The Best of Two Worlds

"FREIHEIT, BILDUNG UND WOHLSTAND FÜR ALLE!" *

* FREEDOM, EDUCATION, AND WELL-BEING FOR ALL

Forty-Eighters – 1848 through today

The year of the revolutions began in January, in a small country of little importance. Then the protests spread to the region's largest and most important state, toppling a regime that had seemed firmly entrenched. The effect was far-reaching. The air was filled with talk of liberty and freedom. Street protests cropped up everywhere, challenging the rule of autocrats and monarchs, who watched from their palaces with fear.

That could be a description of events in Tunisia and Egypt as those countries' peaceful revolutions have inspired and galvanized people across the Middle East. In fact, it refers to popular uprisings 162 years earlier that began in Sicily and France. The revolutions of 1848, as they were called, were remarkably similar in mood to what is happening right now in the Middle East. (They were dubbed the springtime of peoples by historians at the time.) The backdrop then, as now, was a recession and rising food prices. The monarchies were old and sclerotic. The young were in the forefront. New information technologies — mass newspapers! — connected the crowds.

—Fareed Zakaria, Time Magazine, 28 February, 2011

"The Legacy of 1848: Transplanted Ideas and Values in America's Past and Present" celebrates what many historians believe to be America's most remarkable and unique immigrant group, the "Forty-Eighters." After unsuccessfully fighting for freedom with pen and sword in Europe, this group of several thousand refugees arrived in the United States between 1847 and 1856. They proceeded to provide an intellectual transfusion that had a pronounced effect on the political and social history of America during one of its most critical periods.

Many of the Forty-Eighters hailing from northern Germany and Hungary chose Iowa as their adopted home. There, some of their best and brightest began using their finely honed journalistic skills to argue for the freedoms and liberties so dear to them. Ironically, these recent immigrants' patriotism was grounded more in the bedrock beliefs of America's founding fathers than in many of the attitudes in the United States at the time.

Although far-reaching and profound, the extraordinary legacy of the Forty-Eighters is little understood by most Ameri-

cans, many of whom are three or four generations removed from their own immigrant ancestors. The overarching purpose of the "Legacy of 1848" conference is to identify and come to grips with the important, timeless legacy left to all us by the Forty-Eighters.

While Gitta and I feel privileged to enjoy the best *of* two worlds, the group of European immigrants arriving in the United States following the democratic revolutions of 1848 (the "Forty-Eighters") were definitely the best *in* two worlds.

Before this backdrop, we are dreaming of an Institute for German-American Forty-Eighter Studies.

Areas of Research of the Forty-Eighters' Institute:

- Forty-Eighter contributions to life in America (arts, education, politics, mores, social organizations, journalism, etc.)
- The acculturation of the Forty-Eighters: Lessons for today's immigrants
- Biographical sketches of Forty-Eighters
- German-American immigration experience
- Low German in America – Forty-Eighters as early social politicians and "Arbeiterbildungsvereine"
- "Freedom, Education, and Welfare for All": How would widely held Turner beliefs mesh with recent developments in the fields of permissible governmental intrusions in our lives, the often adversarial roles played by public education and private religious beliefs, and mandated health care programs?
- Were the events of 1848 (the "European Spring of Nations") a blueprint for today's "Arab Spring"?

English Interview Ruediger Lentz, director, Geman-American Heritage Museum, Washington, D.C. German Interview

Many ethnic-American associations and clubs seem to be heading down the road to oblivion. Of course, from our point of view, any marginalization of German-American groups is especially distressing. This makes support of the few "lighthouse projects" with a truly promising future all the more important and worthwhile. These institutions embrace a modern approach to preserving German-American history, while at the same time stressing the importance of a close relationship and heightened cooperation between twenty-first century Germany and the United States. Included among these beacons of German-American historical preservation and cultural interaction are the German-American Heritage Museum in Washington, DC; the German American Heritage Center in Davenport, Iowa; and Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa.

One doesn't need to look very hard to find evidence of the atrophy of German-American clubs and organizations. Over the past several decades, the immigrant contributions of forefathers have become less identifiable and more diluted in the great American melting pot. In part, this is understandable given both the growth and aging of the general population. Nevertheless, this disturbing trend is reversible. The key, of course, is education. Newer generations must be educated as to the remarkable cultural contributions of their forebears and how those precious gifts helped mold them and the country they call home. This all-important knowledge must be presented in a modern, appealing, and relevant way.

A growing number of German political and opinion leaders have observed the emasculation of German-American clubs and associations. They worry that the traditionally close transatlantic ties based on our common roots are loosening. Those roots may be deep, but they still require nourishment. That is why forward-thinking institutions like Wartburg College — a college that is working to resurrect the contributions of important immigrant groups like the Forty-Eighters from the dustbin of history — deserve our continued support.

The concluding point I wish to emphasize is that Scott County German-Americans were key cogs in vouching at a critical moment for a mid-19th Century Presidential candidate, a late 20th Century candidate, with carryover implications for his oldest son who became the first President of the 21st Century. They then split their votes for the first African-American to occupy the White House.

No one should underestimate the importance of individual political engagement and the power of citizenship. Citizens of German heritage in Scott County, Iowa are testament to this American phenomenon.

Thank you.

—Jim Leach, Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities

The Folly of Freedom without Social Responsibility

In democracies, freedom is often viewed as a license for carte blanche pursuit of egoistic interests. Nowhere was this demonstrated more forcefully than in the financial arena where unscrupulous members of banks, investment houses, and insurance companies engaged in behavior so egregiously self-serving and shortsighted as to precipitate a worldwide financial crisis. Through naked corruption and irresponsible speculation, a small group of individuals amassed huge profits at the expense of clients that had placed their trust in them. In essence, free market capitalism benefitting society as a whole was replaced by a rigged market enriching only a few.

The financial crisis resulted from a widespread cancer of moral irresponsibility. This cancer will continue to grow until there is a radical awakening of the world's conscience and a collective understanding that freedom is unsustainable if we are only responsible to our selves. Conscientious, civic-minded people should consider the prevailing aversion to constructive politics and the resulting apathy as a call to arms to search for lasting solutions that benefit all.

Enduring solutions do not require the individual to give up his cultural identity. They do require an acknowledgement that the concept of freedom is meaningless without social responsibility. These two basic tenets are the yin and yang of any civilized society. One without the other is meaningless and unsustainable. Laws must reflect the democratic values of human dignity, free speech, help to those in need, respectful and civil dialog among people of diverse backgrounds, gender equality, and a government that is neutral in religious and philosophical matters, as long as these do not undermine its very existence.

With the foregoing in mind, a common European constitution with a global vision would be an important first step. The guiding principles on which to base this constitution are not new. They can be found in the ideas of the European Enlightenment of the 18th century, concepts which form the bedrock of America's Constitution and the Basic Law of the German Republic.

The fight for political freedom was a powerful motive for many of the almost 500,000 men and women who left Germany and Europe between 1848 and 1850 to immigrate to America. Following the failed democratic revolutions in their home country, these "Forty Eighters" took a stand in their new country for freedom from unjustified and unwarranted governmental intrusion and state-sanctioned discrimination. These courageous individuals can serve as role models as we seek a new path. In our search for new answers, we can draw inspiration from their conviction that each of us is imbued with inherent moral values that we must exemplify in both our public and private lives.

Postscript: Call for Action

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Bedside Monologue

1995: A few months before Gitta’s car accident, near Holstein, Iowa.

English

Bedside Monologue

(Prologue about our German-American experiences)

It was March 30, 1996, in the waiting room of the hospital in Sioux City, Iowa. A worried looking pastor approached me with the words, "Mr. Reppmann, I'm sorry to have to tell you your wife might not survive." It was a terrible moment. Only a few yards from where I was standing, Gitta was fighting for her life. I could do nothing but helplessly pace and wait. The operation after the car accident lasted fourteen tortuous hours. Fortunately, Gitta was unaware of what was happening and would lie in a coma for the next four weeks.

As the doctors prepared for the operation, something happened that would have caused Germans to shake their heads. A friendly nurse said, "Come with me. You can talk to your wife."

I stood at her bedside and in a long monologue, spoke to the silent person lying there, recalling our recent marriage in Las Vegas, painting our common future in bright colors, and hoping she would not only live but be returned to health.

I don't know if my voice penetrated her coma's silent armor. In any case, the doctors and nurses in usually conservative mid-America believed it did. And so, while I comforted my wife, the medical staff comforted me.

Three hours earlier, Gitta had been in an accident in our old 1976 Ford, which had been converted to a camper. Shattered jawbones had penetrated her brain and blocked her airways. Emergency personnel gave her oxygen in the ambulance. Immediately on arriving at the hospital, a doctor performed a tracheotomy to allow Gitta to breathe on her own.

I was completely unaware of all this.

It was a cold and wet gray day, and the new snow had turned to gray slop on the roads. Gitta and I were meeting members of the German Bundestag's parliamentary subcommittees for Agriculture and Nutrition at the Sioux City airport. A chauffeured bus provided by Chicago's German General Consulate waited for them in front of the arrival hall. Three Americans got into our van with Gitta to follow the bus.

They were headed for Holstein, a town of about fifteen hundred west of Sioux City, which I'd experienced during earlier visits. The German politicians would stay with private families for two days to learn first-hand about operating a large hog farm. I'd been instrumental in getting the group to visit America's Heartland. My advice, "You'll never learn anything about real-life in Washington," had apparently resonated with the Germans.

The bus travelled along Highway 20, an asphalt ribbon stretching all the way across Iowa. I stood next to the driver

at the front of the bus, talking into the microphone, telling our guests about the country, and explaining the program we'd prepared for them. The tires gripped the road, causing the slush to shoot out from under the wheels. "Good tires," I said to myself, thinking no more about it.

A little more than an hour later, we arrived at the hog farm. Before introducing the travelers to their hosts, we decided to look around the farm. I had just pulled on my rubber boots when a stranger approached and gave me the news: "Your wife has had an accident." In the same breath, the stranger offered to drive me the forty-six miles back to the hospital in Sioux City.

As agreed, Gitta had followed the bus in our Ford. Iowa is as flat as our home in Schleswig-Holstein, where we say on Monday we can see who is coming to visit on Friday. But about a half mile before Holstein, there is a small hill that was being buffeted by severe wind gusts. That wind and the slush conspired to cause the crash. I later learned Gitta had been blown into the oncoming lane and careened thirty feet down into a gully. The police report dryly observed, "No excessive speed." The speedometer was frozen at 55 miles per hour; Gitta's driving had not contributed to the crash.

On the road to Sioux City, we passed a tow truck with the wreck. The van that had served us well for so long was now a mass of torn and crumpled metal.

It was Gitta's good fortune that a sheriff's deputy had been only a few hundred yards behind Gitta. Shortly before the rise, the van disappeared from his view. Reaching the top of the hill, he saw the wreck and immediately radioed for an ambulance. I later found out what happened next. A helicopter picked up the three Americans, who although bloodied, had fortunately escaped serious injury. Fate had a different plan for Gitta, who'd received severe head injuries when she hit the steering wheel. Pinned in the wreckage, she lay prostrate, her jawbone splintered like a piece of rotten wood. As her rescuers worked to cut her free, precious minutes passed. In the meantime, a heavy fog descended, making it impossible for a second helicopter to land. The only way to get Gitta to the distant hospital would be by ambulance over the same roads that had caused the accident.

Thank God!! Gitta survived. But she still suffers from the aftereffects. She remained in intensive care in Sioux City for four weeks before she could be moved. I decided to have her taken to what I think is the world's best health care facility, the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. We got to know the dedicated doctors, nurses, and other staff members, especially the then rehab clinic chief Bob DePompolo and his wife Teddy. We became good friends and on occasion, join them for Thanksgiving turkey.

A Dinner with Consequences

Thanksgiving Day 1995 had long-lasting consequences. That was the day I gave a lecture entitled "Democratic Revolutionaries of 1848 from Schleswig-Holstein in the USA" at the German Embassy in Washington. The talk was part of an exhibition titled "The Influence of German

According to fifty-four-year-old Flensburg historian Dr. Joachim "Yogi" Reppmann, Low German speakers like Iowa native Glenn Sievers are slowly becoming a dying breed in the United States. Reppmann should know: he's researched the Low German phenomenon in America for the past thirty-three years.

Insatiable curiosity and wanderlust resulted in the north German spreading his wings at an early age. His boundless passion for both his native Schleswig-Holstein and the United States jumps off the pages of the many books he's authored. Since his college days, when he worked on a PhD

In 1978, we discovered Iowa farmers talking excellent, high-quality, superb Low German—even though they were born in America. Unfortunately, today that beautiful language is dying off. I found this article from Wulf Buschardt on the web site www.germerica.net.

Immigrants on American Agriculture." The organizer, Jürgen Heitmann, had been sent to the U.S. by the German Agricultural Chamber of Commerce and had an office in the Embassy. After my talk, he invited us to dinner at his home, but Gitta was too tired and returned to the hotel. I spent a pleasant evening with Jürgen, his wife, and Iowa farmers Glenn Sievers and Bill Storjohann. Both men's ancestors had immigrated to Iowa from Schleswig-Holstein. Although they couldn't speak High German, they frequently spoke Plattdeutsch and were fluent in the North German dialect, having learned it from their parents and grandparents. Storjohann was a rustic fellow, who delighted in entertaining the little group with jokes in Plattdeutsch.

Sometime during the evening, Heitmann informed me he would be hosting a visit from German politicians specializing in agricultural policies. While we talked, the idea they should see American agriculture firsthand began to develop.

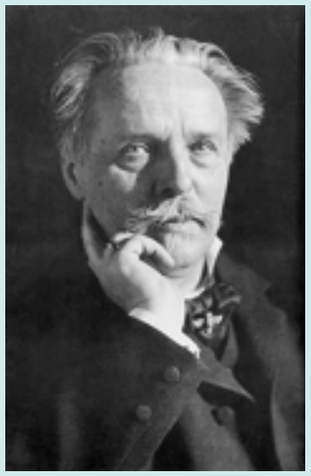
"Say, Yogi, can you set that up?" I immediately accepted, thinking about the hog farm I've previously visited in Holstein.

This was the first decision of the evening. The second quickly followed after Storjohann asked me, "Yogi, Gitta is such a nice gal. Why are both of you still single?" Returning to the hotel, I relayed Storjohann's question to Gitta. Her reaction was simple and immediate: "I've often asked myself the same question…."

Telling no one, we flew sixteen hundred miles to Las Vegas on short notice. There, we were married under the bright lights shortly after midnight on November 27, 1995.

Gitta and I were but one of around 100,000 couples tying the knot each year in Las Vegas. After standing in line for two hours on Clark Avenue with many other happy couples, it was our turn to come before the Justice of the Peace. A few minutes later, we were man and wife. No longer was it Yogi Reppmann and Gitta Ortmann. From here on, it would be Herr und Frau Reppmann. Little did

Tall Tales of the Wild West: The Stories of Karl May



The novels of German author Karl May served as trail guides to the mystique of the American West and even today are celebrated in European festivals and theme parks. His books have outsold those of Louis L'Amour and Zane Grey combined and were beloved by the likes of Albert Einstein, Herman Hesse, Fritz Lang, and Franz Kafka.

But there's a hitch: May never visited the West. Nevertheless, his faith in the land of cowboys and Indians nurtured an entire continent's love for it. From Nov. 18, 2012, to Feb. 9, 2014, the New Mexico History Museum/Palace of the Governors celebrates May's life, legacy and lasting impact in an

either of us know how important this would be several months later on a lonely, windswept hill near Holstein, Iowa.

After Gitta's accident, her first husband demanded she be transported back to Germany. Thanks to the marriage certificate, I could prevent this. Without it, I would have been legally helpless.

An innocent question from a Plattdeutsch-speaking Iowa farmer, a joyous Las Vegas marriage, and a gust of wind on slush-covered Iowa Road had intersected in an unforeseen and hideous way. It would be up to the wonderful staff of the Mayo Clinic to help us start putting the pieces of our shattered lives back together.

The Best of Two Worlds

Because I don't have a green card, we live half the year in Germany and the other half in Northfield, Minnesota. When I'm in Flensburg, I look forward to being in Northfield, and when I'm in Minnesota, I look forward to being in my home state of Schleswig-Holstein. For Gitta and me, our life on two continents is the best of two worlds; our emotional batteries are always kept fully charged by the biannual change of scenery. If I could only live in America, I would miss Schleswig-Holstein, the land between two seas, and if I could only live in Germany, I would miss the beautiful expanse of the Midwest. As much as we love our beloved Flensburg, when we deplane in Minneapolis, we experience a liberation of sorts. We've escaped the narrow confines of Germany for six months of America's wide vistas. But when it comes time to leave, I know how happy I'll be to return to my homeland in Germany. Yes, we truly enjoy the best of two worlds.

In my wildest dreams, I never imagined I would live like this. Blame Karl May for my early desire to see America. Although May was one of the world's most successful and prolific writers of westerns, almost no one in America has ever heard of him. Even though I was thin and shy as a

young boy, I never avoided a fight. I imagined myself as May's character Old Shatterhand, strong as a bear and riding across the prairie on his horse Iltschi alongside his friend, the Apache chief Winnetou. The sofa in my parents' living room served as the buffalo I'd killed, shielding me from the enemy tribe's fierce attack.

Anytime there mischief surfaced, little Yogi seemed to be in the middle of it. When I was eight, I had a serious conflict with my parents, my school, and the police. Two friends and I stole some chalk from our elementary school and ran across the schoolyard to the Auguste-Viktoria School where we drew swastikas on the walls. We thought it was hilarious, but the police had a far different opinion. Within a few hours, they were standing on our doorstep. As you can imagine, my parents made big deal out of it and dealt with us like young Nazis, even though my schoolyard chums and I didn't have a clue about the symbol's dark meaning.

Mother Hilde managed to sweep the subject under the rug. A pragmatist through and through, she marched straight to the police station with me in tow and a bottle of Hennessy in her purse. The cognac changed hands, and I was impelled to issue a contrite apology accompanied by a promise I'd be good from then on.

Chalkboard swastikas weren't the only challenges my mother faced in raising me. Mealtimes were always a contentious combat between the two of us. I was seldom hungry, and no matter what she put on the table, my reaction was that of the "Soup-Kaspar" from the "Struwwelpeter" children's' tales: "No, I don't like that." How things have changed. Today, I have to sweat a lot not to become a couch potato.

As was typical for the family of a German official — my father worked for AOK, one of Germany's largest health insurers — our daily routine was planned with Prussian precision. Lunch and supper were served at a fixed time, as it never would have occurred to my mother to delay a meal by even a few minutes. She was just as exacting when it came to education. If her two sons were not earning exemplary grades in school, she opened her oh-so-tight purse strings to pay for tutoring.

During my childhood, it was unusual for a middle class West German family to have no telephone, television, or car. Yes, the vaunted German "economic miracle" had passed by our house on Professor Mensingstraße 14. Nevertheless, looking back on those days long since passed, I now know what a wonderful childhood I enjoyed. It

wasn't until much later that I realized how rocky my parents' marriage had been. My older brother Bernd and I were probably the glue that tenuously held the marriage together. After Bernd and I struck out on our own, the marriage began its inevitable decline. By the last year of my mother's life, she no longer spoke to my father.

"To one whom God wants to bless..."

Some of my earliest childhood memories are about travel. Every year we'd visit my maternal grandmother and grandaunt at their home in Jena, East Germany. Although the trip was interminable, it was always exciting. Just like in the movies, the border patrol boarded our train at the Iron Curtain, entering communistic East Germany. They werde standing before us with stern faces and submachine guns at the ready.

These trips are forever etched in my memory. We set out on the first train at 4:26 in the morning. We then changed trains in either Büchen or Bebra and finally arrived at grandma's about 11:00 p.m. Today, the trip takes only six and a half hours.

I probably inherited my wanderlust from my grandfather, a charismatic man of pious beliefs, who possessed a beautiful singing voice. I still recall the words sung in his rich, baritone voice: "The one to whom God wants to bless, He sends out into the world." Somehow, my grandfather had sensed what the future had in store for me.

Grandpa's travels resulted not from any wanderlust, but from the nature of his employment with the Reichsbahn (German Railway). I always listened attentively to his travel stories, especially those concerning his service during World War I, during which he lost his right leg near Paris. In one of these stories, he told me about his friendship with a superior. Ironically, this same man would one day save my mother from being molested by Soviet soldiers at the end of World War II.

Before My Time

My mother's horrific experiences in Potsdam on the nights of April 14 and 15, 1945, would haunt her until her death in May of 2011. She was a Fourier (food supplier) in the Krampnitz Kaserne military complex in Potsdam. While riding the streetcar from Berlin back to Potsdam on the night of April 14, the air raid sirens sounded. She took cover in a trench next to the station at Babelsberg, a neighborhood of Potsdam famous for its

film studios. Future Hollywood luminaries Billy Wilder, Peter Lorre, Ernst Lubitsch, Fritz Lang, Marlene Dietrich, Josef von Sternberg, and Fred Zinnemann had all left Babelsberg well in advance of this night to escape the Nazis.

While my mother cowered in the trench, British bombers unloaded seventeen hundred tons of bombs on the city, killing nearly sixteen hundred and making another sixty thousand homeless. The attack was part of the British Air Ministry's "Area Bombing Directive" of February 14, 1942. The thrust of this directive was to destroy the morale of the enemy civilian population, especially that of industrial workers.

When the all clear sounded, my mother staggered exhaustedly through the rubble-covered streets of Potsdam, passing the charred skeletons of streetcars and truck, dead animals, charred corpses, burning houses, and fellow citizens dazedly wandering about. The stench of destruction was inescapable as the night of April 14 faded into the morning of April 15. As my mother surveyed the devastating destruction of the night before, she remembered it was her birthday. How insignificant that once happy day now seemed. Her life would never again be the same.

February 1945: Bombing of Dresden

On April 22, five days before the Russians marched into Potsdam, mother's unit moved to the Grenzland Kaserne (frontier barracks) in Flensburg. As it passed through Schwerin, another crisis arose. Hitler and long-time mistress Eva Braun had committed suicide a few hours after marrying one another. Admiral Dönitz had become the Third Reich's new Führer and was en route to Flensburg to form a "new government."

In Schwerin, my mother and all the other women were made involuntary Red Cross nurses. Even though completely untrained, they did their best to take care of badly wounded soldiers laid out on the steps of the Schwerin castle. Amazingly, the officer in charge was the man who had been my grandfather's friend during World War I. Now a general, he ordered my mother to remain with her unit, enabling her to end her odyssey by making it to the city on the fjord by the Danish border.

Mother's long, strange journey had actually begun a year earlier in her hometown of Schneidemühl (now part of Poland). As the war wound down, her parents had fled westward, landing in Jena quite by accident. Jena seemed like it would provide a respite from the horrors of war, as it had surrendered to the Americans without a fight. On July 1,

1945, however, that apparent respite was shattered when the American GIs departed and the Soviets took control. Jena was now part of the Soviet Occupied Zone. It would eventually become part of the communistic East Germany, so-called, German Democratic Republic, behind the Iron Curtain, and the place where I spent my childhood summer vacations.

The American Image

When in Flensburg, I had to go to my friends' houses if I wanted to watch TV. While visiting my grandparents, however, I could watch TV to my heart's content. It was there in 1966 that I witnessed the famous "Wembly Goal" during the Soccer World Cup. But there was also the infamous "Schwarzer Kanal," an East German political propaganda program shot through the dark red lens of "real existing socialism." Viewers were informed that the Soviet Union was governed by "our peaceful friends" ("Learning from the Soviet Union means learning to be victorious"), while America was controlled by a group of bloody warmongers.

I entered my teenage years amidst stormy times. There were anti-war demonstrations in the United States, student riots and a general strike in Paris, mobs in Switzerland, and peace marches in democratic West Germany. In 1968, there were 27 successful or attempted aircraft hijackings from the USA to Cuba. The East German media, of course, took full advantage, recasting the hijackings as clear evidence that Americans had fled to Fidel Castro's Cuba to escape suppression by their own government. In reality, of course, these "political refugees" were left wing radicals and petty criminals trying to extort money from the airlines.

Youth were protesting everywhere and against everything. Flensburg, and especially my school (Altes Gymnasium, or Old Gym), followed suit. The targets of our protests were many and varied: the Vietnam War, higher fares on buses and streetcars, "old fogeys" in the educational sphere, and the Nazi past of our parents' generation. Emulating my rebellious older brother, I mixed in at every opportunity. Little "Yogi" was always "out front" in the street with his friends, but when the "Bulls" (our pejorative term for the police) showed up with their billy clubs, he disappeared behind his mother's apron.

It was not only our rebellious actions that displeased our

parents, but our appearance, as well. Our clothes and unkempt, shoulder-length hair also elicited harsh words from our conservative parents. One day, in a sudden and uncharacteristic attempt to establish authority, my father Ingo warned us, "As long as your feet are under my table, you

will obey!" Knowing our father's bark wasn't matched by his bite, my brother and I responded with uncontrollable laughter.

As the following episode illustrates, the mood was equally tense at our school. In anticipation of the visit of Adolf von Thadden, the head of the far-right political party NPD, another stone-throwing protest was announced. As my fellow students and I stood in the crowd, we observed our greatly disliked Religion and History teacher enter the building where the NPD was holding its meeting. Incensed at the teacher's action, a fellow thirteen-year-old and I seized the moment. After quickly drawing two sketches of the teacher in a Nazi steel helmet to highlight his right-wing beliefs, we snuck into the school and taped the sketches to one side of a folding blackboard.

The next morning, my co-conspirator took our seats in religion class. Our teacher entered the room, turned over the blackboard, and was confronted by his own caricature staring back at him. Cut to the quick, he paled and hurried silently from the room. During the coming days, the school administration tried everything to discover who the scoundrels were so they might be expelled. Luckily, my friend and I had told no one about our prank, not even my brother, and the whole thing ended with a whimper.

Several years ago, I confessed my youthful transgression to Tim Dallmann, who had taught at Altes Gymnasium in the late 1960s. He informed me that the teacher who'd been the target of our prank had even been allowed to quote Adolf Hitler at a teachers' conference without any consequences. Dallmann had felt powerless at the time. "We young teachers couldn't say much in those days." My conscious was now completely cleansed; perhaps my caricature had spoken for others unable to do so at that time.

Demonstrations marked the late 1960s and early 1970s. Opponents of "American Imperialism" filled the streets of West Berlin, a democratic free island surrounded by communistic East Germany. They demonstraters, mainly university students, were shouting "Ho-Ho-Ho-Chi-Minh" or "Ami go home." Paradoxically, these anti-American activists wore American-style clothes, listened to American music, and copied American protest tactics in staging their "sit-ins" and "go-ins." They believed pluralism was just a cover used by the capitalist class in its effort to oppress others. Ironically, their crusade against pluralism only

made West Germany more diverse and pluralistic than ever before.

After Martin Luther King's murder, track stars Tommy Smith and John Carlos embodied the struggle for "Black Power" and equal rights when they raised their black-gloved fists during the American national anthem at the Mexico City Olympics. Social and political unrest even penetrated the borders of the Soviet bloc, with the "Prague Spring" being the most well-known example. Closer to home, the Flower Power and Hippie movements agitated for sexual liberation, arguing that "sleeping more than once with the same person is selling out to the establishment."

I, too, was caught up in this vortex of protest, signing leaflets every day at school, often without reading them. At the same time, and much to chagrin and complete bewilderment of my friends, I vehemently defended my positive image of America.

I remained undeterred. From then until today, I am thankful to Americans for helping end hunger in Europe after the Second World War and securing West Berlin's freedom with the airlift in the late 1940s.