FOREWORD

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JOHN DAVIDSON KETCHUM, Professor of Psychology in the University of Toronto, known to hosts of friends and students as "Dave" and to innumerable others as "J.D.K.," died on April 24, 1962. He left the memory of a buoyant personality, a scintillating wit which could mercilessly parody anything sacred, an amazing capacity for translating obfuscated jargon into simple English, a genius for stimulating young minds, a fund of love which could immediately infect anyone who had even remote contact with him. Ketchum was a great teacher and a great human being. Something more of his life and career is given in the biographical tribute by Professor D. O. Hebb, printed below.

Ketchum also left an incomplete manuscript. For more than thirty years, and through a variety of demanding professional activities, he had nursed and coddled the story of his experience as a prisoner in Ruhleben during the World War of 1914-18. Anyone who had heard him talk of Ruhleben at any time looked forward to the book with undiminished anticipation. As a teenager with great musical promise he had gone to Germany to study music. He was caught by the war, was interned for more than four years in the prison camp, and was later returned to his native Canada. His experience had not diminished his passion for music, but it had generated an interest in human problems which led him first to religion and then to psychology. This book was written by Ketchum the reflective social scientist, but one readily recognizes too the humanist, the artist, the man of deep religious concern. Ketchum was never a wild-eyed evangelist, but there was always more than a little of the missionary in him, even in his teaching, and for him the Ruhleben story contained a message to which he hoped his students would hearken.

It was with great humility and a feeling of utter inadequacy that in his last illness I agreed to round out the manuscript for publication. In many hours of conversation over the years I think I had come to understand something of what Ketchum learned from Ruhleben, but I am sure that

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I have not been able to interpret it adequately. Since he was a perfectionist in his writing, who could never proceed to the next chapter without having satisfied himself that the previous one was complete, the seventeen chapters of manuscript he left have required almost no editorial modification. They leave us at New Year's of 1918, a date which marked the beginning of a slow transformation of Ruhleben into what Ketchum called "an aging society." Several more chapters were projected, but for these there are only the scantiest of notes. One has the feeling that the author could not quite face the task of bringing the story to an end. Rather than try to re-create the final chapters, which only Ketchum could write, I decided merely to complete the narrative and to systematize a few of the main themes that keep recurring in the book. These I have presented as a Postscript. The narrative is, I hope, faithful to the notes; for the inadequacies of the final interpretation I must bear the responsibility. Ketchum would have done a far better job.

The primary sources of this book are, of course, Ketchum's memories of his four years in Ruhleben, supported by a meticulously kept diary and the somewhat disguised reports included in his letters. He first began to think of his material as a book while he was working on a dissertation at the University of Chicago. The dissertation, as it happened, never materialized, but the notes he was assembling proceeded to expand as he established contact through correspondence with more and more of his former fellow-prisoners who had also kept records. From these, from official sources, and from the growing library of published reminiscences and interpretations, he gradually filled out the picture. In 1933 he mailed a questionnaire to the dwindling number of Ruhlebenites for whom addresses could be found, many of whom were generously co-operative during the succeeding years. Ketchum's last trip to England in the autumn of 1961 was to interview as many as possible of the survivors to make sure that no remaining source of information remained untapped and that no person was quoted in the text even though under a pseudonym without authorization. This final task was halted by his illness. He was deeply concerned that no one be quoted without explicit permission, and after his death his colleague, Professor C. Roger Myers, undertook the tedious task of tracking down individuals who might conceivably have been missed. Because of Ketchum's ingenious system of concealing identities, which we never fully solved, we cannot be absolutely certain that someone has not been overlooked. We can assure readers, however, that every effort was made by Ketchum to preserve the anonymity of the individuals who appear in the text. With the exception of those who are quoted from published sources, the authors of all

quotations were given fictitious names or some other disguise. In the very unlikely circumstance that an unwarned reader will recognize himself in print, we humbly ask his forgiveness.

Ketchum himself may be identified as Denton. The part which he played in the life of Ruhleben cannot be deduced from his formal report, and it would be disloyal to him to add items which he did not see fit to include. Those who knew him, however, will realize at once that the modest "Denton" who crops up here and there in the story was more than an inconspicuous observer. He was very much involved in the religious, the musical, the theatrical, and the educational activities of the camp; he enjoyed sports but was not an outstanding athlete; he had little of the drive for power that makes men jostle for position in an administrative hierarchy. This pattern of interests and values undoubtedly influenced his observation and his subsequent account of Ruhleben life. Another observer might have dwelt at greater length on the seamier side of the story, on crime and perversion, on the moral collapse of individuals, on the despair that pushed some of the prisoners to insanity and suicide. There was probably a good deal that Ketchum did not see. Such is my respect for his integrity as a social scientist, however, that I am willing to accept his account as substantially correct. Ruhleben society was certainly not normal in the conventional sense of the word, but it was astonishingly viable. This is what makes it so interesting.

As I have saturated myself with the Ruhleben story, I have come to feel that this book may rank in a modest way as one of the classics of modern social science, a book to which we shall keep returning as we do to *Middletown* or to Malinowski's descriptions of life in the Trobriand Islands. The fact that the setting is World War I gives it a date in history, but it is not "dated" in the other sense of the term; the story of a society that was suddenly forced into being, that grew, matured in its own peculiar way, and then ceased to exist, is a story which in a different setting and with different characters might have been written at many other times and places in history. It just happened that in Ruhleben there was an alert observer who kept careful notes and who was to spend his spare hours during the better part of a lifetime thinking about the meaning of it all. It can be read, of course, as a contribution to the history of World War I, but it should also be read as a basic study of the dynamics of individual and group behaviour.

Ketchum's book naturally invites comparison with the books that have come out of the Nazi concentration camps, but it should not be placed in the same category. Ruhleben was not like a Nazi concentration camp. Life was rough, it is true, but the Germans of 1914-18 were not the

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Nazis of 1933–45. The Germans with whom the *Ruhlebenites* had to deal were stern, often stupid and uncomprehending, but on the whole relatively decent. There were sadists among them, but there was nothing like the organized brutality which in the Nazi camps reduced both the perpetrator and the victim to a level lower than that of the beasts. Social scientists who contemplate the horrors of the Nazi period find themselves concentrating on the lurid extremes, and the best of the books that have emerged tend to be clinical studies of social pathology. From these we can learn a great deal, just as we can gain insight into the normal personality from the study of neurosis and psychosis, but there is always the danger of the psychiatrist's bias. *Ruhleben* society is still recognizably a society, a strange one it is true, but still not so far removed from the societies we know as to be obscured by a film of unreality. Here are ordinary people, humdrum Britishers of all sorts, suddenly thrown together in a disorderly mass and forced to find in themselves and in their own tradition a basis for individual and group living. There is a great deal in the story to make the sociologist and the psychologist think.

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