

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON WILLIAM HERMANN'S (1895-1990)

William Hermanns (1895-1990) was one of the best personally informed authorities of the events in Germany from World War I through the Hitler era. In 1895 Wilhelm was born in Koblenz, Rhineland, Germany. He was orphaned at the age of 10 and raised by his aunt in a village by Mönchengladbach, Germany close to the Dutch border. In 1914 he enthusiastically enlisted as a nineteen-year-old volunteer in the Kaiser's army. He became one of the longest living survivors of the Battle of Verdun, where a million young German and French soldiers lost their lives. His book The Holocaust - from a Survivor of Verdun (Harper & Row, NY 1972) recounts some of his memorable war experiences to trace the path of discovering his conscience and spiritual guidance in the midst of what he called "the raging mass mind." He made a vow on the battlefield of Verdun, for which he was quite concerned to fulfill before his death.

Following Hermanns' return from forty months in French captivity in 1920, he resumed his studies at the Universities of Berlin, Munich and Frankfurt, and, in 1926 under the tutelage of Franz Oppenheimer, received his doctorate in Sociology. While awaiting a promised post to open in the League of Nations, he was active in the League for Human Rights, in the Walter Rathenau Society, and in the Alexander von Humboldt Club, with the goal of creating a united Europe. At this time, he also gained a literary reputation with his poetry and educational plays written for Berlin Radio.

Dr. Hermanns' 1930 broadcast "Genius and Tenacity," about his conversation with Einstein, made him suspect with the ever more popular Nazi Party. After Hitler came in power, Hermanns' anti-war poetry caused his poetry and manuscripts to be seized and thrown onto the house-high *auto de fé* of books before the University of Berlin on May 10, 1933. He witnessed Goebbels shouting his "Inquisition" speech as the students in brown uniforms marched and sang around the fire.

In January 1934 Dr. Hermanns fled Germany, and as a refugee in Lisbon, Paris and London, taught languages and literature. In 1937 he was allowed entrance into the United States and worked at first in the New York Institute for the Blind, and then, thanks to his article "The Principles of Teaching" published in the journal Education in September 1939, was invited by Prof. Sorokin to lecture and research at Harvard University. During the Second

World War, he worked in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in Washington, DC, in the rank of a captain. IN 1945 upon hearing of the death of his sister and niece, 35 other relatives and over 200 friends in Nazi concentration camps, he moved to California to retreat from the world as a night watchman in a Christian Science sanatorium.

Through his contemplation and academic acquaintances, especially his friendship with Einstein (described in Einstein and the Poet - In Search of the Cosmic Man (Branden Press, Brookline Village, MA, 1983), he decided to continue with his mission of teaching the importance of the conscience's guidance, inclusive cosmic religious feelings and the World Youth Friendship Parliament. In 1946 he was appointed Professor of German Language and Literature at San Jose State College (now University) to serve until 1965, when he became emeritus professor. From 1973-1984 he was a Visiting Scholar in the Hoover Institution for War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University.

Hermanns' other published works include: *Passion & Compassion* (1948); Mary and the Mockers (Our Sunday Visitor, Huntington, IN, 1953); "*Die Feder stockt*" (pre-published excerpt from Seelenhunger - Erlebnisse und Gedichte, Verlag Rudolf Riethausen, Hanau, 1983). He has numerous English and German unpublished manuscripts and poems. In 1977 President Walter Scheel of the Federal Republic of Germany awarded him lifelong help from the Presidential German Artist Aid Fund.

In 1983 the Einstein-Hermanns Foundation was incorporated by Professor Hermanns and international friends to foster reliance on intuition for intercultural exchange and understanding. Through grassroots efforts the World Youth Friendship Parliament was inaugurated on July 1, 1988 at the seaside Villa Muramaris on the Swedish island Gotland in the Baltic Sea. In September 1989 the Mayor of Mönchengladbach honored him for his life's dedication to reconciliation between Jews and Christians at a city-sponsored reunion of its citizens who fled the Nazis, and on the following day the Mayor of Verdun awarded him the Verdun Medal of Honor for his dedication to the reconciliation between the French and Germans.

William Hermanns transitioned 7 months later on April 6, 1990 in San Jose, California.