

purpose in the new world to come? Do we have the strength to carry on?

By morning we thought we had solved most of the world's problems during the night, but then the first day of the week begins....

A SMALL EPILOGUE

It is more than twenty years since the prison manuscript came from Germany. I really never had been thinking very much about my life in prison since...One got busy with the problems of the day...For us that had lived a passive life for so long, we had a lot of energy to be spent...We had to use all of the power we possibly could...No time for recreation...We really knew this was wrong, but it just had to be this way...Many of our friends paid a high price for this and died much too young...I am especially thinking of Christian Oftedal representing this group. He had to do everything in the shortest possible time. Nothing was too large or too small for him, he worked equally hard. He traveled all over the world; he wrote and talked about the problems of the world.

One day came the end...

For many of us it often times meant long stays in hospitals..after the first "activities explosion". We came out of it the easy way...

Now, when I read the prison manuscript, I am aware that I used so many short sentences and many exclamation marks. This is contrary to my normal style of writing. Perhaps it is a result of the prison atmosphere and the life style there...Everyone who is locked up for a long period of time has a need for "every day philosophy"! The mind is filled with so many thoughts...It is the small every day things that play the leading role...Our world is so little, the surroundings so naked and cold, the energy insufficient to make a complete line of thoughts...Instead come exclamation marks...

A long time in prison will always change a person in one way or another.

You experience a life style deeply humiliating that most of us never had any feeling with. Prisons in all countries are closed to ordinary people. One may have a bad feeling in passing these grim buildings with bars on the windows, but actually know very little about the life behind the walls...Why shouldn't we be interested, after all they are fellow citizens... Are the prisons administered properly? In the best way? I am convinced that in a prison administered in the old fashioned way, with prisoners isolated and passive, with no contact with actual life cannot cope with reality in a responsible way once they return to a normal life outside the walls. It is easy to make a model prisoner of a criminal. This had been done hundreds of years in hundreds of prisons with old fashioned methods and stupid methods. That type of prisoner will never make it on his own once outside.... Fortunately, many countries have changed their ideas, especially noticeable in the years after the war, in our homeland also...But we have a long way to go before we reach the same standards of our neighbor country...Sweden...

For political prisoners to share quarters with criminals is not a German phenomenon only. It is common practice in many countries, including ours. One does not have to live very long in that type of milieu before one realizes that this is a shameful system for modern society. You are dealing with two entirely different categories of people. Most of the political prisoners have a background that is tied to a firm national way of life, while most of the criminals have broken the law by stealing for gain or even committing murder. The political prisoners do not feel any shame because of being in the same cells with criminals. The shame belongs to a society that does not recognize the difference in treatment of a political prisoner and an ordinary criminal.

Associating with many that lost their lives by being executed gave me an absolute assurance that a death sentence does not belong in a civilized society, neither in peace time nor in war. They went to death upright and proud. It was the wives and children that were punished, a punishment of a lifetime for people not guilty of any crime. This form of punishment is barbaric. In the first years after the war it was almost considered treason to express this sort of an opinion. At this time (twenty years since the ending of the war) it ought to be possible to debate the question.

Life in prison taught me one lesson, how primitive and alike we react when confronted with one of the most bitter problems of the world, hunger. I am not thinking about the pleasant feeling we might experience after a few hours without food, knowing that a good meal is awaiting us. This is not hunger.

I am thinking of living on a minimum ration for weeks, months, years, without any reasonable hope of having enough to eat. The body virtually becomes a skeleton...you lose the power of resistance and the will to live, the smallest incident can break you and life is snuffed out...It is then that the dreams of food come...day and night. Food is the only subject discussed. This is the time when otherwise normal people write down recipes for food in the hymnal, although they know full well it is impossible to practice any cooking from these recipes or others...It is just comforting to have them written down!

Never again will I be surprised if persons living with permanent hunger will act desperate...

WE MEET AGAIN

I met Hiltgunt again a few years later in America. As always she was convinced it was fate that had something to do with our meeting...I had taken a weekend trip from Washington to Baltimore. On my way from the railroad station to the Norwegian Seamen's Hotel I was stopped by a car. At the wheel sat Hiltgunt! She was on her way to a church where she was to take part in a wedding of a young couple that had been living together for many years. The man was a sailor and had never remained long enough in the state of New York to establish legal residence to be able to get married. The couple had now gone to Baltimore where the law was more liberal! Thus they would be able to straighten out their marital status. I came along to the church to take part in the ceremony.

To tell the truth we had all we could do to convince the pastor that Hiltgunt and I were not the couple to be married. The engaged couple were delayed, and the pastor was obsessed with the idea of getting the whole thing over with. Eventually we made him understand that we were not the right couple!

The wedding was performed, the reception held...at last...

Why did Hiltgunt decide to live in America as a doctor? During the war she had felt that she was a part of "the hidden Germany". Why not help in peacetime?

It would seem that Hiltgunt had all the credentials to assist in building a new democratic Germany. She was not....

After a couple of years in Germany she completed her medical education in Norway and Denmark and emigrated to the USA. For political minded people this may be difficult to understand, but she was completely free of any political ambitions. She never carried a flag for any politician! When she did her great and daring part during the war it was not because she wanted to play a part in the political arena. She simply registered her personal objection to a most inhumane system.

The key word for her was the human contact regardless of nationality or race. She received a shock in the first years after the war when she lived in occupied Germany. Norwegian prisoner friends came to visit her, most of them in officers' uniforms. They wanted to continue the contact from the war into peacetime, but Allied "control officers" hunted them down. It was not permissible for Allied personnel to associate with the Germans. The rules for fraternizing applied to all. During all the years Hiltgunt had been a part of tearing down the walls between people of different nationalities. With great danger to her life she had established contact with "the enemy". Now, she herself was hit "by the men of victory" that ruled no contact with her own people! Neither she nor we were ready to accept this concept of collective guilt.

On the other side, most of her countrymen did not have much sympathy for the activities she took part in during the war. She became neither bitter nor disappointed over this. She had never done her work with the idea of getting personal recognition.

When the war was over with at last, she had only one wish: to tie the strings to the way of life that so brutally were snapped when as a nineteen year old youngster she met the Nazi regime with all its horrors.

This and many other subjects we discussed after the wedding in Baltimore. I remember one of her comments in the wee hours of the night:

"At one time you were a part of a group ready to give me the wings of an angel. Now you have to help me cut them off. I don't want to be an angel, only a normal person."

TWO VISITS

It so happens that I have, a few times, been inside prison walls...but as a visitor...It has always been very depressing. It seems as if the prison administration's main objective, in war as in peace, is to create disciplined, subservient and obedient prisoners. A process of degradation.

It is especially two prison visits that I will never forget.

The summer of 1945 I was in America as a journalist. I was met by a friendliness and warm hospitality that had no equal. But at one place it became too much of a good thing! It was in the city of Wichita, Kansas where one of the city officials also was the head of the prison system. He did not give up before he was permitted to show us his pride...the prison..

We came to the prison at ten in the evening, at the time when the guards were changing. Together with a few others I was seated in a dark room with four guards who had placed their guns on a table in front of us. In the room was a podium arrangement and a spotlight focused on same and a glass wall in front of this.

The parade of prisoners began. One by one came into the spotlight. Very politely and gracefully did they present themselves, giving their number and name and told us about the crime they had committed...before a high spirited audience...There was no need of the guns...

My mind became upset, I had the feeling it was my friends standing in the searchlight on the podium, and my enemies sitting in the room with the guns.

I became nauseated and uncomfortable. I had to get out and vomit! I still feel nauseated and uncomfortable whenever I think of this humiliating parade.

By coincidence I once again had the horrendous experience of stepping down from the high pedestal to see a parade of prisoners...

This was in Rendsburg.

It was an irony of fate that the Norwegian Headquarters during the occupation of Germany after the war was located right in the city where so many Norwegian prisoners had served a long period in prison. I stayed with the Norwegian general only a stone's throw from my old prison. In spite of my better judgement, the general persuaded me to go with him to the prison. The director was standing on the steps to greet "honored and prominent guests", next to him was a small army of guards to take us around the institution.

Everything was arranged to make the performance as perfect as possible. I could not help thinking of the prisoners that certainly must have been busy for many days scrubbing the washbasins and polishing the shoes to be as shiny as possible the same way I had to do it when visitors were expected. In the long cold hallways the prisoners were lined up with their faces against the wall. Exactly like the old days. I experienced a humiliation to a greater extent than at the time I myself was one of those standing with my nose against the wall.

I could only manage to go half the distance through the hallways. The director took me to his office. He had been so considerate that he had collected all the journals with records of the prisoners from the war. It was with a certain pride he showed me the remarks made about me while in prison. While it did mention that I received additional punishment for not having produced enough work while weaving, I must have improved, because the last comment said "Hat sich gut benommen"! In other words my behavior had been very satisfactory. Even I had become tyrannized to become a model prisoner.

I asked the director if they continued to have political prisoners in this prison.

"No, we have never had political prisoners here," said the director with a most surprised reaction.

Through the glasses of a prison director all prisoners look alike.

In war and in peace.....

NAMES OF FRIENDS

In the prison it was most practical to use the first name only of the prisoners and comrades we were together with. I have not been able to change this in the manuscript. Friends that have read the manuscript have expressed the desire to know the surname of the persons written about. I do therefore give the full name of the persons that in the book are only known by their first name.

Kristen	Dean Kristen Hatlevik, Bergen
Fenrik Harald	Officer Harald Skjold, Fana, Executed in 1941
Andreas	Medical Student Andreas Bertnes, Sandefjord
Viggo	Director Viggo Widerøe, Oslo
Otto	Dock Laborer Otto Hansen, Drammen
Kjell	Kjell Magnussen, Drammen
Ivar	Attorney of War Ivar Follestad
Sigurd	Journalist Sigurd Jacobsen, one the few that did what he planned to do in prison, become a farmer and fisherman!
Christian	Editor Christian Oftedal
Olaf	The skier Olaf Økeren, Baerum
Fredrik	Editor Fredrik Ramm
Gunnar	Jeweler Gunnar Carlsen
Ingvald	Cabinet Maker Ingvald Nordtvedt, Bergen
Paul	Editor Paul Hovding, Oslo
Arne	Shipowner Arne Bjørn Hansen
Bjarne	Bjarne Aasland, Jaeren
Hjalmar	Hjalmar Bergsjø