

# Introduction to the First Issue of *Frankfurter Hefte* (April 1946)

## Abstract

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A year after the end of the war, sociologist and political scientist Eugen Kogon and journalist Walter Dirks founded the journal *Frankfurter Hefte*. In the late 1940s and 1950s, *Frankfurter Hefte* developed into one of the most influential socio-political journals in West Germany, with an average circulation of 60,000. Both publishers came from a left-leaning Christian milieu and were critical of Konrad Adenauer's CDU. Kogon had been interned in the Buchenwald concentration camp in 1939, and in 1946 he published the book *Der SS-Staat* [*The SS State*], the first fundamental analysis of the National Socialist system.

## Source

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*To our readers!*

We write these words thoughtfully, "To our readers." Who will not be among them? We stand within a circle that knows us; but from it we go to the people, into the world, into the unknown. It is an adventure, like everything that is starting new today.

Will the teacher who has a changed youth before him pick up our journal to feel the current of ideas meant to renew Germany? The returned soldier, who, on the street and in train stations, has looked for traces of sympathy and understanding with tired yet attentive eyes? The student with many unspoken demands, needs, expectations? The cleric who knows he is standing on a rock but feels the waters around his feet? The woman who was adrift in the "folk community" and is now seeking new ground? Or her sister, who offered resistance out of the inerrancy of feminine feeling and is now seeking the surety of understanding to go with the certainty of the heart? The politician with the great aspirations and the nagging doubt in his heart; the worker with the pronounced party thinking and the discerning eye for utopias and possibilities; the entrepreneur who is eager engage in his customary activity and who has pessimistic feelings in view of the rubble that surrounds him, in view of the declining rather than growing reserves? The intellectual who believes in the power of the mind, and the "practitioner" who only wants to see "what the theoreticians are writing about"? Or will those who are merely hungry for reading reach for our journals because books are in short supply and simply leaf through them with curiosity and skepticism?

We know nothing about our readers, who are, after all, to become our partners, our associates, our friends.

But maybe that's a good thing. Already determined not to tell them what they want to hear, we will not show any false concern for them, but will say what we believe is right and necessary. Not infrequently this will sound harsh and uncomfortable. And it won't always be easy, for some things and nexuses of this dark earth and this especially dark present are complicated and cannot be made clear like a primer for everyone who doesn't understand. We will make every effort at clarity, but the reader will likewise have to make an effort. The common phrase, the nebulous word, which people took in so easily and quickly allowed to evaporate again from the brain, has clogged the atmosphere of thinking. We cannot breathe in it, we want good visibility and a precisely functioning mind – the living heart that beats in the rhythm of the times for eternal goals is self-explanatory.

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We thus expect “thoughtful” readers. We believe that in this way we will serve the renewal of Germany – we, that is to say, the publisher, the staff, and those readers already included. The darkness around us shall brighten. We all want to help to explain the opaque and the mysterious that is threatening us, to the extent that this is possible for us, who have just come from the abyss, and for the human spirit.

We therefore want more: namely to lead the reader that we have made thoughtful from this thoughtfulness to the necessary departures and decisions, to give him courage for “No” and even more courage for “Yes,” and we want to nourish with understanding the power of the heart and the mind, which is part of it. The clarifying and nourishing word that one can read here shall be shaped by the Christian conscience; yet the world to which it refers is not “the religious” world, but all of the multi-layered, rich, poor reality.

We are hoping, even though we are almost still entirely alone, that all those in Germany who are alert and restive will understand these words and this language, all the “open-minded,” the living and the questioning – an elite from all social strata, age groups, and “directions.” We are hoping, for otherwise we would not have had the courage to start. Some who certainly would have something to say have preferred to keep silent until now, from doubting caution that the nearly numbed ears of the people are not yet ready to hear, that the hearts are still closed, and from a concern for hasty slogans; moreover, the history of the last thirty years was not exactly suited to arousing in writers the desire and courage to create programmatic work. We, too, were struggling with these concerns. But in the end we did arrive at the opinion that many people in the country, especially now that the waters of a propagandistic flood have receded, are longing for clarity and orientation. And thus we have gone to work.

Source: *Frankfurter Hefte, Zeitschrift für Kultur und Politik*, edited by Eugen Kogon and Walter Dirks, 1/1 (April 1946), p. 2 f.

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Recommended Citation: Introduction to the First Issue of *Frankfurter Hefte* (April 1946), published in: *German History in Documents and Images*, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/occupation-and-the-emergence-of-two-states-1945-1961/ghdi:document-4588>> [July 01, 2025].