Wisconsin, requested that a Belgian prisoner, who had been a former student of his, be released to his monastery. The man in question, one Father Huppetz, was drafted into service when Hitler invaded Belgium and annexed the counties of Eupen and Malmédy to Germany.[78] The Provost Marshal General took such requests under advisement and insisted that the service commands would be notified when a policy was developed regarding prisoner clergy. In the first few years of the POW program, security of the civilian population was still of primary concern. By 1944 and 1945, as the war drew to a close, the official response to such requests was that it was expected that all prisoners would be repatriated shortly.

Education of Prisoner Theologians

Representatives of two international religious organizations submitted another unique request to the Special Assistant to the Secretary of War in February 1945. The International Catholic Help for Catholic Refugees and War Victims and the Ecumenical Commission for Chaplaincy Service to Prisoners of War of the War Council of Churches proposed the establishment of a seminary camp for prisoners who had begun theological

[78] William Nolken to Michael J. Ready, 30 December 1943, Letter, NCWC RG 10, CUA, Box 58.

training before the war and sought to continue it during their "stay" in America.[79] The representative and Chairman of the International Catholic Help, Dom Odo, Duke of Württemberg and Pastor Carl E. Wenngren of the Ecumenical Commission had been developing this plan with Catholic and Lutheran churches in America for several months. They found that there were some 300 candidates for such a camp, should the government see fit to open one.[80] At this point, the church leaders were interested in ensuring Germany's spiritual future by seeking to fill what they believed would be a great shortage of clergy in post-war Germany. Between casualties of war and Hitler's aversion to religion, world church leaders believed there were insufficient German clergy to fill this need, which would arise as the dust settled in Europe. With willing potential seminarians, Catholics and Lutherans believed a great deal of preparation could be achieved before repatriation.

Wenngren and Dom Odo, with the assistance of other church leaders, had crafted a course of study and designated criteria for seminary applicants along with requirements for textbooks and faculty. The seminary camp would be devoted to theological training

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[79] Carl Erich Wenngren, "Memorandum Re Conference in Washington About Establishing a Theological Seminary Camp for German Prisoners of War," 20 February 1945, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 19, 1.

[80] [C.A.G.] to Dr. Lawrence Meyer, "Memorandum from POW office," 19 April 1945, LBM Concordia Historical Institute, Box 79.

of only Roman Catholics and Protestants and would preferably be "situated in a northern state since the German prisoners of war cannot very well stand the war [sic] and sub-tropical climate of the South, especially while studying hard."[81] It was also suggested that

> [t]he seminarians themselves will perform the daily barrack duties, (cleaning the barracks, etc.) For kitchen service we wish to suggest the support of prisoners of war not seminarians, since the seminarians would lose too much time from their studies if they had to attend to that service.[82]

A letter from Theodore G. Tappert, editor of the *Lutheran Church Quarterly*, to Dr. Ralph Long of the National Lutheran Council, indicates that in February 1944 meetings took place to discuss the possibility of finding faculty and developing a curriculum. Rev. Tappert made several suggestions regarding the set up of the Protestant faculty. He reported that the Roman Catholics seemed to already have a complete faculty chosen for the job.[83] This monumental undertaking proved too difficult for the Army to achieve. They did not expect to have enough time to select a site, screen candidates and transfer them to the chosen camp. The OPMG was already much engaged with the transfer of prisoners to separate Nazi and anti-Nazi factions. Finding and transferring over 300 theologians to a seminary camp seemed a waste of time, especially since the government was beginning to consider repatriation by the spring of 1945.

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[81] Carl Erik Wenngren and Dom Odo, Duke of Wurttemburg to the War Department, 15 February 1945, Appendix to "Memorandum Re Conference in Washington About Establishing a Theological Seminary Camp for German Prisoners of War," LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 79, 3.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Theodore G. Tappert to Rev. Ralph H. Long, 16 February 1944, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2, 2.

It would be a year, however, before the bulk of the prisoners would be sent back to Europe. In response to the desire of prisoner clergy to further their studies prisoners were offered the opportunity to take correspondence courses with DePaul and Loyola Universities, a program that was also offered to people in Germany and other parts of Europe.[84]

In the meantime, Catholic churches continued to minister to prisoners and provide them with reading and recreational materials. To illustrate these efforts monetarily, during the five months from November 1, 1944 to March 31, 1945, the Bishops' War Emergency and Relief Committee spent nearly $50,000 on the POW program. Of this amount, $14,672 was designated for the reimbursement of chaplains, while $20,605 went to the distribution of religious articles such as books and rosaries.[85]

Controversy

The charitable response by the Catholic Church to the POWs in America was well appreciated, but the Church fell victim to criticism as the war in Europe drew to a close. The public, many of whom had had no idea that Axis prisoners were interned in the United States, began to read in the papers about how well the German POWs were being treated in America and how much American POWs had suffered in Germany. As the American soldiers returned home and spoke of harsh winters in camps with not enough to eat, the life of their counterparts in America suddenly seemed luxurious. The

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[84] War Relief Services, "Summary of General Report," 2.

[85] "Interim Report of Receipts – November 1, 1944 to March 31, 1945," Bishops' War Emergency and Relief Committee, NCWC RG 10, CUA, Box 72, 10.

government was even forced to respond to this criticism by cutting back the caloric intake in the POW diet.[86] It was the footage of the recently discovered concentration camps, however, which really turned public opinion against the apparent "coddling" of German POWs.

An article appeared in the *New York Times* on May 3, 1945, quoting Emmanuel Chapman, Director of the "Committee of Catholics for Human Rights."[87] The article indicated that a survey of Catholic Americans was carried out to gauge opinion regarding punishment of Axis war criminals. The survey indicated that many Catholics wanted to see the Germans strongly punished for the crimes against Jews and political prisoners. He stated that, although many people believed the punishment of political leaders was sufficient retribution for war crimes, sixty percent of Catholics surveyed felt all German citizens should be held responsible for the actions of their leaders. Seventy-five percent supported "the use of labor battalions of Nazi enemies in the reconstruction of territories devastated by their armies."[88]

The appearance of this article towards the end of the war in Europe caused problems for the Catholic Church. Prisoners, who were granted access to the *New York Times* and other newspapers, were angered by the supposed beliefs of American Catholics set forth in the article. Abbot Francis Sadlier of St. Leo, Florida, wrote his superior that prisoners in two camps questioned him about this allegedly prevalent Catholic attitude. The Nazis in the camp used the article to spread anti-Catholic

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[86] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 240-241.

[87] "Use Nazis as Labor, Catholic Unit Says," *New York Times*, 3 May 1945, 8.

[88] Emmanuel Chapman to U.S. Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., 3 May 1945, copy of letter, NCWC RG 10, Box 58, 2.

propaganda [89] Curiously enough, the Allied government did eventually carry out widespread war crimes trials and other attempts to weed out the Nazi members of German society. They also put POWs to work rebuilding parts of Europe before repatriating them to their homeland.

The opinions set forth in this article, therefore, were not so far-fetched. They were, however, somewhat detrimental to the relationship between German prisoners and the Catholic Church. Chaplains and the NCWC avoided mixing politics and religion for good reason. The POWs were known in the beginning to be extremely suspicious of their captors. Clergy were among the only Americans in whom the POWs felt comfortable confiding. These efforts were threatened by the apparent opinions of American Catholics set forth in the survey. Fortunately, the Catholics who allegedly held those beliefs were not in charge of war relief efforts. The work done by the Catholic Church in the POW program and after repatriation was too significant to be overshadowed by one controversial report.

After the War

As the prisoners were returned to Europe and usually detained in England or France, the Catholics continued to provide for POWs and displaced persons. Relief efforts took on astronomical proportions as millions of refugees and displaced persons wandered about Europe. The Catholic Church had already been carrying out a program to assist refugees and Displaced Persons through the National Catholic Welfare

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[89] Abbot Francis Sadlier to ["Monsignor"], 21 May 1945, Letter regarding effects of New York Times Article, NCWC RG 10, Box 58.

Conference. As the need for support of American camps was lessened by repatriation, the focus turned to the enormous holding camps in France where there was still a need for religious intervention. A May 1, 1946, Interim Report of the WRS-NCWC estimated 1,000,000 German prisoners held in France. This number was derived from repatriated POWs from Britain and the United States in addition to those captured in the final days of the European campaign.[90]

Upon their return to Europe, prisoners still depended upon American agencies such as the NCWC. One prisoner wrote from France to request assistance after mistreatment by the French guards. Apparently, the French guards cleared the barracks of prisoners and ransacked them, taking prisoners' possessions. The prisoner, Hans Baumgart, was particularly appalled at the way the chapel had been treated. The altar had been destroyed, the Host thrown on the ground and the Communion ware, which had been donated by Americans, stolen.[91] Baumgart requested American protection from such attacks, especially considering that the war had been over for nine months. Clearly, he felt the Americans had afforded the POWs better treatment than they were receiving back in Europe.

The National Catholic Welfare Conference was active in many war relief efforts and its contributions to POW relief did not end with the United States' repatriation of prisoners. When the French repatriated the hundreds of thousands of POWs who had been sent to rebuild their country, the Occupation governments in Germany were

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[90] War Relief Services, "Interim Report, War Relief Services – National Catholic Welfare Conference," 1 May 1946, NCWC RG 10, Box 72, 6.

[91] Hans Baumgart, 2 February 1946, Copy of letter attachment directed to the National Catholic Welfare Conference, NCWC RG 10, Box 58, 1.

concerned about the influx. War Relief Services was asked to help. It had already contributed nearly 8,000,000 pounds of food and supplies to the recovering Germany.[92] Monsignor Patrick O'Boyle notified the General Secretary of the NCWC as to how War Relief Services planned to respond to the call for assistance. WRS representatives already in Germany were to contact the "Caritasverband," the German relief agency, which had handled distribution of previous donations, to coordinate efforts. The WRS representatives would also contact the military governments to discover what plans were in place for the massive repatriation. Once this information was collected, War Relief Services could better estimate how much clothing, food and other items would be required to fill the need.[93]

During and after World War II, the Catholic Church was one of the primary providers of charitable assistance, both nationally and internationally. Cooperating, albeit somewhat tentatively, with international relief organizations, the Catholic Church was able to contribute to the ministry to prisoners of war in all parts of the globe. In addition to ministering to the POWs, Catholics contributed recreational and educational materials whenever possible. The Catholic priests who entered the camps supplied more than just books and cigarettes. They encouraged and uplifted their captive congregations and in many cases became their advocates, negotiating on their behalf with American and international organizations.

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[92] Msgr. Patrick A. O'Boyle to Msgr. Howard J. Carroll, 18 March 1947, Enclosed memorandum, NCWC RG 10, Box 58, 2.

[93] O'Boyle to Carroll, Memorandum.

CHAPTER 3

THE LUTHERAN COMMISSION FOR PRISONERS OF WAR

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

Romans 10:14

Although the United States government was initially reluctant to involve civilian organizations in the administration of POW camps, it became clear that in the summer of 1943 ministry to the prisoners would require the assistance of civilian clergy. Having enough to coordinate without overseeing the ministry of civilian clergy, the government accepted offers of collaboration from the major Catholic and Lutheran church bodies in America. Dealing with the existing National Catholic Welfare Conference was easy enough, but the Lutheran church bodies in America were not unified. For almost as long as Lutherans had been in the United States, there had been internal disagreements on practice and doctrine. Without recounting the history of Lutheranism in America, by World War II, those of the Lutheran faith were divided into two main bodies or synods, with a few smaller organizations that would not join either of those. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the National Lutheran Council, the predecessor of today's Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, were therefore the primary providers of Lutheran clergy to POW camps. The government, however, was loathe to become involved with two factions, and insisted that both synods find a way to unite in this ministry.

War often effects collaboration among disputing organizations with the presence of a common enemy. As yet, the Lutherans had not been able to come together for much of anything, despite repeated attempts at unifying all American Lutherans. Joining forces to provide service to the German prisoners of war was, therefore, a tenuous experiment. On September 3, 1943, in Washington, members of each synod founded the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War (hereafter LCPOW). Each synod initially appointed three members to the Commission: from the Missouri Synod – Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, the Committee's first chairman; Dr. P. L. Dannenfeldt; and Dr. Lawrence B. Meyer; from the National Lutheran Council – Dr. S. C. Michelfelder, who was made secretary of the committee, Dr. C. E. Krumbholz, and Dr. G. H. Bechtold. The presidents of each synod, Dr. Ralph H. Long (NLC) and Dr. J.W. Behnken (LC-MS) served ex officio. In addition, the Ecumenical Commission for Chaplaincy to Prisoners of War for the World Council of Churches and the War Prisoners' Aid of the YMCA provided consultative representatives in the Rev. Carl Erik Wenngren and Dr. Howard Hong, respectively.[94]

The first concern of the LCPOW was to ensure that Lutheran clergy were provided for all POW camps. To some extent efforts to reach this goal were already underway before the Commission's existence. Many civilian pastors had already been approached by the commanding officers of camps in their communities. Some pastors had taken it upon themselves to offer their services. As in the case of the Catholic Church, pastors from all over the country were writing to their superiors to request

[94] T.W. Strieter, "A Brief History ," 4.

assistance and inquire what was to be done nationally to coordinate their efforts. It was decided early on to compensate pastors for taking on the additional duties of ministering to prisoners. Pastors were given $5.00 for each service conducted and upon request could be reimbursed for travel expenses. It was also immediately decided that each synod would pay its own pastors.[95] At this early stage, many pastors had not yet heard about the LCPOW and the LCPOW was not yet aware of all the pastors who had been volunteering their services.

The reimbursement for each sermon was a blessing to many of the beleaguered pastors. For some, however, it was still not enough. Rev. Arthur E. Widiger of New Orleans, Louisiana found that the $5.00 per sermon did not stretch as far as he had hoped. Despite efforts to enlist the help of other area pastors, Rev. Widiger found himself serving five prison camps alone. Gas and mileage devoured most of his LCPOW earnings and the extensive travel required him to have his son take over much of the work in his home congregation. The congregation did not see fit to pay his son, as he was only a seminarian, so Rev. Widiger felt it necessary to compensate his son from his own meager earnings.[96] On the other hand, one honest pastor found himself with too much money. Rev. Walter M. Ruccius of Hempstead, New York, received his LCPOW reimbursement check, but promptly returned it. In a letter to Rev. Ralph Long, he indicated that the Protestant Chaplain who supervised his work at Mitchel Field paid him

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[95] "Civilian Pastors Present at Chaplains Conference," January 21, 1944, Report of proceedings, LBM Collection, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 55.

[96] Arthur E. Widiger to Rev. H. Meyer, 21 August 1945, Enclosed with letter from T. W. Strieter to Rev. L. Meyer (23 August 1945), LBM, CHI, Box 79.

out of a prisoner Offering fund: "I am getting not merely satisfaction but enjoyment from this contact with the prisoners."[97] Although many pastors welcomed extra funds and the experience of preaching to the German POWs, for others it was truly a service project.

The first few months of the Commission's existence were devoted to exploring religious activity in the camps and determining what more could be done for the POWS. To better facilitate the investigation, the LCPOW commissioned field secretaries. Two men were appointed, one from each synod, to travel the country and visit each camp, reporting on the status of religious activity. Rev. F. J. Seltz served as the first Missouri Synod Field Secretary and Rev. K. Walter Schmitt was appointed as the first NLC Field Secretary. Rev Seltz reported to the Commission in May 1944: "39 Lutheran chaplains and 34 pastors are breaking the bread of life in 76 prisoner of war camps and sub-camps. If we should venture to estimate the number of souls to whom our church is ministering, we would place it conservatively at 20,000."[98]

Field Secretary K. Walter Schmitt reported in September 1944 that he had been generally well received by camp commanders. Other field secretaries, however, reported encountering difficulty while visiting the camps. In May 1944, Rev. Lawrence Meyer composed a form letter to pastors known to be serving POW camps explaining that the government was planning to expand the POW camp system greatly. Meyer encouraged pastors to offer their services to any camp in their particular area. He warned, however,

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[97] Rev. Walter M. Ruccius to Rev. Dr. Ralph H. Long, 16 October 1945, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2.

[98] "Minutes of the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War," 2 May 1944, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 76, 18.

that "...it is altogether up to the local Commanding Officer to grant or deny you permission to preach to the German POW's."[99] Throughout the course of the war, as the efforts of the LCPOW became more well known and cooperation with the OPMG increased, it became easier for civilian pastors to be granted access to the prison camps. In the beginning, though, the commanding officers were not required to grant clergy access. In the early months of the POW camps' existence, it seems the Army was more likely to grant access to Catholic priests. This may have been because the National Catholic Welfare Conference organized its POW ministry efforts and contacted the OPMG several months before the formation of the LCPOW.

Book Distribution

One of the most significant aspects of the LCPOW contribution to the POW ministry was the book distribution effort. The YMCA opened a portion of its book depository in New York City for use by the LCPOW. The LCPOW sent Pastor L. Sanjek to run the depository and to oversee the distribution of materials collected by the LCPOW. Throughout the three and one-half years of the depository's operation, the LCPOW collected and distributed over 500,000 pieces of literature to U.S. camps and eventually to camps in Europe.[100] In addition to German literature of all sorts, the LCPOW provided catechisms, devotional books, hymnals, Lutheran periodicals, and

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[99] Rev. Dr. L. Meyer 11 May 1944, General letter to pastors serving in the vicinity of a POW camp, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 55.

[100] T. W. Strieter, "Director's Report for meeting of Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War," 26 July 1945, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, box 72, 6; T.W. Strieter, "Report of Director to the Meeting of the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War," 27 September 1945, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 72, 3.

Christmas and Easter greeting cards to POWs throughout the country. Although such printed matter was the most frequently requested material, the LCPOW also received requests for clerical items such as vestments, pulpit gowns, and communion sets.

A report of the Army Navy Commission of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod dated July 22-23, 1946, stated that, in all, over 100,000 Bibles and New Testaments were distributed in the United States and Europe, in addition to 75,000 catechisms. Concordia Publishing House printed devotional booklets, which had a peak distribution of 68,000 per issue.[101] The LCPOW designed a hymnal entitled, *Ein Feste Burg* (A Mighty Fortress) which was proofread and corrected by prisoner theologians to remove any questionable material.[102] Approximately 350,000 copies of prayer books and hymnals were sent to the camps. This figure represents nearly one per prisoner. The prisoners also enjoyed reading the Lutheran periodicals, *The Lutheran Witness* and *Der Lutheraner*. Peak circulation in the camps reached 23,000 copies.[103] The latter newsletter was especially welcome, as it was written in "gute, klare Deutsch," in the words of one grateful prisoner.[104] These statistics do not mention the volume of non-religious German books and materials donated and distributed by the LCPOW.

The devotional booklets were largely successful with one possible exception. Chaplain Armas Holmio of Camp Swift, Texas warned Dr. Long in a letter that the

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[101] "Pastor Dannenfeldt's Report on POW Work," 22-23 July 1946, From Minutes of the Army and Navy Commission of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, LC-MS Armed Services Commission Collection, Supplement IV, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 1.

[102] T. W. Strieter to Dr. C. E. Krumbholz, 24, October 1945, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2.

[103] T. W. Strieter, "Prisoner of War Work Terminates," 207.

[104] "Kirchliche Arbeit unter Kriegsgefangenen," *Der Lutheraner* 100, no. 22 (31 October 1944): 340.

POWs were suspicious of the booklets because of the inclusion on the title page of the following phrase: "Herausgegeben von der lutherische Kommission für Kriegsgefangene," (Distributed by the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War). It seems that the fact that it was produced specifically for POWs led some prisoners to consider it propaganda. Holmio advised striking the phrase or wording it so as to convey that it was material designed for all Lutherans.[105]

The effort to collect German language material was taken quite seriously by the LCPOW. In both *The Lutheran Witness* and *Der Lutheraner*, the LCPOW requested that American Lutherans donate any German language material in their possession to the POW effort. In the September 13, 1943, issue of *The Lutheran Witness*, a Lutheran U.S. Army chaplain made a plea for reading material: "With little or nothing to do and less to read, these soldiers are hungry for something to read, and the Bible is the most available, if not the only, book they have at present."[106] By December 21, 1943, a second request appeared in *The Lutheran Witness* for books, from textbooks to classics (such as Goethe and Schiller), music and phonograph records.[107]

To illustrate the extent of the distribution handled by the Depository, the Director's Report for the September 27, 1945, meeting of the LCPOW indicates that in the two previous months the Book Depository received 133 orders. The LCPOW passed another 30 orders on to the YMCA, the Ecumenical Commission and several other

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[105] Armas K. Holmio to Dr. Ralph H. Long, 24 February 1944, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA , Box 1, 1.

[106] Lawrence B. Meyer, "A Plea for Prison Camp Literature," *The Lutheran Witness* 62, no. 19 (12 September 1943): 311.

[107] P. E. Kretzmann, "The Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War," *The Lutheran Witness* 62, no. 26, (21 December 1943): 421.

church suppliers who could better fill the particular needs of those making the requests.[108] By 1944, Rev. Strieter, then field secretary for the LCPOW, reported the material receipts of forty camps he had visited included 40,000 Lutheran hymnals and 4,000 Catechisms had been sent to these camps. Periodicals were heavily requested. Every six weeks, the depository sent 28,000 devotional booklets as well as 3,000 copies of each issue of *Der Lutheraner*.[109]

Prisoner clergy read the theology books provided by the LCPOW with great interest, but their repatriation posed a problem. The prisoners were only permitted to take a certain weight amount of possessions back to Germany outside of what they brought. The prisoner clergy expressed a desire to keep the books they received through donations, but could not transport these materials back to Germany. The Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War, working through the YMCA, offered to pay for the postage and ship packages of books and other religious materials.[110] In all, the LCPOW shipped 366 boxes of religious literature for prisoner *pfarrers*.[111]

As a further act of goodwill, the LCPOW sent the POWs Christmas greeting cards for the holiday season in 1943. The success of this distribution prompted the sending of Easter cards the following spring.[112] The government gave its consent to these mailings,

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[108] T. W. Strieter, "Report of Director," 1-2.

[109] "Minutes of the Lutheran Commission of the Prisoner of War," 20 September 1944, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 76, 23.

[110] Army Service Forces, ASF Circular No. 382, 10 October 1945, Copy of document permitting prisoner clergymen to send religious materials to the LCPOW for shipment, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2.

[111] T. W. Strieter, "Prisoner of War Work Terminates," 207.

[112] F. J. Seltz, 3 March 1944, Announcement to pastors serving POW camps, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 55.

but warned that the prisoners would not be permitted to forward these greeting cards outside of the camp.[113] The LCPOW debated whether to send greeting cards to all prisoners or just to the Protestant POWs. Although some chaplains believed that it would be difficult to distribute the cards to certain prisoners and not others, the LCPOW decided to send cards to the Protestants only, most likely in the interest of saving money on printing. Dr. Ralph H. Long suggested to Rev. F. J. Seltz in a letter dated December 6, 1943, that "in all probability Catholics will arrange for a similar distribution among Catholic prisoners."[114]

In addition to donating reading materials, the LCPOW often took responsibility for reviewing materials placed in the camp libraries by the government and other organizations, without being asked. In one instance, the LCPOW began receiving complaints from its chaplains and pastors about some of the books promoted by the Special Projects Division. Rev. T. W. Strieter contacted Lt. Col. Edward Davison about some of these offensive materials. Certain titles in the series provided by the Special Projects Division under the title "Neue Welt" were particularly reprehensible to the LCPOW. According to Strieter, "The complaint is that these books are highly sexy and immoral and are conducive to vile practices in prison camps where men have been isolated for months and years from home life."[115] He reviewed one collection of stories by Carl Zuckmayer, entitled "Ein Bauer aus dem Taunus." The stories were billed as

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[113] Col. A. M. Tollefson to the Emergency Planning Council, 3 April 1944, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 55.

[114] Ralph H. Long to F. J. Seltz, 6 December 1943, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1.

[115] T. W. Strieter to Provost Marshal General's Office, 8 June 1945, Decimal File 461, RG 389, National Archives, Box 1647.

scenes from everyday life, but apparently described adulterous scenes and tales of the sexual conquests of young men, usually soldiers. Rev. Strieter believed such stories detracted from the attempts of pastors and chaplains to foster morality among the prisoners.[116]

Lt. Col. Davison's only response to the complaint was to say that "the first edition of this reprint is exhausted and a reprint is not contemplated by the publishers."[117] Major Maxwell S. McKnight had responded to an earlier, more generalized letter from the LCPOW on June 20, 1945. In his response, he explained that the reeducation program sought to expose the prisoners to books which had been banned under National Socialism, "not because of pornographic content, but because the authors opposed National Socialism."[118] The works included were considered to be valuable contributions to literature, so the Special Projects Division did not support banning them as had the Nazis. Rev. Strieter rekindled the issue in January 1946. His argument again centered on the fact that the books promoted sexual immorality among a prisoner population, many of whom had been separated from their families for years.[119] At this late stage in the POW program, it appears that the Special Projects Division dropped the issue, because by January, the SPD was in the midst of preparing for its final stage of reeducation and repatriation.

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[116] T. W. Strieter to Major Maxwell McKnight, 24 August 1945, Decimal File 461, RG 389, National Archives, Box 1647.

[117] Lt. Col. Edward Davison to Rev. T. W. Strieter, 31 August 1945, Decimal File 461, RG 389, National Archives, Box 1647.

[118] Major Maxwell S. McKnight to Rev. T.W. Strieter, 20 June 1945, Decimal File 461, RG 389 National Archives, Box 1647.

[119] T.W. Strieter to Lt. Col. Edward Davison, 9 January 1946, Decimal File 461, RG 389, Entry 459A, National Archives, Box 1648.

Building Germany's Spiritual Future

The future of religion in Germany was of great concern to the LCPOW. Every effort was made to ensure that German *pfarrers*, or pastors, were strengthened in their faith during their incarceration. By supplying religious materials and encouraging the *pfarrers* to continue to study the Bible and Lutheran theology, the American Lutherans believed they were promoting religion in Germany's recovery.

On January 21, 1944, chaplains and pastors serving prisoner of war camps met for a conference in St. Louis. Missouri Synod pastors already serving in POW camps, as well as Rev. Lawrence Meyer, Rev. F. J. Seltz and Rev. T.W. Strieter of the LCPOW, attended this meeting. The leaders of the meeting wanted, of course, to coordinate the efforts of all the pastors thus far in serving camps. In addition, Dr. Kretzmann, Rev. Dannenfeldt and Rev. Seltz emphasized the important task that lay before each pastor and chaplain. The minutes from the meeting indicate that Rev. Dannenfeldt called for the clergy to be thinking of the impact of their ministry on the future of Germany.[120] Rev. Seltz furthered this idea by stating that, in addition to preaching in the camps, the ministers should attempt to "make in these camps contacts for our post war work in Europe."[121]

Dr. Kretzmann continued these sentiments with a speech entitled "Post War Implications of our Prisoner of War Work," which highlighted several goals of the ministry to the prisoners. First and foremost, the pastors were to endeavor to counteract

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[120] Rev. F. J. Seltz, "Minutes of Conference of Chaplains and Pastors Working in Prisoner of War Camps," 21 January 1944, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 55, 5.

[121] Ibid., 9.

the Nazi rejection of all religion and to "bring them to the consciousness of their need of God." Following this recognition, the pastors were to assist in the development of personal relationships with God. Dr. Kretzmann's third goal was to "endeavor to inculcate the fact that Lutheranism is the soundest and the most adequate exposition of Christianity."[122] All of this was to be done in the hopes that religion could be restored to all aspects of the life the prisoners would face in Germany, civil, economic, or political.

The Commission went so far as to appeal to the OPMG on behalf of prisoner clergy. In October 1945, the LCPOW requested the immediate repatriation of all POW clergy, expressing the belief that these men were vital to the reconstruction of Germany along democratic lines and that "the sound old, religion of Jesus Christ as the only Savior will not only save Germany, but will make it a nation safe in the society of nations, and will especially lighten the burdens of the Army of Occupation."[123] Rev. Strieter reminded the OPMG that the war had severely drained Germany of its clergy, whether by persecution, military service or death. The LCPOW believed very strongly in the value of reinstating a religious foundation in Germany upon which a peaceful, democratic nation was more likely to thrive.

Since no one could be sure when the POWs would be repatriated, the LCPOW sought to make the most of the time they had with the POW clergy. The LCPOW counted approximately 400 clergy and theology students among the POWs.[124] In an

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[122] [Emphasis in original], Seltz, "Minutes of the Conference," 6-7.

[123] T. W. Strieter to the Provost Marshal General's Office, 12 October 1945, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2, 1.

[124] T. W. Strieter, "Prisoners of War Work Terminates," 207.

effort to instruct them in theology, the LCPOW began to cooperate with Rev. Carl Erik Wenngren of the Ecumenical Commission for the Chaplaincy of Prisoners of War and Dom Odo, Duke of Württemberg, in their efforts to establish a seminary camp[125] Rev. Strieter approached the Provost Marshal General on behalf of the LCPOW about such an idea. Lt. Col. Edward Davison responded in August 1945, informing him, as he had told Wenngren and Dom Odo, that the OPMG hoped the prisoners would be repatriated soon. Davison did emphasize that all prisoners were encouraged to pursue religious studies in their own camps.[126] Although the Office of the Provost Marshal General rejected the seminary camp as logistically impossible, efforts to educate theologians did not end there.

Studying to become a *pfarrer* in Germany required six years at a university after the Abitur (equivalent to High School diploma).[127] The war interrupted the studies of many of the prisoner seminarians. For some time, chaplains had been asking LCPOW officials what could be done about those prisoners who wanted to continue theological training during their incarceration. In February 1944, Chaplain Irwin Heckman from Opelika, Alabama, wrote that one of his prisoners wanted to study Lutheran theology. Heckman pointed out that the Catholic priest serving the camp already had three students and was teaching with materials given to him by the Catholic Church.[128] If the pastor was

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[125] See Chapter 2, p. 44.

[126] Lt. Col. Edward Davison to Rev. T. W. Strieter, 20 August 1945, Decimal File 000.3,RG 389, National Archives, Box 1595.

[127] Irwin E. Heckman to Dr. Ralph H. Long, 14 March 1944, RHL Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1.

[128] Chaplain Irwin E. Heckman to Dr. Ralph H. Long, 25 February 1944, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1.

willing and the POWs were interested, private lessons were carried out in camps. Prisoners could not, however, receive college credit for such unofficial instruction.

The LCPOW developed a new plan to offer theological studies through an extension program, or correspondence courses, with seminaries. Under the supervision of the civilian pastors and chaplains, students would complete coursework designed by the Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis, for credit toward a degree.[129] Although Concordia was the only Lutheran seminary listed in government references to correspondence courses, NLC members of the LCPOW expressed the interest of some of their seminaries in setting up similar programs.[130] The Director's Report for the September 27, 1945, meeting of the LCPOW hailed the correspondence course as successful, but by the request of the OPMG, the LCPOW stopped matriculating students. The Provost Marshal General was most likely preparing repatriation of the prisoners.[131] The LCPOW continued to receive requests from theological students to remain in the country and finish their studies. In all, forty-five students participated in the correspondence course with Concordia Theological Seminary.[132]

Camp Concordia, Kansas, had one of the strongest correspondence programs. Reverend Strieter listed at least seven POWs from Concordia who completed the

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[129] Prof. P. E. Kretzmann to the Chaplains and Civilian Pastors at Work in Prisoner of War Camps, 15 June 1944, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 55.

[130] Ralph H. Long to Rev. P. E. Kretzmann, 20 April 1945, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2.

[131] T. W. Strieter, "Report of Director," 3.

[132] "The Work of Our Planning Council," Synopsis of activities of Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod – Emergency Planning Council, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 69, 3.

correspondence course and wished to keep in touch with the Lutheran Commission.[133] Prisoner theological students there completed what appears to be a special essay dealing with the issue of the reconstruction of religious life in post-war Germany. The proposal, headed, "Dept. of Theology, POW University, Prisoner of War Camp, Concordia, Kansas," declared Germany to be a true mission field. The authors wrote of their conviction "that it is impossible to awake the moral strengths which are necessary for the reconstruction of our nation...without the preaching of Jesus Christ."[134]

Internal Disunity

Despite the unified façade presented by the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War, certain aspects of the general disagreements between the two Lutheran bodies began to seep into the Commission. Neither side publicly admitted their agitation, but in correspondence between members of the same synod, tensions manifested themselves. The key issue in the early months of cooperation was an office for the administration of the LCPOW. From the beginning, the New York-based National Lutheran Council wanted a centrally located office, preferably in Chicago. The Missouri Synod members held out for several months, insisting that the two parties could conduct business without a central office. By July 1944, the NLC members of the Executive Board were becoming frustrated with the disorganization brought on by the lack of a central office. Dr.

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[133] T. W. Strieter to Dr. L. Meyer, 13 September 1945, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 79.

[134][Emphasis in original]. "Suggestions for the Reconstruction of Institutions of Religious Life in Germany," 21 August 1945, Copy of treatise by POW theological student, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 79, 1.

Ylvisaker and Dr. Long lamented the stubbornness of the Missouri Synod:

> It was our original plan to set up an Office of Prisoner of War Commission to which all communications could be sent, an Office which would be in charge of a competent office manager as well as receiving the services of a director. We failed in that because of the habitual and traditional point of view of our brethren in the Missouri Synod.... As far as I am concerned I never want to be hooked up in this kind arrangement again.[135]

Eventually, the sheer volume of correspondence and paperwork necessitated a joint office and, in February 1945, the Missouri Synod members agreed to its establishment in Chicago.

The problems between the two bodies did not end with the office issue. Several of the NLC Field Secretaries reported difficulties in dealing with their Missouri Synod counterparts and with camp pastors from other Lutheran Synods. Rev. K. Walter Schmitt wrote in September 1944 that Rev. Strieter, the Missouri Synod Field Secretary assigned to visit camps west of the Mississippi, was visiting camps in the East simply because the pastors serving them were Missouri Synod. Rev. Schmitt believed that such overlapping was a terrible waste of the Commission's time and money.[136] There were also complaints made by NLC pastors that the Missouri Synod was trying to promote itself to the prisoners of war as the "Lutheranism of America."[137] After the Missouri Synod's tri-annual convention in 1944, National Lutheran Council members involved in POW work took offense to reports at the convention that the Missouri Synod was doing the bulk of

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[135] [Dr. N. M. Ylvisaker to Dr. Ralph H. Long], 5 July 1944, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1.

[136] Rev. K. Walter Schmitt to Dr. Ralph H. Long, 7 September 1944, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1, 2.

[137] Rev. S. C. Michelfelder to Dr. Ralph H. Long, 28 February 1944, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1, 1.

the prisoner of war ministry.[138] Rev. Michelfelder was greatly offended at the idea that the Missouri Synod considered itself the leader in the POW effort and in all aspects of American Lutheranism. As he wrote to Dr. Ralph Long, "They always will consider themselves a mother church to which all Lutherans of America must come back. As for me and my house, I am back now."[139]

In keeping with the practical differences between the two Synods, the simple matter of prayer became an issue for the Commission. Rev. G. H. Bechtold of the NLC wrote to Dr. Ralph Long about a conversation with Dr. P. E. Kretzmann regarding prayer at the LCPOW meetings. Apparently, the Missouri Synod members felt uncomfortable with the idea of joining in prayer with NLC members. Rev. Bechtold stated, "It is surely against my conscience to begin meetings involving the spiritual care of souls without asking for God's help and guidance."[140] Dr. Kretzmann's only response to the question of prayer at the meetings was to ask if Rev. Bechtold engaged in personal devotions before the meetings and whether that would not be sufficient for his purposes. Rev. Bechtold, like others in the NLC, believed that the Commission was bending to the whim of the Missouri Synod members and called for the NLC to stand up and force compromise on certain issues.[141]

Dr. Long, Executive Director of the National Lutheran Council, responded to Dr. Bechtold's letter with sympathy and agreement. He advised, however, that the NLC

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[138] Schmitt to Long, 7 September 1944, 2.
[139] Michelfelder to Long, 28 February 1944, 2.
[140] Rev. G. H. Bechtold to Rev. Ralph H. Long, 5 September 1944, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1.
[141] *Ibid.*

choose its battles with the Missouri Synod carefully. Although the fact that prayer had become such an issue was distressing to him, Dr. Long contended, in his letter of September 6, 1944, that the need for a central office was the more pressing issue. He lamented, "It is not only a sad situation, but one which makes it exceedingly difficult to operate such an agency as the Prisoner of War Commission.... Let us plead with the representatives of the Missouri Synod to make this an integrated and united organization or agency."[142] Rev. Michelfelder had expressed his concerns about the cohesion of the group nearly one year earlier, just as the Commission was getting off of the ground. He confided in Dr. Long, "It seems as though the cats aren't hopping the way we thought they would be hopping, in this interrelation with Missouri. I personally do not see how we can go on kidding ourselves that we have unanimity in outward things. They don't want it."[143]

Indeed, it seems a wonder that the two Lutheran church bodies could come together at all. Prior to the formation of the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War in September 1943, several representatives of each body came together to discuss relations with the government concerning missions and churches in defense areas. The government apparently rejected building plans for missions in the vicinity of certain

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[142] Ralph H. Long to Dr. G.H. Bechtold, 6 September 1944, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1.

[143] Rev. S. C. Michelfelder to Dr. Ralph H. Long, 29 October 1943, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1, 2.

bases, citing "that facilities for religious services had already been made available for the Protestant Church."[144] The Missouri Synod members sought cooperation from the NLC in convincing the government to recognize the Lutheran Church as separate from other "Protestant" churches. At a meeting on January 26, 1943, the NLC representatives allegedly snubbed the Missouri Synod members. Rev. J. W. Behnken, president of the Missouri Synod, shared his feelings on the meeting with Rev. Lawrence B. Meyer:

> We came as Christian gentlemen and presented a project which we had considered well and had decided to offer and to seek cooperation.... And then we met with such coarse, rude and uncouth treatment....To say the very least, this certainly has not aided the cause of Lutheran Unity.[145]

Unity was very much on the minds of all Lutheran bodies. The history of efforts to achieve such cooperation and consolidation is much too lengthy to enter into here. Suffice it to say, that on key points of the practice of the Lutheran faith, the two sides found reconciliation nearly impossible. During World War II these interdenominational struggles often interfered with cooperation in outward issues, such as ministry to the Prisoners of War. The Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War was largely successful in accomplishing its goals, but its members felt the strain of the troubles going on around them. The NLC members were more vocal about their irritation with the Missouri Synod, but it is clear that both sides had their doubts about the existence of any such cooperative committee existing in the future.

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[144] J. W. Behnken to Rev. Lawrence B. Meyer, 26 January 1943, Enclosed Memorandum on meeting with the Commission on Home Missions of the National Lutheran Council, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 39, 1.

[145] Ibid.

How did such tensions translate into the prison camp ministry? Lutheran ministers served all the German Lutherans as well as those who merely labeled themselves "Evangelisch" or "Protestant," because Lutheranism was the most comparable American denomination. It would have been rare for one camp to be served by a Missouri Synod pastor and an NLC pastor simultaneously. The prisoners usually had one or the other, so a basis for comparison of the two branches by prisoners would probably not exist. Many prisoners probably did not appreciate the difference anyway, and were just grateful to have any spiritual ministry. Pastors on each side, however, told a different story.

Many NLC pastors and several NLC Field Secretaries reported to their superiors that the prisoners preferred their brand of Lutheranism to the Missouri Synod. Dr. William L. Scheding was one of the most vocal pastors on the differences between the NLC and the Missouri Synod. His Field Report, dated October 29, 1945, related what he claimed were the concerns of some of the German *pfarrers* he encountered:

> There is a deep gratitude on the part of Pfarrers and Laymen to the Commission and to Miss. Synod, [sic] but at the same time a strong distrust of what Miss. Synod have in mind about helping the Church in Germany next summer. Often questions have been asked about reason, attitude on Miss. Synod' [sic] part for not being part of Luth. World Convention.[146]

Rev. Scheding alleged that several *pfarrers* expressed concern that the divisions among American Lutherans would be carried over to Germany. The German pastors welcomed

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[146] Rev. W. L. Scheding to Dr. Ralph H. Long, 29 October 1945, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2, 1.

the assistance offered by Americans to rebuild the Church in their country, but they feared the kind of division they observed between the major branches of American Lutheranism. Dr. Scheding omitted such comments from his reports to the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War, but shared them with Dr. Ralph Long in private letters. In one particularly scathing comment, he told Dr. Long, "Remember for days to come, a few of the Camp Kirchenrat [church council] asked me point blank: Is Missouri Synod going to bring division and dissention into the Church in Germany? Are they going to make us a heathen mission field?"[147] The Missouri Synod pastors may have encountered prisoners who expressed similar concerns about the NLC chaplains. If so, it was not readily apparent in correspondence between Missouri Synod pastors and their superiors. What is clear is that, to some degree, the difficulties experienced by the disputing synods were translated to the POW camp level.

Competition and Cooperation

Disagreements between the Lutheran synods beg the question, how did the Lutherans get along with their Catholic counterparts? Most pastoral and chaplains' reports, as well as correspondence, indicate a healthy "competition," so to speak, between Catholics and Lutherans, regarding prisoner attendance. The Lutherans were always pleased to draw a larger crowd than the Catholic priests, especially when the Lutheran services attracted Catholic worshippers. On some occasions, the Lutheran Field Secretaries reported negative behavior on the part of the Catholics serving the camps they

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[147] Rev. W. L. Scheding to Dr. Ralph H. Long, 30 August 1945, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2, 1.

visited. On a visit to Camp Forrest, near Tullahoma, Tennessee, the camp CO denied Field Secretary Rev. K. Walter Schmitt access. It was rumored, Schmitt reported, that a Catholic visitor had transmitted a message from someone inside the camp to the Swiss Legation.[148] Rev. Schmitt reported from another camp that the priest serving there allegedly sent the camp officials a bill for his services, for which the officers, in turn, charged the prisoners.[149]

Rev. Em. Poppen of Ohio reported to Dr. Ralph Long that a Catholic priest in Indiana refused several Protestant pastors permission to minister to the camps under his control. The camp held 600 prisoners according to a guard, so there was reason to believe that some of them may have been affiliated with a Lutheran church. Further correspondence revealed that the prisoners in question were actually at a side labor camp and would only remain for a short time. Rev. Poppen was told that, upon their return to the base camp at Atterbury, Indiana, the priest in question would see to their spiritual needs. It is not clear if the matter was ever resolved.[150]

Rev. Henry Meyer, a Missouri Synod Field Secretary, on the other hand, found Lutherans and Catholics working together in the camps. In his travels through the 7th Service Command, he found prisoners who inquired as to why there were three American churches serving them. It seems in these particular camps, the prisoners were unaware of the difficulties among the denominations. Rev. Meyer attempted to focus on what the

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[148] K. Walter Schmitt, "National Lutheran Council – Report on POW Visitations," 23-24 July 1944, Report of Camp Tullahoma, Tennessee, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1.

[149] K. Walter Schmitt, "National Lutheran Council – Report on POW Visitations," 6 July 1944, Report of Camp Ashby, Virginia, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1.

[150] Rev. Em. Poppen to Dr. Ralph H. Long, 24 September 1945, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2.

different churches did together. For example, at Camp Riley in Colorado, he discovered that "the Lutheran Pfr. Guenther preaches regularly on Sunday mornings in the Catholic Church to the Catholic congregation the same sermon which he preaches to his own Lutheran congregation."[151] Rev. Meyer saw another possible explanation as he continued to visit camps:

> Both Catholics and Lutherans made common sense against the common enemy, national socialism, a common interest helped them to feel kindly toward each other and to share their strength rather than to emphasize each other's weaknesses.[152]

Thus, cooperation was not unheard of, but it was not as common as it could have been.

After Repatriation

The LCPOW was committed to not only ministering to the POWs during their stay in America, but also to strengthening the future of religion in Germany. This is evident in the aforementioned schooling and subsidizing of prisoner theologians and *pfarrers* and in the attempts to have these clergy repatriated directly to Germany at the end of the war. When direct repatriation did not come about for any prisoners and they were sent instead to France to assist in reconstruction, the LCPOW did not forget them. In fact, the dream of a theological camp was realized in France. In February 1946, before many POWs in America had been repatriated, Otto Piper of the Princeton Theological Seminary received a request from Rev. Andre Liotard, Assistant Head Chaplain of the French Army, for books and materials. Dr. Piper passed this request on to the LCPOW,

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[151] Rev. Henry Meyer, "Report of the Rev. Henry Meyer, Field Secretary, Third Itinerary, August 20 to September 15, 7th Service Command," RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2, 4.

[152] Ibid.

which extended its book distribution for POWs to include this camp in Montpellier, France.[153] The LCPOW sent the 240 theology students gathered in the camp books, vestments, and even a car to facilitate their learning and their ministry to fellow prisoners.[154]

Although Rev. Lawrence B. Meyer and others traveled to Germany to investigate the religious situation in Germany, the LCPOW sponsored no official efforts to send American pastors over to help rebuild. Several pastors who served in camps did volunteer if such an effort was to be made. Rev. Herbert Stahnke, one such pastor, wrote to the Commission, hoping the Synod would consider those pastors who served in camps and spoke German fluently if they sent anyone to Europe. Stahnke added that many of the prisoners he encountered wished for some American Lutherans to help the German Church. These prisoners told him, "Wir gebrauchen [sic] echte Lutheraner, die uns das reine Wort Gottes predigen."[155]

The prisoners were extremely grateful for the ministry of the LCPOW and all who cared for them spiritually. The LCPOW received many heartfelt letters from POWs who appreciated that pastors took the time out of their busy schedules to preach to them and converse in their own language. Often the guards and commanding officers could not communicate in German and relied on the camp spokesman and the few who could speak English to carry out the administration of the camp. The clergy, however, were able to

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[153] Otto A. Piper to Rev. T.W. Strieter, 26 February 1946, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 79.

[154] "Kriegsgefangene in Frankreich," *Der Lutheraner* 103 no. 6, (18 March 1947): 86.

[155] T. W. Strieter to Dr. Lawrence B. Meyer, 18 March 1946, Quoting Herbert Stahnke, POW, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 79. (Translation: "We need true Lutherans, who will preach us the pure Word of God.")

reach the prisoners on a more personal level, and this became a great consolation to many of them. The Commission's donation of books and other leisure materials were especially appreciated. The March 27, 1945, issue of the *Lutheran Witness*, featured a letter from Chaplain Maurice Imhoff. Chaplain Imhoff had personally distributed books to men in six camps and told the *Lutheran Witness*, "Perhaps you will never know the joy that you brought into the lives of thousands of men who are homesick in a spiritual sense, sad, and having the sense they have no friends."[156]

The prisoners had little to give in return for the services of a pastor but, like the parable of the widow and her two mites, they felt compelled to give what they had. [157] In December 1945, the prisoners at Camp Ruston in Louisiana, collected the sum of $4,207.90 to be donated to the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War. The letter accompanying the money read:

> Dieses Geld wurde in diesem Lager gesammelt und Ihnen zugesandt, und die Gefangenen wünschen, daß es an die Lutherische Kommission für Kriesgefangene gesandt werde, um bedürftigen Leuten in Deutschland zu helfen und für irgendwelche Zwecke, die die Kommission in ihrem Heimatland in die Wege leiten kann.[158]

The government took exception to this sum of money being donated to the LCPOW. The particular complaint was that it was transmitted, not through the Office of the Provost Marshal, but rather through the War Prisoners' Aid of the YMCA. Dr. E. T. Colton of

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[156] Chaplain Maurice F. Imhoff, "Books for Prisoners of War, A Card of Thanks," *The Lutheran Witness* 64, no. 7 (27 March 1945): 104.

[157] Luke 21: 2-4 NIV.

[158] [L. F.], "Schöne Beweiße der Dankbarkeit seitens Kriegsgefangener," *Der Lutheraner* 102, no. 1 (8 January 1946), 9. (Translation: "This money was collected in this camp and sent to you, and the prisoners wish that it be sent to the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War, to help needy people in Germany and for any other purposes in your homeland which the Commission can organize.")

the War Prisoners' Aid communicated this concern to Rev. T. W. Strieter of the LCPOW, who immediately took up the matter with the OPMG. He pointed out to the OPMG that the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War had previously been granted permission to receive unsolicited donations from POW camps. Strieter reminded Major Griffith, the Chief of the POW Finance Branch of the OPMG, that they had indeed discussed the donation of money by prisoners to the LCPOW the previous June. Although the OPMG strongly objected to the solicitation of money from prisoners of war, it did grant permission for the LCPOW to receive unsolicited funds.[159]

As for the transmission of such funds, the LCPOW preferred that they not be sent through government channels, as this often led to much confusion. The government had previously ordered such donations be made out to the "Evangelical Lutheran Church." Rev. Strieter reminded the Major that, "I explained to you that mail and checks sent with such designation could go to a hundred different Lutheran offices and any office receiving the check could claim it."[160] For this reason, the LCPOW asked that checks for unsolicited POW donations be made out and sent to the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War, specifically.

The gift from the Camp Ruston prisoners was the largest single donation to the LCPOW. This indicates that the ministry there was one of the more successful missions. A report filed for January 1945 by Capt. Frantz-Oluf Lund, a POW *Pfarrer*, indicated some specifics of the spiritual life in the camp. Capt. Lund reported that the average

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[159] T. W. Strieter to Major L. E. Griffith, 21 January 1946, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2, 2.

[160] Ibid.

attendance at services and lectures was 100 prisoners, while approximately ten came to the Bible study classes on a regular basis. The camp contained three Lutheran pastors, four Catholic priests and had two theological students enrolled in the Concordia Seminary correspondence course. In the blank marked, "General Attitude to Our Work," Capt. Lund responded, "Your every line of endeavour receives high praise from the Prisoners, they are sincerely grateful for everything you have done and are trying to do for them."[161] The report therefore shows what the donation of eleven months later would confirm, that the prisoners of Camp Ruston felt especially blessed by the intervention of the LCPOW.

For each camp or prisoner who made a small or substantial donation to the LCPOW, there were several more who wrote to express their thanks for book donations and the service of a pastor. The Missouri Synod received dozens of letters from both prisoner pastors and laity. Several excerpts were printed in both, "A Brief History of the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War," and the Lutheran periodicals. One excerpt in *Der Lutheraner* summed up the thoughts of many:

> Er...spricht seinen innigen Dank aus, für alle Liebe, Förderung, Hilfe, Selbstlosigkeit, nicht zuletzt für die brüderliche, echt christliche Gesinnung, die Sie alle uns in Amerika in so ungeheuer reichem Masse erwiesen, obwohl wir Kriegsgefangene eines mit Ihnen im Kriege stehenden Landes waren.[162]

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[161] Chaplain Frantz-Oluf Lund, "Report for the Month of January 1945 to the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War," RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1.

[162] [L. F.], "Schlußnachrichten aus den Lagern Kriegsgefangener," *Der Lutheraner* 102, no. 12 (11 July 1946), 186. (trans. "He...proclaims his deep gratitude for all the love, support, help, selflessness, and last but not least, for the brotherly, truly Christian 'morality?' which you have exhibited to all of us in America in such abundance, although we were prisoners from a country with which you were at war.")

In all, the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War devoted nearly three years to the POW ministry. Paying their own pastors and field secretaries, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the National Lutheran Council spent approximately $80,000 and $54,000, respectively. Each organization put an additional $20,000 into the LCPOW for other expenses. Rev. Strieter reported that the NLC paid all the shipping costs for materials sent to camps from the New York book depository and contributed to the War Prisoners' Aid of the YMCA in the amount of $71,500. He lists the NLC total contribution to Prisoner of War work as $172,720. Other than the roughly $100,000 spent directly on LCPOW work, Strieter does not indicate any more expenses for the LC-MS.[163]

Much more significant than the monetary commitment to prisoners of war, was the time and spiritual support given by all involved. Between September 1943 and May 1946, the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War reached 454 German POW camps and hospitals with the help of 173 civilian Lutheran pastors.[164] Although the prisoners served by the Commission were, for the most part German, efforts were made to conduct services in Italian and Japanese camps as well. In all, Rev. Strieter reported the number of civilian clergymen (Catholic and Lutheran) serving POW camps in America to be 370.

Like many other organizations in the United States, the Lutheran churches were able to pull together quickly to meet a specific need created by the war. Although differences in theology and practice between the synods were not always conducive to

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[163] Strieter, "A Brief History." 48.

[164] T.W. Strieter, "For Christ and Humanity; Our Church in Service to a World Stricken by War: Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War," *The Lutheran Witness* 65, no. 1 (1 January 1946): 10.

cooperation, the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War managed to lay these aside, if only temporarily. Through the work of the LCPOW, prisoners were ministered to by nearly 200 Lutheran pastors, POW clergy and theological students continued their education, and hundreds of thousands of German prisoners received reading and other materials in their own language. The efforts of the LCPOW can only be considered a great success.

CHAPTER 4

INTERNATIONAL RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER MISSIONARY EFFORTS

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also.

Hebrews 13:3

Caring for the spiritual needs of prisoners of war was a worldwide endeavor. Clearly most of the belligerents had valued religion enough to support its inclusion in the Geneva Convention in 1929. Even though Nazism had suppressed religion in Germany, Hitler abided by the Geneva Convention, including Article 16, in his treatment of war prisoners. Had he or anyone else neglected the spiritual needs of the world's war prisoners, the various churches of the world had developed organizations to ensure the facilitation of worship for those who would spend the remainder of the war behind barbed wire. The Lutheran and Catholic churches in America saw to it that Axis prisoners were cared for spiritually, but they did not act alone and they did not act first. Both the Lutheran and Catholic national church bodies were approached by international organizations acting on behalf of prisoners long before America entered the war.

Like the International Red Cross, the main international bodies responsible for spiritual war relief were centered in Switzerland. The Ecumenical Commission for Chaplaincy Service to Prisoners of War (part of the World Council of Churches) and the War Prisoners' Aid of the YMCA's World Committee organized not only ministry efforts, but also recreational, educational and relief programs. The Ecumenical

Commission was formed shortly after the outbreak of the war and represented approximately 70 non-Roman Catholic Church organizations throughout the world.[165] Working with the War Prisoners' Aid of the YMCA, the Ecumenical Commission sought the cooperation of church bodies in belligerent countries in providing religious services to their prisoners. Once the United States began accepting German and Italian prisoners, both organizations approached American church bodies. As previously mentioned, the Catholic Church almost immediately dismissed the idea of a close relationship with the YMCA. Clearly, the non-Roman Catholic makeup of the Ecumenical Commission was no more palatable. The Catholic Church accepted and acted on information retrieved by emissaries of these organizations, but refused close collaboration. Both organizations had a much more fruitful working relationship with the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War.

In late 1943, representatives of the two committees arrived in the United States and Canada. For the Ecumenical Commission, Rev. Carl Erik Wenngren, Rev. Karl Gustaf Almquist, and Rev. Otto Nothhacksberger, all from Sweden, came to work with the Commission on Aliens and Prisoners of War, "a joint agency instituted by the Federal Council of Churches and the Home Missions Council with the cooperation of the Foreign Missions Conference."[166] In addition to consulting with church bodies, the men visited most of the camps in America and Canada, talking with prisoners and relating their

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[165] "Memo Re Chaplaincy to Prisoners of War," 3 October 1941, Typewritten account of the work of the Ecumenical Commission for Chaplaincy Service to Prisoners of War, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1, 1.

[166] Erik W. Modean, "How the Swedish Church Served War Prison Camps in America," *The American Swedish Monthly* (March 1946), RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2, 11.

spiritual needs to the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War, the National Catholic Welfare Conference and the Provost Marshal General.

The Ecumenical Commission focused more specifically on spiritual ministry. Its primary goal was to ensure that all prisoners had the means to worship according to their own beliefs. A 1941 memorandum, concerning the Commission's involvement in Canadian camps, however, indicates that it was just as important to the Commission that Nazi prisoners be exposed to Christianity. The memo reads:

> It would seem desirable that efforts should be made, carefully and resolutely, to interpret to these men, wherever possible, the Christian principles upon which our culture and civilization rests. It is not a question of imposing propaganda but that by friendly and genuine Christian service interpret to men the finer and more enduring aspects of life.[167]

The importance of clarifying that religious services were not to be propaganda was to prevent the Axis powers from retaliating with Nazi propaganda. If the Germans could in any way interpret ministering to German POWs in Allied hands as propagandizing, the Allies feared that their own POWs in Germany would face the most severe brainwashing tactics that Joseph Goebbels could develop. On the other hand, the Allies and the Ecumenical Commission had reason to believe that if German POWs were granted such religious freedoms, the Allied prisoners might be shown the same courtesy by the Germans.[168] This again demonstrates the claim, discussed in Chapter 1, of

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[167] "Memo Re Chaplaincy to Prisoners of War," 3.
[168] Ibid., 2.

inspiring reciprocal behavior from the Germans that Arnold Krammer asserts in *Nazi Prisoners of War in America.*[169]

Outside international representation also came from an organization called the International Catholic Help for Refugees in the person of Dom Odo, Duke of Württemberg. Dom Odo was instrumental in drawing up the proposal for a seminary camp with Rev. Carl Wenngren, but he also made frequent visits to camps. His personal interest stemmed from the fact that several of his colleagues and acquaintances were among the POW clergy, but he was relatively able to be objective in his reports of conversations with the prisoners. In one report to Lt. Col. Horatio R. Rogers, Executive to the Assistant Provost Marshal General, Dom Odo stated, "Very deeply I was impressed to find that all the War Prisoners are still convinced that Hitler will win the war. I had hoped that the morale of the soldiers is already broken."[170] On the other hand, the Duke estimated the political temper of the men he visited to be "5% real, hard boiled Nazis, about 3% Communists… and about 92% of loyal men to Hitler, because he is the chief of the Government."[171] This he attributed to the prisoners belief that Germany would lose if they gave up their support of Hitler.

In addition to measuring their allegiance to Hitler, Dom Odo took up some of the prisoners' requests. One overriding desire of the prisoners was to have physicians, pastors and priests who spoke German well. He found that they lacked confidence in men who made frequent errors or who had too much of an American accent. The

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[169] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 257.

[170] Dom Odo, Duke of Württemberg to Lt. Col. Horatio R. Rogers, 23 May 1944, Letter to report on camp visits, Decimal File 000.3, RG 389, National Archives, Box 1595, 1.

[171] Ibid., 1-2.

prisoners found it difficult to confide in clergy who did not speak German fluently, just as they found it challenging to express illnesses and ailments to physicians through a translator. With this sort of knowledge, the OPMG could try to better fulfill the needs of the prisoners.

The War Prisoners' Aid of the YMCA

The Young Men's Christian Association was especially committed to providing for the young men behind barbed wire. Even before the United States' entry into the war, the YMCA was providing for 4,000,000 prisoners in camps across the globe. Whether providing materials or enabling prisoners to provide for one another, the services of the War Prisoners' Aid of the YMCA were invaluable to prisoners throughout the world. The greatest challenge facing most prisoners, according to the YMCA, was boredom. Without a job to do, or something to contribute, most were reduced to a sedentary life. The YMCA supplied the prisoners' greatest necessity after food and shelter – something to do. Whether the prisoners filled their time studying in camp classrooms, keeping fit on sporting teams, or worshipping in church services and Bible studies, the YMCA assisted them in some way.[172]

Neutral organizations like the Red Cross and the YMCA were the only ones throughout the world permitted to send representatives into the camps. While representatives from the International Red Cross and the Swiss Legation periodically inspected camps to ensure that the prisoners were receiving fair and adequate treatment in

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[172] International Committee YMCA, "I Speak for the Barbed Wire Legion," Pamphlet of YMCA activities in World War II POW Camps, NCWC 10, CUA, Box 58, 2-3.

accordance with the Geneva Convention of 1929, YMCA representatives entered the camps to find out what the men needed and wanted.[173] YMCA officials were tireless in their attempts to provide for and encourage leisure activities. In addition to books, most camps were given sports equipment. Several camps had orchestras or choral groups for which the YMCA provided musical instruments and sheet music. Because theater programs were also popular, the YMCA even sent a handbook of drama techniques to the camps.[174]

In April 1943, as POW camps in the United States were just beginning to accept prisoners, the YMCA was in full swing, sending materials all over the world. A report of "Y" activities gave the following list of items distributed: "2000 soccer balls, 5300 footballs, 2907 volley balls, over 12,000 phonograph records, 1700 playground balls, hundreds of baseballs, 9000 Bibles...and over 6000 non-fiction and fiction books.[175] The YMCA's commitment to keeping the hands and minds of POWs busy and therefore, contented, was unsurpassed by any organization or government. Most countries abided by the Geneva Convention's regulations for the treatment of prisoners, but their wartime economies could only provide the basic necessities. Recognizing that bored and discontented prisoners could be problematic for camp security, the countries retaining prisoners were more than grateful for the YMCA's offers of assistance.[176]

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[173] YMCA, "Barbed Wire Legion", 3-4.

[174] D.A. Davis, "Program of Y.M.C.A. Service Among Prisoners of War in Thirty Different Countries," RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1, 3.

[175] Ibid., 5.

[176] International Committee YMCA, "Barbed Wire Legion," 5.

In addition to providing for the prisoners recreational, educational and spiritual needs, the YMCA and the Ecumenical Commission for Chaplaincy Service to Prisoners of War often supported the publication of manuscripts written by the prisoners in their free time. Since written materials could not be transmitted from prisoners to the outside, the two committees would intervene with the Office of the Provost Marshal General to secure censorship approval.[177] In one case, the Ecumenical Commission submitted a manuscript to the OPMG for which it lacked sufficient funds to publish it. The representative of the Ecumenical Commission, Carl Erik Wenngren, believed the manuscript to be a pertinent study of Martin Luther's writings and therefore requested permission to approach one of the Lutheran church bodies about publishing it. As a consulting member to the LCPOW, Rev. Wenngren believed the Lutherans might have the funds to print it.[178] Major John Dvorovy, the Chaplain Advisor to the Special Projects Division, reviewed the matter and sent his reply. Dvorovy, also a Lutheran, expressed no objection on the part of the OPMG, but suggested that Lutheran scholars review the material for authentication.[179] In this manner the governmental, charitable, and religious organizations often cooperated in honoring prisoners' requests fostering religious activity in the camps.

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[177] Carl Erik Wenngren to Lt. Col. Edward Davison, 15 January 1946, Decimal File 461, RG 389, National Archives, Box 1649.

[178] Carl Erik Wenngren to Col. A.M. Tollefson, 26 October 1945, Decimal File 461, RG 389 National Archives, Box 1648.

[179] John Dvorovy, "Memorandum for Director, Prisoner of War Special Projects Division," Memo regarding publication of manuscript written by POW, Decimal File 461, RG 389, National Archives, Box 1648.

The Ecumenical Commission and the War Prisoners' Aid were concerned not only that the prisoners received spiritual guidance, but also that such guidance and ministry coincided with their own backgrounds. Rev. Wenngren wrote in a letter to Dr. Ralph Long of the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War that "Although Christianity is supra-national, it will always be best interpreted to a congregation—inside or outside the barbed wire—by men with a similar background who have passed through the same type of experiences."[180] This statement was made in conjunction with a request that the LCPOW publish a worship book written and developed by prisoners at Camp Mexia, Texas. Clearly, Rev. Wenngren believed that prisoners of war would be best served spiritually by other prisoners; men who understood the unique situation in which they had all been placed. Army chaplains and American civilian clergy were welcomed, of course, but POWs understood best how they felt and, therefore, their own clergy often knew the best way to minister in the camps.

Other Denominations

The Lutheran and Catholic churches of America were the primary providers of religious services to POW camps, because most Germans claimed to be Lutheran, Catholic or the more ambiguous "gott-glaubig" (god-believing). Among Italian and German POWs there was simply no need for any other denomination to minister in the camps. Had there been a need for a Baptist or Methodist or, more likely, a Reformed Church minister, the position could probably have been filled. Chaplains of other faiths

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[180] Carl Erik Wenngren to Dr. Ralph H. Long, 5 July 1944, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1, 2.

abounded but, as mentioned before, often found themselves useless to prisoner of war populations. Nevertheless, the missionary opportunity was too irresistible for people of all faiths. Nowhere was this more evident than in Utah.

Mormon residents of Utah often found themselves working next to or supervising prisoners of war. As a mission-oriented church body, the Mormon Church encouraged its members to evangelize actively. Both church elders and those who were simply members often took the opportunity to share their beliefs with their new neighbors. At Fort Douglas, Utah, two German-speaking Mormons were granted access to the camp to discuss their faith with the POWs. According to Allan Kent Powell, the prisoners were not especially moved. Powell writes, "The dozen or so prisoners who heard [the] earnest and forthright comments about his firm belief in the Mormon faith listened politely, asked no questions, and were apparently uninterested in his message."[181] One former Utah prisoner explained the lack of interest: "We did not speak much about religion in the camp. It was not interesting to me. We only wanted to do our work and go home. I never did see any prisoners who were ready to join the Mormon church."[182] Another pointed out that "the young prisoner 'is much more interested in girls, smoking and perhaps drinking. As soldiers we hardly thought about anything else.'"[183] Of course, that particular camp may have simply been resistant to religion in general.

Some prisoners were more receptive to the Mormon faith. Several even chose, after the war, to immigrate to the United States and were sponsored by the Mormon

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[181] Allan Kent Powell, *Splinters of a Nation* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah, 1989), 218.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.

Church.[184] Others were simply impressed with the friendliness and compassion of the Mormons they encountered. In general, Mormon civilians were very giving to their POW neighbors. In one instance, their ministry was particularly appreciated. On July 8, 1945, in Salina, Utah, at a satellite camp of Fort Douglas, a crazed guard opened fire on the prisoners sleeping in tents, killing eight prisoners and wounding several others. The men were taken to the local hospital and, in the absence of any Catholic or Lutheran clergy, Mormon elders came to comfort the wounded. It was later discovered that the elders came in response to the misunderstood cries by some of the prisoners for "meine Eltern," meaning "my parents."[185] Regardless, at such a time, the ministry of any available clergy was appreciated.

Christians of other faiths did not organize their POW ministry efforts to the extent Lutherans and Catholics did, but they were known to reach out to the prisoners.
A minister's wife named Mrs. Leonora Wood, wrote her congressman to complain that the commander of Camp Ettinger rejected the donation of Bibles by the Men's Club of her church. Mrs. Wood believing that the commander was "decidedly not interested in the spiritual life of the prisoners,"[186] asked the congressman's assistance in the matter. Because camp commanders could make such decisions at their own discretion, some charitable organizations had more luck than others donating to their local POW camp. Certainly there were camp commanders who would not refuse such an offer. This

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[184] Powell, *Splinters of a Nation*, 253.
[185] Ibid., 228-229.
[186] Mrs. (John A.) Leonora W. Wood to Hon. Jennings Randolph, 13 December 1945, Decimal File 461, RG 389, National Archives, Box 1648.

particular commander may have been concerned with censorship issues and following the proper procedure for admitting materials into his camp.

One former prisoner wrote in his memoirs that the Quakers donated books to his camp: "Die Quäker hatten uns Kisten mit Büchern geschickt, amerikanischen und alten deutschen, auch Schulbüchern, teilweise mit Unterstreichungen und Randbemerkungen von Collegeboys, die jetzt wohl im Pazifik oder in Europa and der Front standen."[187] The irony of the current situation was, therefore, not lost on the prisoners. Many prisoners realized that they were reading the books of young men who had left their college studies to fight their own army in Europe. Others were working in fields or factories replacing the workforce that was fighting overseas.

Many everyday citizens proved that it was not necessary to be part of a worldwide charitable organization to effect change in the prisoners' lives. Most of those citizens who did encounter the prisoners found that their lives were forever changed as well. In 1992, Reader's Digest featured an article about one American family's experience with German POWs. The author, Jeanne Hill, was a young girl when several German POWs were assigned to work with her father on a contracted carpentry job. The family was apprehensive at first, having already lost a family member in the war. As the author's father taught the men (some of them just teenagers) how to do their jobs, he began to trust them and even befriend them, despite the language barrier. When he became seriously ill and could no longer work, it seemed the deadline for completion of the work would be

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[187] Fritz Arnold, *Freundschaft in Jahren der Feindschaft*, (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1998), 76. (trans. " The Quakers sent us boxes with books, American and old German, also schoolbooks, some of them with underlining and notes in the margins from "College boys," who were now well into the Pacific or on the front in Europe.")

missed. The POWs volunteered extra hours to learn how to complete the specialized work. With the dedication of the POWs, the deadline was met. As a gesture of thanks, the American family invited the 36 POWs and their guard (who had also volunteered extra hours to watch the men on the job) to Thanksgiving dinner.[188]

In this manner, many individual Americans were exposed to "the enemy." Young German men and boys entered American workplaces to work alongside everyday citizens who often were fearful of the "Nazis" in their midst. In the spirit of Christian charity and forgiveness, however, many grudges were put aside and friendships formed.

Like the YMCA, the Red Cross and other organizations, the Americans who worked with the prisoners began to see them not as perpetrators of the atrocities war, but as boys who fought for their country, were captured, and were waiting for the day when they could go home.

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[188] Jeanne Hill, "Our Unlikely Thanksgiving," *Reader's Digest* 141, no. 847 (November 1992), 96-99.

CHAPTER 5

CHAPLAINS, CIVILIAN PASTORS AND PRISONER CLERGY

How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace. Who bring glad tidings of good things!

Romans 11:6

Organizations outside of the camps made most of the decisions about what religious activities would take place within them. The major church bodies cooperated with the Army to serve the men and ensure that their spiritual needs were met. The most fruitful relationships, however, were to be found within the camps. Thousands of prisoners came to depend upon their pastors and chaplains for comfort and counsel. The clergy, in turn, came to appreciate their prisoner congregations for the challenge they presented as well as the friendships that developed. For most pastors, the experience was overwhelmingly positive. Generally, the POW congregations were responsive, helpful and grateful for their time. The POWs' appreciation was often what kept the clergy going, as service to the camps was far from easy.

Chaplains and civilian clergy were very often the only Americans in whom the prisoners placed any trust. Guards and commanding officers, although at times friendly to the POWs, were nonetheless in charge of keeping them captive. They were the enemy's men in uniform and the Germans were not inclined to trust any American military figure. One camp report submitted to the National Catholic Welfare Conference

stated the obvious: "Men do not dream of going to confession with a U.S. Army Chaplain.... A good tactful pow [sic] Catholic priest is very much needed in this camp and would be very welcomed...."[189] The prisoners deeply appreciated having someone to converse with in their own language who was not an enemy military figure.

Most civilian pastors and priests served the camps in addition to their full-time positions in civilian congregations. Many also traveled great distances every week to meet with the POWs. Frederick H. Goos, pastor of a Lutheran Service Center in Newport News, Virginia, recalled, "In all I served five of these camps at one time or another.... That was a 75 mile trip each week end. For two and a half months I went over to the Norfolk side. That was a five hour trip each week."[190] This sort of distance was not unusual, especially for those pastors and priests who voluntarily served the often-remote branch labor camps.

Rev. Arthur Scheidt, like many others, approached the commanding officer of a camp in Lexington, Kentucky about preaching to the prisoners. The CO gave his permission and asked if Scheidt could locate a Catholic priest to come and preach as well. Out of 600 prisoners, Rev. Scheidt preached to about 100 men. When he began in early autumn 1944, he believed it would be a more temporary position than it was. By the following spring, several more camps had opened in the area and Rev. Scheidt had to get approval from the FBI and the Chief of Chaplains to extend service to them. Rev. Scheidt preached to the prisoners at the Lexington Signal Depot every Wednesday night.

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[189] War Prisoners Aid of the World's Committee of YMCA's, March 1944, Report of Camp Trinidad, Colorado, NCWC 10, Box 58.

[190] Frederick H. Goos to Dr. N. M.Ylvisaker, 28 March 1946, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2, 1.

His wife wrote in personal family letters about the benefit of extra money earned for the services. In addition to the $5 per service paid by the Missouri Synod, Mrs. Scheidt wrote that the prisoners were permitted to collect funds and pay up to $15 per service from their own pockets. In one instance, they collected $132 but were only permitted to give the maximum of $15.[191] This extra money was added incentive to civilian clergy who often had to travel great distances to visit the camps.

Many civilian clergymen were happy to carry out services to POWs, but admitted their own inadequacy whether linguistic or otherwise. Chaplain Opie S. Rindahl of Fort McClellan, Alabama, freely admitted to "murdering the Kaiser's German" and was "humbly thrilled to think that the Lord can use me."[192] He requested assistance from the NLC in obtaining German sermons, which he could evidently read but not compose on his own. Chaplain John Dvorovy, at the time stationed in Alabama, assisted him with this by supplying some of his own sermons. Likewise Chaplain James C. Peterson, stationed on Angel Island in San Francisco, began his ministry in English with a translator, but as the prisoners told him they did not like the translator's use of Low German, they requested that he attempt to use what little High German he had learned in the seminary. Chaplain Peterson did request that someone more experienced in the language be stationed on Angel Island as soon as possible.[193] Overall, most of the

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[191] Rev. Arthur Scheidt and Mrs. Leonora Hoyer Scheidt, 19 August 1945, Personal family letters given to the author by a relative.

[192] Opie S. Rindahl to Rev. N. M. Ylvisaker, 26 July 1943, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1, 1.

[193] Chaplain James C. Peterson to Dr. Ralph H. Long, 14 September 1943, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1, 2.

Lutheran pastors who volunteered to serve the camps were competent in the German language.

Despite the language barrier, many pastors developed close friendships with the German soldiers. Pastor Carl A. Becker of Temple, Texas, wrote of two close friends, a Catholic priest and an engineer who occasionally conducted services in his absence. Becker commented, "They really are giving me a picture of Germany. They readily admit the sins of their people but pray and hope for a tolerant America."[194] Such "repentance" was not uncommon. After several months in captivity, with access to uncensored newspapers and media, many prisoners came to recognize, if they had not before, the error of Hitler's ways. Many looked to American churches to help their country recover financially and spiritually.

Several pastors kept in contact with prisoners after the war. Rev. Elton Temme, whose father preached at a camp in Neodesha, Kansas, recalled that his father received letters of thanks from several prisoners upon their repatriation to Germany. Even more surprising was that the elder Rev. Temme often took his son, at the time a boy of twelve or thirteen, along with him to the camp services. Rev. Elton Temme would later marvel that he sat "right next to German Prisoners of War" and worshipped with them.[195] Although children and non-clergy civilians were not regularly permitted to enter the camps, the admittance of a young boy serves to illustrate that commanding officers varied in their adherence to the Provost Marshal General's direction concerning clergy.

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[194] Carl A. Becker to Rev. Em. Poppen, 25 December 1944, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2

[195] Rev. Elton Temme, letter to author, 30 July 2000, enclosed copy of letter to family dated 12 January 2000.

The pastors typically visited camps at least once a week, usually on a Sunday evening. Many discovered, upon seeing the camps for the first time, that materials for conducting services would be hard to come by. In some camps, the prisoners made use of their special skills to create a place of worship. Those with a talent for woodworking often created their own altars and crosses. In other camps, the pastors located such items or made them themselves. Rev. Wyatt Kimberley, whose POW congregation worked in the woods of North Carolina, still has in his possession a wooden cross, crafted by one of the prisoners for use in the chapel.[196] Other supplies necessary for services were usually requisitioned by the pastors and chaplains from their church organizations or donated by the local congregation.

The prisoners pulled their own weight as far as religious activities were concerned. Recognizing that pastors and priests were not always available, many POWs organized worship services and Bible study groups on their own. A Lutheran field secretary touring camps in Virginia wrote of a prisoner who led *Bibelstunden* ("Bible hours") several times per week despite also laboring at the nearby depot.[197] POW clergy and theologians often led these groups when civilian pastors could only spare time to do weekly services.

Some of the most enthusiastic participants in religious activities were POW clergy or students whose service to the German Army had interrupted either theological studies or service to congregations in Germany. These men welcomed the opportunity afforded

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[196] Rev. Wyatt Kimberley, letter to author, 14 April 2000, 3.

[197] W. L.Scheding, 27 October 1945, Field Secretary Report of Camp Visits #11, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2, 3.

them by their captivity in the United States. Oddly enough, many German prisoners in contact with the LCPOW indicated that their exposure to American Lutheranism strengthened their faith and their understanding of Lutheran Doctrine. One *pfarrer*, whose comments were included in Rev. Strieter's history of the LCPOW, wrote:

> God has to lead us to America to become firmly grounded in conservative Lutheran Theology. I have so absorbed it that I can see Scripture only as so wonderfully and purely set forth in Pieper's Dogmatic, and in Fuerbringer's and Stoeckhardt's exegetical works. Give Pieper and Fuerbringer to every believing pastor and theological student in Germany with the understanding that they study and preach it for one year, and we shall, like one man, stand four-square on God's Word and Luther's Doctrine Pure![198]

The history of the LCPOW written by T. W. Strieter includes several such excerpts from letters of thanks written by POWs who either received theological books or participated in courses, whether in the camp or through correspondence. These prisoners proved themselves invaluable to the civilian clergy and chaplains as assistants or devotion leaders during their internment.

Clergy Controversies

The Office of the Provost Marshal General warned the religious bodies, which in turn warned their clergy, not to forget their position and the uniqueness of the situation.

[198] Strieter, "A Brief History," 27.

An excerpt from the Minutes of the LCPOW expressed this concern: "Always bear in mind that the war prisoners are our enemies; therefore exercise the utmost caution that nothing be said or done that will in any way jeopardize our national security and welfare."[199] Although written in the early days of the POW program, this guideline almost prophetically hinted at the possibility that the pastors would form close relationships with their prisoner congregations.

Although no incidents of espionage or other threats to national security ever arose from a chaplain/prisoner relationship, a few incidents of questionable behavior threatened the delicate balance of trust that the government sought to maintain. The threat never extended to national security. Essentially clergy and prisoners were powerless to effect any real change in the course of the war. The government saw to it that camps were placed far away from coastlines and any industries or other sites crucial to the war effort.[200] Even if civilian pastors were willing or able to slip anything from the prisoners (i.e., documents) past the guards, it is doubtful that the prisoners would have access to any useful information. The pastors were much more likely to want to bring things *into* the camp, such as gifts from their congregations. A few individual pastors, however, broke the trust of the prisoners and the government by making poor decisions in their tenuous positions.

The vast majority of civilian clergy generally kept to their responsibilities and rarely posed any problem to the camp or its operation, but there were a few occasions on

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[199] S. C. Michelfelder, "Minutes of the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War," 5 November 1943, LBM, Concordia Historical Institute, Box 76, 11.

[200] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 27-28.

which pastors or chaplains abused their positions. For instance, in January 1944, an army chaplain anonymously published an account of his experience with the Germans behind barbed wire in LIFE Magazine. Although not an overtly negative article, many prisoners, who could purchase LIFE in the camp canteens, took offense at the article. There was, for a short time, a marked mistrust of American officials, especially chaplains. Such irresponsible action on the part of a person who was charged with upholding the confidentiality of the confessions of individual persons seriously threatened relations between prisoners and American camp officials.

The chaplain in question painted a portrait of the men as, for the most part, arrogantly hopeful that the Nazis would prevail. Each one, he stated, was "well versed in Nazi apologetics," able to describe in detail the offenses against the German nation after the previous war.[201] The chaplain dispelled the image of the Nazi superman by describing the prisoners as boys who very much resembled their American counterparts. He described them as very musical and not anti-religious. Many attended religious services and exhibited familiarity with many of the hymns and prayers. The chaplain did note, curiously, that many prisoners believed in a nationalized version of Christianity, in which the state took precedence over any attempts at worldwide religious collaboration. On one point, the chaplain was mistaken. He believed, as did others who dealt with the prisoners, that although they were clearly not all Nazis, the anti-Nazi contingent represented a minority.[202] Perhaps it was to assumptions such as this that many prisoners

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[201] [Anonymous Army Chaplain], "PWs," *LIFE* (10 January 1944): 47.
[202] Ibid., 48.

took offense. The government came to discover, throughout the course of the POW program, that strong Nazis were actually in the minority. Anti-Nazis and those who remained politically indifferent made up the greatest portion of the prisoners.

One pastor became the subject of scrutiny for allegedly including political statements in his sermons. Under investigation by the FBI, Rev. Charles L. Ramme was removed from his preaching position by his superiors at the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War at the request of the OPMG. He had begun his POW ministry when the LCPOW discovered a particular need for Lutheran clergy in South Carolina and Ramme's name was suggested as a good candidate. Ramme was transferred to South Carolina from Colorado at the express wishes of the LCPOW. By all accounts, and as the recommendation for his transfer suggests, Rev. Ramme was a model minister to POWs. In July 1945, however, Dr. Ralph H. Long of the LCPOW received a letter from Rev. Frank R. Jenkins, the Post Chaplain at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Rev. Jenkins reported that Rev. Ramme was under investigation by the FBI for making questionable statements in his preaching. Chaplain Jenkins also reported that commanders at some of the side camps shared his concern regarding Rev. Ramme. "One reports that from his conversations with Reverend Ramme he believes Reverend Ramme to be a German sympathizer."[203]

Rev. Ramme apparently commented that "he had never heard any worse swearing anywhere than he had heard from American soldiers," and had used an anecdotal

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[203] Chaplain Frank R. Jenkins to [Lutheran National Council], 8 July 1945, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2.

illustration that presented an unfavorable picture of American society. For this, Chaplain Jenkins requested that Rev. Ramme be transferred to some other location in the country. Interestingly enough, Chaplain Jenkins, even after consulting with the FBI, did not call for Rev. Ramme's complete removal from POW camp service. He merely requested his transfer and asked that another minister be sent to take his place.[204]

The LCPOW, for whatever reason, did not stand up for Rev. Ramme, who later wrote an angry explanatory letter to the Commission. Rev. Ramme clarified his position in the matter in the lengthy letter and expressed his outrage that freedom of speech and freedom of religion could be so abused. In a sermon about the parable of the Feeding of the 5000, Rev. Ramme claimed he sought to focus on the leadership of Christ and "His INSISTENCE UPON LAW AND ORDER" or crowd-control, in modern terms.[205] Rev. Ramme mentioned a recent local news item in which a storeowner advertised the sale of lard, which, being in short supply at the time, prompted a large crowd. The crowd became so unruly that more damage was done to the store than could be compensated for by the sale of the lard. The anecdote was meant to illustrate crowd-control, or the lack thereof. A supervising chaplain, Carl Roemmisch, who heard the story, received what Rev. Ramme referred to as a "false impression," which was never fully explained, and complained to the camp officials.

The other transgression of which Rev. Ramme was accused was the implication that American soldiers swore more often than any other individuals, Rev. Ramme had

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[204] Ibid.

[205] Rev. Charles L. Ramme to Rev. C.E. Krumholz, 3 August 1945, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2, 3.

encountered. In response, Rev. Ramme simply stated that, "it would be foolish for me to deny the realism of this statement...."[206] While he recognized that such a comment, gave an unfavorable impression of Americans to the POWs, Rev. Ramme insisted that his statement, in the proper context was not directly accusative of American GI's. Rather, he related a story about receiving a pleasant greeting from a German POW and commented how wonderful it would be, "wenn wir überall von einem jeden so begrüsst werden dürften, anstatt mit Fluchworten-abschreckenden Fluchworten,- wie man sie in so manchen americkanischen [sic] Lagern findet, und wie das tatsächlich geschied."[207]

After repeating his "offending" statements in context, Rev. Ramme rebuked the LCPOW for accusing him of using his position for something other than "the Direct Preaching of the Gospel" as he was commissioned.[208] He felt, first of all, that direct preaching--without the use of anecdotes, stories, and other examples—was essentially impossible and he invoked Martin Luther's own preaching style for supporting evidence.[209] Obviously upset at having to resign a position in which he felt he had done some good, Rev. Ramme stated clearly that he would cherish the memory of all the positive remarks he received from prisoners rather than to dwell on those events that caused his expulsion.

This resignation by a clergyman or termination of his camp-visiting privileges seems to have been a unique event. It does beg the question, however, as to how serious

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[206] Ibid.

[207] [Ramme's punctuation and emphasis] Ibid., 4. (Translation: "if we could be so greeted everywhere, instead of with swear words-unpleasant swear words-as one finds in so many American camps, and as that actually happens.")

[208] Ibid., 5.

[209] Ramme to Krumbholz., 4.

were the instructions given to civilian clergy and how strictly were they enforced. As mentioned earlier, few of the surviving clergy contacted for this study could recall any restrictions on their ministry. Rev. Ramme suggested that the accusations against him might have been made as a form of revenge, as he had scolded his accuser before the service in front of several camp officials for telling off-color stories.[210] Any instances of friction seem to have developed from already strained relationships between among chaplains, prisoners, and camp officials. In any case, such interpersonal conflicts appear to have been rare.

A Welcome Comfort

Even with these isolated occurrences, the need and desire for the clerical service was not diminished. In several instances, clergy were almost always accepted. One was in hospital settings where prisoners were recovering from illness and wounds, whether war-related or other. Several pastors and chaplains recalled how moved they were by the gratitude and appreciation of those POWs whom they met in hospital wards. The ministry and counsel of the Mormon elders among the victims of the shooting in Salina, Utah, provides an excellent example of this.[211] Another occasion on which the services of a chaplain were called for was the death of a prisoner.

Most cases of POW deaths were due to illness, injury or accident, but in one instance German prisoners were tried and executed for murder. A news report included in the papers of Edward Davison recounts the execution of seven POWs at Fort

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[210] Ibid.
[211] See Chapter 4, p. 89.

Leavenworth. The men were charged with murdering a fellow prisoner whom they had deemed a traitor to Hitler's Reich. Nazi persecution of fellow prisoners was not uncommon. Ardent Nazis felt it was their duty to search out POWs who voiced their opposition to the Hitler regime and exact punishment. These seven men were convicted of killing their fellow inmate and sentenced to hang at Fort Leavenworth. Of the seven men, four gave thanks in their final statements for the assistance and counsel of the priests provided.

The men for whom religion was a comfort in their final hours varied in their beliefs. After the first man gave his thanks for the priest and met his fate, the reporter questioned the priest, who told him that the prisoner had honestly believed he committed no crime and deserved no such punishment. He felt he was merely fulfilling his duty. The second prisoner, Heinrich Ludwig, no doubt felt the same as he announced, "I want to thank you for the religious presence of the both Priests, that is my only thanks."[212] The sixth man to be executed expressed to the priest his sorrow over having put aside his religion for his political beliefs. He received Holy Communion before he died. Rolf Wizuy, the last man to be hanged, thanked the priest who stood beside him personally at

[212] Gene Dennis, 25 August 1945, Report of the execution of seven German POWs at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Edward Davison Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University, Box 10, 2.

the gallows. The reporter summed up his thoughts on these eleventh hour statements of faith:

> Yet, these non-believers of our law, these men who died upholding a law that went side by side with atheism; these men returned to their God in hour of death. Can it be, or will it be that Religion will be a crutch for a badly injured people? I talked to a Priest who knew his Nazi well; I talked with a
> Protestant Chaplain who had prayed with these condemned men. The Nazi did not understand the law, but he understood God. Hitler had not been able to extinguish the fire of greater faith.[213]

Whether penitent or not, it is clear that several of the prisoners appreciated the ministry provided for them.

This range of religious acceptance seems to be indicative of the prisoner population throughout the country. Some prisoners retained their Nazi atheism until the end, professing only allegiance to Hitler. Others, like the first prisoner executed, believed that their service to Hitler was a duty, which did not necessarily conflict with their salvation. At the other end of the scale were men like the sixth prisoner, who completely repented and returned to faith in God. These conversions, however, were more likely the exception than the rule.

To some POWs, the role of the chaplains and other clergy was as an advocate for better treatment or even to bear witness to unpleasant incidents or atrocities committed against prisoners. In such cases, the clergymen could be counted on to bring these situations to the attention of their superiors and even the Provost Marshal General. One of the most common complaints was too little nourishment. Although the prisoners were supposed to receive a similar daily caloric intake to American servicemen, this was not

always the case. The Bishop of Covington, Kentucky wrote to his superior of a camp in Morehead, in which the POWs were allegedly receiving only noodle soup or bread and coffee.[214] Although the camps were routinely inspected by neutral organizations, the clergy were often the best informed as to prisoner conditions. This report, however, coincides with the cutting of food rations to POWs, in response to the rumors of "coddling," which surfaced after V-E Day.

William Scheding, a field secretary for the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War, was alerted to a violent incident on a visit to Camp McCain, Mississippi. A prisoner clergyman, Robert Theilman, related to the camp chaplain the story of three men who received bayonet stabs as punishment for not fulfilling work quotas. Theilman explained that the men were told to pick cotton from a field that had already been gone over once. When the men came up short in meeting the required 150-pound quota, they were forced to skip supper and shovel coal for several hours. Having been accused of working too slowly at coal shoveling, the three men were stabbed by with bayonets by guards. Pfarrer Theilman presented the visiting Rev. Scheding with the clothing of one of the men to verify that the wounds were inflicted. An account of this incident appears in the records of the LCPOW with a letter indicating that it was brought to the attention of the Provost Marshal General.[215] Evidence of any follow-up could not be located in any of the other archives consulted.

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[213] Ibid., 3.

[214] [William Mulley] to Msgr. Howard J. Carroll, 20 June 1945, NCWC 10, Dept. of Archives and Manuscripts – CUA, Box 58.

[215] Robert Theilman to Chaplain A.C. Baughman, 16 October 1945, Copy enclosed with Field Secretary Report of W.L. Scheding, 27 October 1945, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2.

Before his own troubles, Rev. Charles L. Ramme encountered violence against a prisoner at Shaw Field in South Carolina. In a standard monthly report to the LCPOW, Ramme related "off the record" that he witnessed "a bloody flagellation of a P.O.W." who was brought into the barrack where he was about to begin a service. Many of the men left the service visibly upset by what they had seen.[216] In both cases, the pastors were understandably hard pressed to engage prisoners to participate in services after the incidents. These seem to be isolated occurrences, but such episodes were clearly detrimental to relations between the prisoners and the Americans and equally harmful to any attempt at religious activity in the camp.

Attendance at Services

With all of the efforts made by government and church alike, one may wonder what, precisely, were the wishes of the prisoners. While it is true that many camp populations requested spiritual guidance, others were just as contented without it. Several pastors encountered enthusiastic congregations comprising the majority of the camp population. Other pastors preached to less than ten men each week. Perhaps the best way to gauge the prisoners' reception of the ministry is merely to examine attendance at worship services. Statistical evidence is available from numerous sources ranging from Special Projects Division inquiries to the boasting of individual ministers. Obviously, many of the attendance claims are subjective. As noted previously, each

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[216] Rev. C. L. Ramme, "Report for the Month of July 1945 to the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War," Report of POW camp at Shaw Field, South Carolina, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 2.

camp population differed with respect to political and religious attitude and affiliation. Some effort, however, must be made to put the religious movement into numerical terms.

First, the more biased pastors' claims. As early as July 1943, Chaplain Opie S. Rindahl wrote to the National Lutheran Council about his call to minister to prisoners at Fort McClellan, Alabama. The first week drew a congregation of 750 men, while the service in which the new communion field kit was dedicated brought 600 men with 230 of those communing. Rindahl believed those numbers "completely dispelled the idea that the Christian Religion is out in the German Army."[217] In a letter written several weeks later, Rindahl reported having nearly 1,400 POWs at a service and boasted of having "the complete satisfaction of outdistancing my Roman friends on church attendance." Fort McClellan was 55 percent Lutheran and 40 percent Catholic, according to Rindahl.[218] These figures contrast those of Rev. Frederick H. Goos, who stated that attendance at the services he performed over a two-year period ranged from four to 188.[219] Several times he arrived to find no congregation, due to a failure on the part of the camp administrators to announce the services. As is evident, attendance at services varied from camp to camp, but few pastors who reported to the LCPOW were disappointed with the numbers of participants.

LCPOW field secretaries often presented statistics from the service commands they visited. Rev. Henry Meyer reported a 100 percent increase in attendance at Camp Carson in the 7th Service Command between August 20 and September 15, 1945. He

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[217] Rindahl to Ylvisaker, 26 July 1943, 1.

[218] Opie S. Rindahl to Rev. Ralph H. Long, 7 August 1943, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1, 1.

[219] Goos to Ylvisaker, 28 March 1946, 1.

attributed the rise, which all the other camps in the Command displayed as well, to V-J Day.[220] Meyer also reported on worship habits in another light. While church attendance did increase, he noted that at one camp, attendance of 75 men at the worship service was somewhat dwarfed by the 500 men who attended the football (soccer) game.[221]

Lance-Corporal Alois Heinzl confirmed this particular problem. According to Heinzl, tournaments between barracks teams required much of Sunday, even though the soldiers had Saturday off as well.[222] For the prisoners who did not play football, (if such POWs existed) watching a football match was often more exciting than attending a church service. Chaplain Dvorovy's solution to the problem, when he came to work at the SPD, was to forbid the scheduling of games or movies during the services.[223] The AEO's were supposed to comply with this, but nothing could prevent the non-religious prisoners from playing an unscheduled match in their free time.

Attempts to increase attendance in spite of Nazi interference often took the form of blatant manipulation. One report kept with Chaplain John Dvorovy's files in the National Archives indicates that all the camp leaders, Nazi and anti-Nazi alike, were often brought together and asked if they wanted a chaplain. "Even the known Nazis displayed a firm unwillingness to risk their souls on a negative response. All voted "aye"

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[220] Rev. Henry Meyer, "Report of Field Secretary, Third Itinerary, 7th Service Command," 1.
[221] Ibid., 4.
[222] Alois Heinzl, Interview with author, tape recording, Droß, Lower Austria, 9 May 2001.
[223] Capt. Roger M. Damio, "Sweetening the Sour Kraut," Article written for public information sent to OPMG on 1 October 1945, Decimal File 319.1, RG 389, National Archives, Box 1628, 22-23. Judith M. Gansberg, *Stalag: U.S.A.*, 111.

but that was not enough.... It would be expected that these company leaders, all of whom voted "aye," would themselves attend Church."[224] Thus, the Nazis were backed into a corner. Not wanting to lose face by voting against a chaplain, they were forced to vote for the very religious intervention that many of them had sought to eradicate from German society.

Other Nazis, however, were not as easily swayed. Several accounts indicate that Nazi prisoners regularly threatened those who attended services with punitive measures when the war was over. Many POWs lived in fear that their names were being recorded either for future punishment or so their families in Germany could be harassed.[225] Rev. Martin Schabaker suspected that it was this very fear that prevented his POW parishioners from opening up to him completely.[226] Not all Nazi prisoners were completely anti-church. In Fort McDowell, Angel Island, California, the prisoners were split into two camps, Nazi and anti-Nazi. Clergy performed communion services regularly for both sides.[227]

Camp officials and AEOs also employed less negative strategies to encourage church attendance. Attempts were usually made to publicize religious activities in the camp newspapers, but camp papers could be as varied as the men who wrote them. Some took on a strong anti-Nazi tone while others tried to remained neutral. Those camp newspapers, which did include sections for religion, usually kept them small. Some

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[224] Ibid., 23.

[225] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 163.; Lewis Carlson, *"We Were Each Other's Prisoners": An Oral History of World War II, American and German Prisoners of War* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 151.

[226] Schabaker to Dahms, 29 March 1988, 2.

merely mentioned the service times. Others allotted a page to the Chaplain or POW *Pfarrer* for a small article about faith in God.

Many pastors found that simply conversing with the prisoners on an individual basis, rather than in large groups was enough to pique the prisoners' curiosity. In a letter to the Special Projects Officer for the 1st Service Command, Rev. Paul Brauer, who visited the camps in that command, observed:

> In the beginning only small numbers responded to the printed and verbal announcements of my service. However, as soon as I was permitted to address the prisoners myself—usually at head count, very large numbers came to chapel. Obviously, they responded to a personality rather than to the principle of attending a religious service.[228]

Rev. Brauer was encouraged by his visit to the camps and felt that he was well received. He believed that the Germans he encountered genuinely desired spiritual assistance and urged that it be provided for as many prisoners as possible.

Only one camp in the 1st Service Command seemed unreceptive to Rev. Brauer. Camp Stark in New Hampshire was a branch camp set up to provide labor for the logging industry. Allen V. Koop wrote the history of this camp, *Stark Decency: German Prisoners of War in a New England Village.* The men at Camp Stark were part of the 999th Division, a group with particularly strong Marxist leanings. A local Catholic priest and Methodist pastor did have some success in fostering religious activity, but Koop believed that some of the men of the 999th attended services purely for the gifts which the pastors would bring from local congregations: "Going to church to get rather than to give

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[227] Rev. James C. Peterson to Miss Marcella Benson, Press Secretary for the National Lutheran Council, 14 September 1943, RHL, Archives and Records Center – ELCA, Box 1.

[228] Paul W. Brauer to Captain Roger M. Damio, 26 February 1945, Decimal File 319.1, RG 389, National Archives, box 1628, 1.

happened in many prisoner-of-war camps. American chaplains who counted heads and not motives overestimated their appeal."[229]

Koop did report that despite the general aversion of the Camp Stark men to religion, they were particularly fond of the Catholic priest who served their camp. Father Heon was well respected by the local community, as well as the camp community. One of the Protestant men who attended his services remembered him in a letter to the altar boy who served with the Father: "In spite of all the political situation against Germany in those days, he developed human relations to us, and kept them even in the dark days.... His personal courage and sympathy for us will be unforgotten by me."[230]

The relationships that developed between clergy and prisoners were inspiring, to say the least. Several stories circulated through the Special Projects Division and the LCPOW, indicating what it meant to the prisoners to have an ally in the chaplain. One concerned a shrine built by prisoners in a New England camp. The prisoners approached the chaplain about constructing a grotto to Mary. Most of the prisoners participated in its construction, asking the Chaplain, Father William A. O'Brien, for materials as needed. Father O'Brien, so the story goes, obtained many of the supplies with his own money. Everything but the statue itself was relatively easy to come by. The Father managed to acquire that with funds donated by an American widow, who had just lost her only son in the war. When he told the prisoners about the woman in the dedication ceremony he added:

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[229] Allen V. Koop, *Stark Decency: German Prisoners of War in a New England Village* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1988), 87.

[230] Koop, *Stark Decency*, 87-88.

CONCLUSION

For all intents and purposes, repatriation of the prisoners marked the end of the POW ministry. Once the prisoners were removed from the care of the Office of the Provost Marshal General, the government made no further attempts at reeducation or ministry. Even though POWs in France, where they were involuntarily sent to aid in reconstruction, were still under the authority of Allied forces, it seems religious intervention by American captors extended no further than the minimum requirement of the Geneva Convention; permitting the prisoners to worship as they chose.
The Lutherans Commission for Prisoners of War continued to serve prisoners in the French camps, by providing books and other religious materials, until its dissolution in June 1946. The Lutherans developed new programs to offer aid and support to their brethren in post-war Germany. The Catholic Church, likewise, actively participated in war relief efforts after repatriation. Most importantly, several American pastors remained in contact with their POW parishioners for years after World War II. The friendships formed between prisoner and clergy proved to be the longest lasting effect of the POW ministry.

As previously mentioned, the only converts the OPMG and the Special Projects Division were interested in creating were converts to democracy, to participate in the future of post-war Germany. To the extent that mission work among the POWs supported this democratic revival, it was permitted and, at times, encouraged. However, when repatriation became imminent, ministry to prisoners was reduced to an

afterthought, especially in the reeducation camps. Various individuals in the OPMG and the Special Projects Division believed the POW ministry could have played a more vital role in democratizing the German captives, but their pleas for greater focus on this project fell on deaf ears.

The National Catholic Welfare Conference, with the support of hundreds of individual priests reached out to the POWs as a part of its War Relief Services program. The incorporation of this branch allowed for the monetary compensation of participating priests as well as the distribution of prayer books, rosaries and other materials for Catholic prisoners. In addition, the POWs found in their Catholic priest an advocate or emissary to the OPMG, willing to bring all manner of requests to the attention of the government for resolution. Unlike the OPMG or the Special Projects Division, the efforts of the National Catholic Welfare Conference did not end when the last German soldier boarded a ship bound for Europe. Even after repatriation, War Relief Services was active in the restoration of Germany.

Like the NCWC, the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War cooperated with the OPMG to attend to the needs of prisoners throughout the country. The efforts of this joint commission are incredible when one considers the disunity among American Lutherans. Putting aside most of their differences, the Commission was able to function in a cooperative, albeit somewhat strained manner. This was made possible only by the Commission's belief that they were attending to the Lord's work. Indeed great things were accomplished with this sense of purpose. The LCPOW stepped up quickly to locate and place pastors in camps throughout the United States. They organized national book

drives among the American Lutheran population and distributed a great deal of literature, both secular and religious, in the POW camps. In addition, special attention was given to the several hundred POW clergy and theology students and the furthering of their education in Lutheran doctrine. At all times, the future of religion in Germany was on the minds of those involved in the LCPOW, who saw the POW ministry as a valuable opportunity to set in motion a restoration of faith to the German people.

When the armies and governments of warring nations were too consumed with military matters and other agendas, the task of looking after the byproducts of such conflicts fell to neutral international organizations. The Young Men's Christian Association rose to meet the challenge of serving the forgotten POWs trapped behind barbed wire. Whereas the YMCA was primarily concerned with the physical and emotional well being of the prisoners, the Ecumenical Commission for the Chaplaincy to Prisoners of War, made the prisoners' spiritual guidance its primary focus. Acting as an intermediary, between the camps and the churches and organizations equipped to serve the POWs, the Ecumenical Commission ensured that worship and Christian counseling were available to all prisoners who desired it.

One cannot forget the work done by the foot soldiers of this missionary operation. The men, who entered the camps week after week, putting in extra time in addition to serving their own congregations, were the true examples of Christ to the prisoners. The significance of their presence amongst the prisoners cannot be overestimated. The POWs were especially grateful for the opportunity to speak with someone in their own language, while so far from home. The civilian clergy and the Army chaplains did their best to set

up a real sense of community within the camps, personally inviting the inmates to come to worship or just to talk. Although a few incidents occurred in which pastors or priests abused the position they enjoyed as the confidants of the POWs, for the most part, they were a welcome comfort to the men.

It is difficult to assess the success of the POW ministry. There is no indication that clergy fanatically pursued large numbers of converts. Although such an outcome would certainly have been impressive, those involved in the POW ministry sought merely to impart the constant support and encouragement of an abiding faith in Christ. No record or memoir by a pastor or priest indicates a disappointment in the lack of prisoner response, despite the fact that some camp congregations were quite small. Whether 7 or 700 were reached in a given week at a POW camp, the clergy seemed to be always encouraged by the growing faith of their parishioners. The POWs, as well, demonstrated their appreciation of the time given by the ministers.

Certainly, the effects of the POW ministry can never be fully traced. One could hope for a stunning testimonial by a formerly ardent Nazi who was converted to faith in Christ. That may very well have happened among the over 350,000 German prisoners. Far more likely to be found, however, are simpler stories of lonely men in a foreign country who found comfort and encouragement in the preaching and counsel of small-town pastors. What such interaction did for each of those men, and what they did with the memories of their experiences upon repatriation is purely conjecture. Many of the prisoner clergy and theology students used the doctrinal knowledge acquired in America to carry out their ministry in post-war Germany. Of course, other prisoners remained

wholly untouched by the ministry. In captivity, as in the rest of the world, faith is often a matter of choice. None of the prisoners was forced to accept Christianity, any more than they were forced to accept democracy. Both ideologies were merely presented to men who had been forbidden or discouraged from learning about either one.

Those who were touched by it can, therefore, judge the POW ministry as a success. The Army chaplains and AEOs who saw religion play a decisive role in the reeducation or indoctrination of the POWs, certainly advocated the more widespread usage of religious instruction. Civilian pastors were given a sense of purpose and the feeling that they were doing meaningful work among their German parishioners. They also formed unexpected friendships with the enemy. Finally, the effect of the ministry on the prisoners who desired it can only be deemed a great success. Each prisoner who was comforted or brought back to a once-lost faith would be forever grateful for the extra spiritual care given him in a time of despair and loneliness. Many POWs spoke or wrote of their appreciation, and many returned home to pass on their faith and restore it to Germany.

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Lawrence B. Meyer Collection. Concordia Historical Institute. St. Louis, Missouri.

The papers of Dr. Lawrence "Lorry" B. Meyer contain the LC-MS records of the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War. Among the papers are several photographs taken at camps for publication in *The Lutheran Witness* and *Der Lutheraner*. Minutes of the meetings of the Commission were also especially useful.

Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War. Ralph H. Long Papers. Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Chicago, Illinois.

The official records of the Lutheran Commission are contained within two boxes of the papers of Ralph H. Long. Included among these papers are Rev. Strieter's *A Brief History of the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War*, as well as Field Secretary reports. Correspondence between National Lutheran Council members of the Commission were especially useful in understanding the internal problems related to Lutheran disunity.

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A complete account of the Commission written shortly after its dissolution. Rev. Strieter served first as field secretary and eventually as director of the LCPOW. His history includes a description of the requirements of the OPMG as well as excerpts from letters of both clergy who served in camps and prisoners' letters of thanks for services provided.

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[A U.S. Army Chaplain]. "PWs: Nazis in U.S. Prison Camps are Arrogant and Sturdy but far from being Supermen," *Life* (10 January 1944): 47-50.

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A regional study of Florida's POW camps, which deals with specific labor programs, reeducation efforts, escape attempts and other incidents. Billinger blends existing literature on the topic with interviews with Florida residents who met and worked with POWs and correspondence with former POWs. There is little reference to religion except to say that attendance was low.

Carlson, Lewis, H. *"We Were Each Other's Prisoners": An Oral History of World War II American and German Prisoners of War.* New York: Basic Books, 1997.

An excellent book for comparing the experiences of German POWs with those of Americans interned in Germany. The comparison demonstrates how the OPMG was seen by the public as "coddling" German prisoners.

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

Gansberg set out to give a complete account of the POW program, but her focus shifted toward the Reeducation Program.

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

One of the most admirable examples of a regional study of POW camps. Koop retrieved substantial material from townspeople and former POWs, many of whom were still in touch with one another at the time of publication. Koop found among those who worked at Camp Stark and those who were interned there some of the longest-lasting friendships to come out of the POW program.

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

Although more than two decades old, this remains the most complete account of the experience of German prisoners of war in America.

Krammer explains the trial-and-error operations of the OPMG in setting up a successful system of over 500 camps. Krammer covered, not only the fundamental processing, retention and repatriation of POWs, but the labor and reeducation programs as well. He concluded that the United States' strict adherence to the Geneva Convention and generally fair treatment of the POWs ensured reciprocal treatment of American captives by the Germans.

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Undoubtedly, the most complete account of the Reeducation program, providing insight into the men behind the Special Projects Division. Robin examines the structure of this unprecedented program from its inception to the culmination of all efforts in the democracy camps. Information on the relationship of Major Dvorovy to the other members of the SPD was especially useful in discovering the role of religion in the Intellectual Diversion program.

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A history of one of the major Lutheran synods in the United States. As the the predecessor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the history of the National Lutheran Council is also the story of Lutheran disunity in the twentieth century. This book is useful for its description of conflicts between this body and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

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Casady reports on the program for education in the principles of democracy. According to his findings, religion played a minimal role in reeducation.

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Mason, John Brown. "German Prisoners of War in the United States." *American Journal of International Law* 39, no. 2 (1945): 198-215.

A contemporary article which thoroughly explores the framework of the POW program from its inception in World War II. Mason spells out the roles of the War and State Departments and the various agencies under them in charge of directly carrying out the POW camp system. Of special note is Mason's explanation of the Germany army's use of clergy and chaplains.

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Melissa Weldon was born in Bayside, Queens, in 1976. A pastor's daughter, she moved with her family frequently, living in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Melissa returned to New York in 1994 to attend Concordia College – Bronxville. She graduated with a B.A. in History in 1998 and began her Master's at the University of Richmond the same year. After completing her coursework and thesis research in 2000, Melissa took a hiatus from her graduate program to work as an English-language assistant in Austria, where she spent eight months teaching at two Austrian secondary schools in Krems an der Donau. Upon returning from Europe, she began teaching at Baltimore Lutheran School in Towson, Maryland, where she continues to teach World History and German.