



Liberated: A Novel of Germany, 1945

Steve Anderson

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Can a lone American captain rescue justice in war-torn Germany?

It's May 1945, the war's just over, and Harry Kaspar, an American captain in Germany, is about to take a new posting in the US occupation—running a Bavarian town named Heimgau. When Harry loses the command to Major Membre, he'll do almost anything to win the job back.

When Harry discovers a horrific scene—three German men tortured and murdered—he reckons that solving the crime could teach the conquered townspeople about American justice, as well as help him reclaim that better posting. The only problem is that Harry's quest for the real killer will lead him straight back to his commander, Membre, and eventually to his mentor, a can-do rebel US colonel named Spanner. Spanner is a gangster run rampant, plundering the war-torn land for all its grim worth.

Harry's lover, Katarina, a gutsy German actress, helps him realize he must fight back. Recognizing that absolute power corrupted and then destroyed Major Membre and Colonel Spanner, Harry takes it upon himself to overcome any obstacle that gets in his way and set a new American example by which a terrorized town and a mix of battered peoples can rise up from the ashes of a brutal, demoralizing war.

"If you like reading about World War II, you will enjoy reading about its immediate aftermath. If you like the noir novels and films of the mid-20th century, you will enjoy the prose and the femme fatale of *Liberated*." —*Historical Novels Review*, Historical Novel Society

"Brilliant, frightening, and, for me, too reminiscent of my USO tour in Kessell in 1945/6. Here is the compelling, always frightening, reality of the unwanted conqueror, the American victor in enemy country, once homeland for many GIs—hated yet vital, trying to stay ahead of the dangers, violence, and corruption—and always the sour taste of combat or revenge lurking in every survivor on all sides. Steve Anderson has revealed the endgame of war, tinged with GI passion—a passion twisted to violence by so many who did not want to change."

—Maria Riva, bestselling author of *Marlene Dietrich*

Liberated: A Novel of Germany, 1945 Details

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From Reader Review Liberated: A Novel of Germany, 1945 for online ebook

John Carpenter says

Liberated, A Novel of Germany, 1945, by Steve Anderson

Liberated is fiction, a novel, but it is very well-informed by history. The action is immediate, closely observed, and fast-moving. But if it is “fiction” it is based on extensive research and experience. The beginning of the narrative launches several plots all at once: a young American Captain has been appointed Commanding Officer (CO) of a German town in 1945. “Within minutes I’d be running a whole Bavarian town on my own.” It is a tall order. He is a recent arrival, before that moment he hadn’t taken part in the war’s action. But he speaks fluent German; his German parents came to the US when he was a child. He quickly finds himself immersed in at least half-a-dozen conflicts. If the war is formally finished, it continues in many disguised ways among the German inhabitants who have very different allegiances, priorities, and cliques. Most inhabitants of the town have adopted new disguises to cope with the times under a veneer of friendliness to the Americans.

Two unexplained mysteries confront the young American Captain. During his first day in the town he discovers three bodies on a road. One is still alive, he has a concentration camp number tattooed on his arm. When the Captain returns later to give help and identify them, they have completely disappeared. A second mystery opens in the early pages of the novel when the narrator hears the whistle of freight cars passing nearby. However, he is unable to discover where the train was going or even what tracks it was using. Only later in the novel it turns out that the freight cars were laden with valuable art works. Taken by the Germans? By the SS still secretly active? By renegade Americans? In 1945 there were countless valuable collections of art in Germany owned by Nazis who aggressively stole and confiscated, mostly from Jewish owners. A reader familiar with “The Rape of Europa,” a book and popular DVD based on it, will be acquainted with some of this material. The Americans have taken over the ancient castle overlooking the town, they have established a workshop for restoring ancient art objects, employing skilled DPs and foreign artisans eager to make a little money.

With narrative flair the novel proceeds to reveal how much chaos and conflict are hidden in this town with the fictitious name “Heimgau,” by extension Germany as a whole. The greatest conflicts, it turns out, are among the American military administrators who claim authority. Fine portraits of people-- and greed-- are of these American officers, at least one a deserter and an imposter. The young Captain-narrator is quickly demoted by new arrivals, a major and “colonel” who outranked him. He becomes a subordinate and helpless “Public Safety Administrator.” A no-holds-barred struggle breaks out between the American army officers and a German baron as they compete for booty and spoils: for gold, paintings and art works, porcelain, sculptures, priceless antiques and valuables hidden in the conquered country.

The distant freight train, with its mysterious whistle described at the beginning of the book, is located later. A great heist takes place. The plots, vividly followed and developed in Liberated, give great suspense and excitement.

D.W.Jefferson says

Well written and well researched story set in the Germany of 1945, after the war but before law, order and civil administration were established. This is a story of corruption and war profiteering, and of a young

German-American Captain, trying to do right in a "wild west" type environment. I also enjoyed the anecdote about Nixon Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's dubious role in the occupation.

Michael says

In a story reminiscent of "The Monument Men," Steve Anderson used research that he performed on a Fulbright Graduate Research Fellowship in Munich from 1993-94.

It tells of actions in Munich, Germany in 1945. Capt. Harry Kaspar, U.S. Army, is appointed military leader of Heimgau, a Bavarian town. Upon arriving at his assignment and with plans of the good he would be doing, he finds three men on the road, recently killed. Upon entering the town, he meets Maj. Robertson Membre who is also assigned as MG (Military Governor). Since Membre's orders come from Frankfort, it's a higher command and they take preference.

As a consolation, Member assigned Kaspar as Public Safety, he is to be the acting police chief.

The story details the power of the conqueror, Germany is defeated and the to the victor belongs the spoils.

Harry goes about his work and finds a good German man, Herr Winkl, a former policeman, to be his assistant. With all the good intentions, Harry is stymied by Membre and a Col. Spanner who has his own plan.

We see the corruption and the few who want to do something about it. It is interesting to see some of the activities at the end of the war such as the prisoners and soldiers coming home and wanting their old homes. It is also to see the few Jewish survivors who have so little but deserve more.

The bulk of the novel tells of Harry and his attempt to prevent the small town from turning to a corrupt area and criminals such as the man, Jenke, a convict, turned S.A. thug appointed to a new position of authority.

There is a romantic side as Harry meets Katrina who is well described and someone the reader will want to succeed with what she has in mind for herself and a number of Jewish friends.

There is a great deal to be considered in the story such as corruption, greed and how war can affect various people and communities.

Rosa says

I received this book for free as Giveaway in exchange for a honest review.

A fantastic book about a horrible time.

This was the first time I read a book by Steve Anderson really liked his writing style and the way how it made you feel like living through the book instead of just reading it. Usually I shy away from books about war, but this post-war setting was, though unsettling, very interesting as well.

Since I was born (and still live in) not in Germany but in Austria, which was occupied as well, I could fit the stories my parents, grandparents and other people who experienced this time told me very well with the happenings in this book (even if it's fictional). I've got the impression that Steve Anderson really has a great knowledge about the post-war time in Europe and he was able to convert a history lesson in a very gripping story full of crime, desperation, greed and the urge to do the right thing.

Russell Phillips says

Note: I was given an advance review copy by the author.

The immediate aftermath of WWII seems to be an unusual setting for a book (at least, I've never read one set then), but it also makes for an interesting plot. In the past, there has been a tendency in WWII novels to portray the Allies as nothing but good and the Axis as nothing but bad. That seems to have changed more recently, which I like, and is very evident in this book.

The depiction of life in Germany immediately after the surrender isn't pleasant, but it does seem realistic. Similarly, the characters and plot are interesting rather than nice, but believable. In an afterword, the author talks of his research as a graduate student, some of which inspired this book.

Don't read this if you're expecting a tale of good vs evil. A few of the characters could be said to be evil (or at least very nasty), but none of them are perfect. They exist in a time and place where compromise is all but essential.

Do read it, however, if you're interested in a realistic portrayal of the occupation of Germany by Allied forces in 1945.

John says

I don't really know what I think. The craft of the story is all there. Open vivid mysterious characters. Somewhere in the reading I started to feel as if I was missing a subplot of important significance. Perhaps it is the concept of the conqueror's bureaucracy assuming the responsibilities of putting day to day survival together amid the populace's reluctant acceptance and inherent mistrust. Within the overriding chaos there are opportunities for petty and not so petty crimes. Thus our story.

I will be giving Mr. Anderson more of my attention. He commands a sparse and precise descriptive element that I like. There are similarities between how he and Alan Furst tell a historic story.

But still I think I missed something.

Amanda Broadrick says

I received this book through a giveaway. I tried to just read a little at a time, because I didn't want it to end. Sadly I just finished it, but I loved it!

Roger Neilson says

Ends somewhat earlier than I expected and I was a little dubious about the plot by then. However the ending occurs around 90% of the book and that is because the final pages are the background to the novel. I stopped being dubious. I also reflected upon the nature of 'when a war is over' and how we then are able to create order out of chaos - and the chaos that is engendered. Recommend this.

John Hanscom says

Probably more like 4 1/2, but a really good historical novel about a sad time for the US Military.

Todd Simpson says

In one word – “Brilliant”. I was only part the way through my first Steve Anderson book (Lost Kin), when I knew I would need to read everything he has written. I enjoyed it that much, and this book is no exception. There are so many things that make this story interesting. For me characters are what really makes or breaks a good book. Each character in Liberated is quite unique, and I really enjoyed the detail the Author has put into each one of them. The main character is Harry Kasper, an American Captain posted to a Bavarian town called Heimgau. You can't help but like him. It would be tough for Harry to investigate the corruption his superiors are conducting. This book gives a good insight of what it would have been like in Germany post WWII. This is another story from a talented Author that was hard to put down, and is definitely worth a read.

Ray Foote says

Ethics and Politics

A suspenseful read - sometimes a bit overdone but takes you through life choices .
For a traveler, the location descriptions are entertaining.
The books cover picture reminds me of the view from the Deutch Museum

SlowRain says

An inexperienced American soldier with the US Military Government is assigned to administer a village in Bavaria just after the end of World War II. Upon arriving, he finds orders changed, a distrustful populace, and a shocking secret in the waning days of SS rule.

(Disclosure: I was a beta reader for this novel, and as such, received my copy for free. The author is also on

my Goodreads Friends list as we share similar interests in fiction.)

Much has been written about World War II: the lead-up, the conflict, the concentration camps. One thing I'd never heard much about before was the immediate aftermath. This novel offers up some interesting insight into the US Military Government and its role in returning Germany back to order, as well as the opportunists who abounded at the time.

The protagonist is a naive, untested soldier whose training is in administration, not combat. Full of ideals and a desire to show the Germans the "American" way of leading, he gets more than he anticipated. It's nice to see the change he goes through as his conscience and beliefs are tested along the way, not only by his colleagues, but also by those he is supposed to be governing. I'd say character--coupled with the excellent atmosphere and information--is the greatest strength of the novel, and well worth the read.

The plot revolves around Jewish art and other valuables looted and plundered by the Nazis under the Melmer account. It makes mention of the Monuments Men (MFAA), but it's not directly involved with their operation (I haven't seen the George Clooney movie, nor read the book by Robert M. Edsel). For me, stolen art is an aspect of World War II that is less important than the genocide, the tyranny, the fighting, and the destruction. This, as well as some rough edges with the dialog, were probably my only main drawbacks with the story.

I'd recommend this novel to fans of Alan Furst's novels about spies in World War II and to fans of Martin Cruz Smith's mysteries. For people considering this novel, I'd say this is definitely not one to judge by the unfortunate choice of cover. Also, the first three chapters are not a good representation of the writing style of the whole novel; they are too rushed and thin, whereas the rest of the novel is quite well-written and with a comfortable narrative style. If you want to sample the author's writing style, you'll have to start at about chapter four or so. To me, this is a good, ol' fashioned adventure story, perhaps even akin to a 1960s movie about World War II. I don't think anyone would be disappointed with it, especially after reading the Afterward and realizing how much research the author did and how closely it resembles actual historical accounts.

Tara Manna says

I received this copy in a Goodreads Giveaway. I am giving my own honest review.

Historical Fiction is one of my favorite genres. Ratings in this area tend to be tougher than in other genres. But this book definitely receives a 5 star rating! I would definitely recommend this book to other readers, not only historical fiction readers, but romance and others as well. This book is brilliantly written, and the reader can imagine the horrors of war and the effects of war on any city or town. How war can turn even the good, bad.

I also want to add that I have read a few stories of where the "when" takes place during the actual war. Very few focus on after and the reader gets to see the effects the war could have had on the characters. I really enjoyed reading about this. Sad to think of the collateral damage of a war.

Grady says

'We're not exactly the Gestapo.'

Oregon author Steve Anderson is a noteworthy young author, a man with history in his veins and wars in his imagination. To date his novels have dealt with WW II in the Germany setting and he knows that period and that country well (he as lived in Germany as a Fulbright Fellow and his knowledge of the atmosphere and landscape of that country are evident): he has recently become a translator of German to English books whose focus is on crime and mystery. But Anderson has a richer and more entertaining background than simply a fine historical novelist: he has backpacked into Eastern Europe when the Berlin Wall fell, written narrative nonfiction, short stories and screenplays, worked in advertising, marketing, and journalism, and has been a waiter, a language instructor, a freelance copywriter. Full life? Enough to make his canvas for his books well prepared with personal gesso.

Steve's ability to transport the reader in time, under conditions most of us have never experienced, he manages form the first paragraph of *LIBERATED*: 'I should've been more scared, but the truth was I had never felt more ready and raring to go. I was heading deeper into the heartland of our bitter enemy. I drove this country route all alone, my jeep so new I could smell the tires. The sun rose above the birch trees lining the road, so I dropped the canvas top. I blitzed on past farms and villages. On the way I saw no German locals, no stray soldiers looking to surrender. They would see me soon enough. Within minutes, I'd be running a whole Bavarian town on my own. I passed through a valley with fields of young green wheat. I'd never seen a sky so blue, like some vast, upside-down ceramic bowl of flawless azure all around me. The road smoothed out. I knew I was close. I slid on my helmet for effect and unclasped my holster, though I wouldn't need a weapon. My olive green American uniform would do the work. I might even be the first Ami most of these people ever saw (Ami meant Amerikaner, the German version of Yank). We were something new, all right. We called it US Military Government, MG for short. I was MG for a burg called Heimgau. I didn't have a staff yet, but Munich MG had told me to get in there, make contact and get the place running again. In Heimgau, the US Occupation was going to be yours truly. As I drove on, the thought of me as liberator and likely mentor gave me a surge of warmth that not even this early May sun could match. Self-support was our goal for these people, and I'd get them off rations even if the Bürgermeister had to work the fields himself. One day I could stage an American-style mock election, show them the ropes of a working democracy. This was going to be the Germans' New Deal and I would bring it to them. Call it idealistic, quixotic even. I didn't care. Not after so many had died.'

This is story about the aftermath of war - a situation/condition that as we have so painfully learned can be as gruesome as active battle. Steve's synopsis distills the plot well: It's May 1945, the war's just over, and Harry Kaspar, an American captain in Germany, is about to take a new posting in the US occupation--running a Bavarian town named Heimgau. When Harry loses the command to Major Membre, he'll do almost anything to win the job back. When Harry discovers a horrific scene--three German men tortured and murdered--he reckons that solving the crime could teach the conquered townspeople about American justice, as well as help him reclaim that better posting. The only problem is that Harry's quest for the real killer will lead him straight back to his commander, Membre, and eventually to his mentor, a can-do rebel US colonel named Spanner. Spanner is a gangster run rampant, plundering the war-torn land for all its grim worth. Harry's lover, Katarina, a gutsy German actress, helps him realize he must fight back. Recognizing that absolute power corrupted and then destroyed Major Membre and Colonel Spanner, Harry takes it upon himself to overcome any obstacle that gets in his way and set a new American example by which a terrorized town and a mix of battered peoples can rise up from the ashes of a brutal, demoralizing war.'

Steve Anderson's books immerse us in reality as explored by fiction and in doing so he enhances our understanding of the 'pity of war' as well as anyone writing today. Highly Recommended.
