Germany Essay, Research Paper

American Studies

December 10, 2000

Germany

Germany is a country located in Central Europe bordering the North Sea and the

Baltic Sea, between the Netherlands and Poland. The size of Germany is just a bit smaller

than Montana. The terrain consists of lowlands in the northern part, uplands in the center

area, and the Bavarian Alps in the southern region. The population as of nineteen ninety

five was approximately eighty-one thousand, three hundred and thirty- eight. The

religious preference in Germany is mostly Protestant and Roman Catholic. Germany is

mainly an industry based country. Most male adults would learn a trade such as

electrician to be their life long job.

The man I interviewed about his immigration from Germany in nineteen fifty two

is Heinz Ginsberg. Mr. Ginsberg was born in Nordlingen, Germany1. Not only did he live

in Germany but also Poland. In about nineteen twenty Mr. Ginsberg s parents filled out

an application for passage to the United States. After being interviewed and their request

accepted the family was sponsored by a company to travel to the United States on a Navy

ship. The process was called troop transport. The name of the organization is unsure

but it is certain that upon arriving in the United States the family was given two

apartments and twenty dollars to begin their new life. The reason for their leaving

Germany to live in a strange country was simply for a better life.

Germany s culture is different from that of the United States in many ways. In

Europe speaking is very formal. When addressing a person other than a close friend the

person s last name and title were always used unless they accept otherwise. However in

the United States we commonly address people by their first name. Another difference is

their holidays, like Christmas. December twenty fourth is when Christmas is celebrated

in Germany, therefor the twenty-third would be considered Christmas eve. On Christmas

eve there is a big meal followed by the lighting of the tree and opening of presents. The

twenty-fifth and twenty sixth are days they reserve for visiting friends and family.

The food in Germany is nothing like that of the food here. Upon arriving in the

United States Heinz first experienced American food. It didn t agree with him or the rest

of his family very well until they adjusted to it. One of the main differences between the

foods is the meat. There are many different kinds of meats in the United States , whereas

in Germany the variety isn t as diverse.

Schooling is yet another difference between the United States and Germany. In

Germany and Poland it was mandatory to have eight years of school. This eight years was

usually from the age of six until the age of fourteen. At fourteen most males began

working as an apprentice to a skilled worker or factory. The apprenticeship lasted four

years. The first year the apprentice would earn twenty five dollars a week, the second

he d earn fifty-five dollars a week, the third year would be seventy five, and the fourth

year the apprentices work would be reviewed to see how much he should earn.

In the years between nineteen thirty-seven and nineteen forty-seven Heinz and his

mother and brothers lived in Poland. While living in Poland with their German mother

during the war their father was working in a German concentration camp. Their father

was German-Jew who was only spared from death because of his working ability. Heinz

and his brothers weren t taken to a camp because they were only half German-Jews and

they were under the age of seventeen when their father was taken. In nineteen forty-seven

their father managed to escape the camp while it was being bombed and people were in a

panic.

Heinz and his older brother immigrated in February, his other brothers and

parents came over in May of the same year. The transport took seven days, before

arriving at a New York port. They did not have to go to Ellis Island or an immigrant

checkpoint in New York. From New York they were transported to Boston where they

were given the apartments. They lived among many other immigrants, many of whom

were Polish and had come over on the ship with them. Heinz has said the war didn t

influence their immigration because it had already come to an end when they left.

Of course there were setbacks as well as high points. The Ginsberg family did not

know a word of English when they first arrived. They spoke only German and some

Polish. In January of nineteen fifty three Heinz was drafted into the army. While in the

army he was taught English and received his citizenship. He was discharged in December

of nineteen fifty four about five days before Christmas. Before being drafted his first

job was in a garment factory in Boston. At this job he earned seventy-five cents an hour.

The second place he worked was a machine shop in Roxbury where he earned eighty-five

cents an hour. Both those jobs were largely employed by Polish immigrants. His third job

was with his father in the sign industry in Boston. His brother went on to own his own

sign shop at which Heinz later worked.

Normally, citizenship is received after five years of residency in the United

States. Every year in about January the immigrant must fill out a form giving an update

of their life in the past year. The form basically ask if there has been any criminal

problems, like speeding tickets, etc. However, Heinz received his citizenship in the army

after only two and a half years because of his service. While in the army he was sent to

France to work with post engineers.

From the start Heinz told me that he and his family traveled to the United States

for a better life. There are many opportunities in the United States that weren t open to

the family living in Germany. The pay here was better than in Germany and Poland and

there were more employment opportunities that required less skill. About eighty percent

of the immigrants who came to the United States between nineteen thirty and nineteen

sixty were from Europe, just like Heinz and his family.2 The idea of beginning a new life

was both appealing and surreal.

After living in the United States for almost fifty years now, Heinz doesn t regret

his decision one bit. When asked if he would do it all over again he said without

hesitation, No question asked. The reason; because in this country he found a home

and made a family. He was successful in the sign industry alongside his brother for many

years after being discharged from the army. In fact, it was just recently that he retired that

very profession. Ever since leaving Germany he has only been back twice. His brothers

still visit from time to time but they all agree that the United States is their home