

# A LIBERATOR'S THOUGHTS

Harry J. Herder, Jr.

I thought of my German heritage, my Grandfather Hugo who had come to the United States from Germany while he was still a teenager, my mother's grandparents who had come over from Germany long before that...

I wondered...suppose my ancestors had not come to the United States; suppose they had stayed in Germany, and, through some fluke, the two people who had become my mother and father had met, and I had been born a German citizen. What would I be like? Would I be like the people who had instituted and guarded a place like Buchenwald? Could I have been that? Would I have been in the German army? The answer to the last question is obvious—certainly I would have been in the German army. But what kind of work would I have done? I hoped that I would not have been like most of the Germans I had seen. I could have accepted a likeness to some members of the German army whom we had fought, but there were many I would have been uncomfortable with. Much of what I had seen ran counter to everything my mother had brought me up believing.

Excerpted from "Liberation of Buchenwald" by Harry J. Herder, Jr. Full text available at [remember.org/liberators.html#Lib](http://remember.org/liberators.html#Lib).