

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

20 South Twelfth Street
Philadelphia 7, Pennsylvania

News from Germany

Number 11

January 20, 1948

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

Almost daily requests come to the German desk asking for information about the six Neighborhood Centers which the American Friends Service Committee has opened in Germany. Because the history of each Center is somewhat different, the story of the Centers is a long one, and because they have come into being in the midst of chaos, it is complex.

In 1946, Hertha Kraus, Professor of Sociology at Bryn Mawr College, went on a mission to Germany for the American Friends Service Committee. On her return she suggested that perhaps the best way to help Germany would be to give her people an opportunity to reestablish the mechanics of civilization, and that this could best be afforded by Neighborhood Centers somewhat after the pattern of the settlement houses in America and England. Here simple, necessary community services such as laundry, shoe repair and child care could be provided, and the neighborhood could meet.

But we hope that the Centers may be serviceable in something more than reestablishing the mechanics of civilization. We hope too that they may help to reestablish the spiritual basis of civilization in Germany broken by the desecrations of the Hitler regime and of war. This means that we hope to bring something of hope to Germany and something of a sense of community responsibility as well as reverence for the individual. It is a large order and if we have said little of the Centers, it is because we are conscious that we are still far short of our goal.

The general pattern of the Neighborhood Centers is this. The Centers are placed in communities where interested groups of the German people have asked for them. The buildings in which they are housed are barracks shipped in from more fortunate countries. They are administered by a representative local Committee of concerned German people such as school teachers, welfare workers and doctors in consultation with the AFSC team. They are staffed by the AFSC team and German workers. For the first few years they are to be largely supported by the American Friends Service Committee, but as they take root, we hope to withdraw most or all support and that the ownership and administration will pass entirely into the hands of the interested German groups.

Peg Atkinson, an American Friends Service Committee worker in Brunswick, sums up the aims and ideals of the Neighborhood Centers so:

"The whole thing is a sort of experiment in democracy, as the Centers are run by democratic committees -- members of the committees coming from different political and religious groups. Five basic ideas of the Neighborhood Centers are:

1. To create a 'Neighborhood Feeling.'
2. To start self-help projects.
3. To foster cooperation.
4. To maintain spiritual and educational aims.
5. To give the people a feeling of a permanent Center which is theirs to help with and develop."

The oldest of the Neighborhood Centers has been functioning less than a year, but the story of each one is, we feel, already a heartening record of accomplishment.

The Frankfurt Center was first to open. There the city offered a site on the bombed-out Roehmerplatz in Bockenheim about ten minutes walk from the University of Frankfurt. The first news that reached the public of actual building was a dispatch from Dana Adams Schmidt to the New York Times on February 15. The Quaker young people, he said, were breaking the peace of the early morning and the frozen ground of the Roehmerplatz with a pneumatic hammer. Mr. Schmidt's dateline read:

"February 15th -- Frankfurt on the Main -- So far as anyone knows, nothing very nice has happened for a long time to the people who live four and five to a room in the half-smashed houses on the Roehmerplatz in Bockenheim. But early this morning three young members of the American Friends Service Committee and five young Germans broke ground in a corner of the Roehmerplatz for a Neighborhood Center designed to help them.

"To the puzzled crowd that soon gathered, Mrs. Nancy Good of New York said this was to be the first of five Centers the Quakers would set up, here, in Darmstadt, Cologne, Freiburg, and the American Sector of Berlin. She added that barracks from Sweden had arrived and none would be deprived of precious space. The idea is to help the people to help themselves and one another. There will be equipment to repair shoes, including leather, washing machines with soap, sewing kits and a warm place for people of the Neighborhood, especially young people, to meet."

The Center was opened in June. Among the finest developments from it is the formation of the Bockenheim Youth Council. It is a story of the conciliation of sharply differing youth groups and perhaps even the beginnings (on a very small scale) of the reconciliation of deeply embittered nations.

It began when the first ground was being broken for the Center and Bob and Nancy Good, who were in charge, sent out the call for volunteers from the young people of the community to help in the building. The first Saturday afternoon representatives from the Naturfreunde and Falcon, which are Socialist groups, arrived, worked hard all afternoon, sang their stirring songs and marched away.

Bob and Nancy had envisaged a youth council which was representative of all the youth groups in Frankfurt, and they realized they had a difficult assignment. Bob wrote on May 22:

"The many conversations we have had with German youth directors confirm our fear that youth groups are going each their own way, moving all the time farther from the possibility of cooperation -- and this not so much because of the reluctance on the part of youth itself, but rather because of the unwillingness of fear-possessed adult leaders to cooperate. The free youth movement is new in Germany. Competition is strong. And trust in the fairness of the other fellow's motives is almost an unknown quantity."

They called together a council -- a Protestant, a Catholic, a Socialist, an educator, and a welfare worker -- to ask advice. When Bob spoke of the plan for a completely representative youth council working together for the common good, he didn't get much encouragement.

"We aren't ready for such democratic processes," said one.

"It has been tried before and failed," said a second.

A third felt it wouldn't work anyhow, but each man agreed to do what he could, and asked all interested young people to come to the Roehmerplatz at two o'clock the

following Saturday afternoon. One man also agreed to get in touch with leaders in the Communist Freie Deutsche Jugend and in the several Bockenheim Sport groups. Bob and Nancy Good themselves went to work on the schools.

The following Saturday some forty to fifty young people gathered in the barrack waiting for an explanation. When Bob Good assured them that we had no political affiliations and wanted every group to be represented, the young people "went to work and had a wonderful time the entire afternoon."

There was only one flaw. Neither the Catholic nor Protestant youth were represented. Bob and Nancy visited a prominent Protestant pastor and the "Youth Priest" for Bockenheim. The Protestant pastor was delighted. Bob reported:

"Before we had been with him for more than five minutes he had a Bockenheim Protestant youth leader on the phone and was making arrangements for an immediate meeting of representatives from all the Protestant Youth Organizations. He was sure it would work. Protestants and Catholics could work together; religious groups could cooperate with non-religious; each group had something to teach the other and something to learn from the other and in this fact was to be found the real significance and importance of cooperation."

The Catholic priest was less enthusiastic. He was very busy, but he did not forbid the Catholic youth to participate.

The next Saturday some seventy boys appeared -- and the group was completely representative.

When the Center opened three months later, the representative "Bockenheim Youth Council" became a reality. It is now meeting regularly every fourteen days and is responsible for a program which it has worked out and for which Monday and Wednesday evenings at the Center have been reserved. In this is included twice monthly folk-dancing, choir, gymnastics, and discussion evening.

It is from the Discussion Evening that the most interesting developments have risen. Bob Good reported in September:

"Contacting potential speakers for these evenings has occupied a substantial portion of my time for the past few weeks. But, without doubt, it has been as interesting and rewarding as it has been time-consuming. Thus far, I've seen the liaison officers of Norway, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Holland. I've written to Andre Trocme in France, to Bunty Harmon in Cologne, to Gunnar Sundberg in Sweden with the hope that these people might find it possible to come in to represent their respective countries. Among the military people, interestingly enough, we have found Dutch and Czech colonels to be of greatest prospect. I'd like to tell you a bit more about the interviews which we've had with them.

"Colonel Pohodohra, one of the leaders of the 'Czech Army in Exile,' as he calls it, is a gentle man, sad-eyed and soft-spoken -- a person of great feeling. At our first meeting he apologized most sincerely for the inconvenience which he had made for me. (I had tried to see him earlier in the day, but had been told he was busy.) 'I had to keep an appointment this morning with some officials,' he explained to me. On the front page of the next morning's Stars and Stripes was a picture of our Colonel Pohodohra pinning a medal on Czechoslovakia's Liberator, General Omar Bradley, in ceremonies which had taken place the previous day. Such was the nature of the 'appointment' which he had found it necessary to keep with 'some officials' and for which he was apologizing to me!

"I told him briefly of the Center, of our work and aims and hopes. Then, more specifically and in greater detail, I spoke of our Youth Committee and the program which they were planning.

"The Colonel spoke of the age-old bitterness between Germany and Czechoslovakia and then he said, 'It will be difficult to speak about these things -- but I will accept your invitation with pleasure, because I know that nothing is so important as a better relationship among nations. And this we can have only by speaking frankly with one another. It will be difficult, but I will do it!'"

The letter continues:

"When the boys met with Colonel Pohodohra, he called in his entire staff and after introducing them to the Youth Representatives, said: 'This is one of the most important things I've yet come across. We must do everything we can to help!'"

"We spent three-quarters of an hour with him, during which time some rather exciting things were said. The Colonel pictured for the boys the background from which he spoke: five and a half years without one word from his family in Czechoslovakia; his wife for six years in a concentration camp; 35 relatives of his best friend killed at the hands of the Nazis because that friend joined him in the 'army in exile.'

"And yet he once again reiterated: 'I cannot hate!' 'You know,' said the Colonel, 'we Europeans are really no better off than slaves -- because Europe isn't ours to govern. America is on one side and Russia on the other. Europe is theirs to divide and all because we haven't interest enough to unite and make Europe economically and politically ours. Instead, we war every 20 years! If necessary, we must forget past differences, because the situation today demands a new and creative approach -- the approach of understanding!'"

In an October report Bob tells of a second visit to the "Youth Priest" he had visited earlier. He wrote:

"I had intended to stay for but five minutes; I knew how busy his days usually are. As it turned out, he wouldn't let me leave. We talked in detail about our Youth Program. About the discussion evening, he was most enthusiastic. We talked at length about the youth committee. I wanted him to know that though the committee was composed of representatives of the several youth groups in the neighborhood, the program they were planning was intended first and foremost for unorganized youth.

"Two things which pointed to the value of having the committee, however, were: one, the leaders of organized youth were contributing their experience in helping the Center to build a good program for young people outside organizational ties; two, it was creating the opportunity for the many different organizations to work together -- an experiment which has proved to be most successful.

THE DARMSTADT NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

In Darmstadt, the public officials offered the "Prinz Emil's Garten" to the Committee as a site for a Neighborhood Center. On it stand the ruins of the castle which Prinz Emil of Hesse built over a hundred years ago.

Earle Winslow describes the Center as it is to date:

"The Castle. This structure was merely a good-sized home, built early in the last century by Prinz Emil of Hesse, and measures approximately 30 x 70 feet. It stands at the far end of a large and beautiful park (Garten) which is surrounded by a high stone wall on the sides and rear, and by a White House type of iron fence on the street side. The apartment houses, private dwellings and schools in the area on all sides of the park are nearly all completely destroyed.

"After Prinz Emil's death some 60 or 70 years ago, the castle was leased by the House of Hesse to private occupants, and was finally sold to the city of Darmstadt by the father of Prince Ludwig, the present head of the local House. It was used by the city as a home for girls and as a sort of community meeting place. The structure was gutted by fire and bombs in the great air raid of September 11, 1944, but the walls were left standing.

"It is the wish of Darmstadt officials and those constituting the Neighborhood Center Committee that the castle be reconstructed in lieu of erecting a second barrack and that it form the permanent home of the Neighborhood Center, a purpose for which it is ideal. The plan originally suggested was that the city of Darmstadt would supply the labor, cement, gravel, sand, and rubble necessary for rebuilding, and that the American Friends Service Committee should supply such materials as lumber, glass, plumbing and electrical installations and other equipment not obtainable locally, or in Germany. In other words, that substantially the same division of expenses be applied to rebuilding the castle as was applied in erecting the barrack and the brick structure.

"One barrack, 25 x 74 feet, imported from Sweden, containing office, library, sewing room, Diele room (combination reception room and general meeting place for small groups, such as committees, decorated in the style of a Bavarian Inn, with large tile stove, plate rail, etc.), and large assembly room which can be divided into two rooms by folding doors.

"Brick structure running at right angle to barrack and forming the first unit in the reconstruction of the castle (Schlosschen). This contains a large kitchen-dining-room, work room (shoe repairing, etc.), toilets, entrance halls, and full-size basement remaining practically undamaged from destruction of the castle. The basement will be used mainly as a storage room, but is large enough to accommodate a good-sized work room, such as furniture repair, etc."

In August he reported:

"These last two weeks have made it increasingly evident that our 'Home' would soon be too small to hold all of the expanding activities, which makes it even more urgent to hurry the process of rebuilding the Castle.

"Although very little open publicity has been given, word of mouth seems to be sufficient to bring great numbers of people to the Center. The Reading Room is full all day long of young and old who appreciate the quiet of the room. Many friends have presented books and magazines.

"About 300 children used the Reading Room in the month of September and approximately 30 adults. The daily newspapers are very popular. We received a gift of children's books in English which are now being translated so that our children can read them.

"Altogether 48 pairs of shoes, mostly children's shoes, were repaired in the Shoe Shop. We have gotten in touch with the Labor Office in order to find an assistant for the Shop.

"In our Sewing Room work, the alteration of winter clothing takes first place. Altogether 318 women used the facilities during September.

"The Theatre and Singing Groups are practicing very hard for a presentation of the fairy tale, 'Dornroeschen,' (Sleeping Beauty) during a Family Evening at the end of October. The play group will present the play and the singing circle will beautify the evening with their songs.

"Our Women's Evenings meet with great appreciation. One evening each week some 40 - 50 women come. We sing together, read something good, some women do their handwork and actual problems are discussed from the woman's sphere. Since we have some very young and some very old mothers, we have decided to have one evening a month for young mothers only. We want to talk about educational questions, advice for young babies' problems, etc. The women expressed the desire to make an outing together one day. Since the weather was so unfavorable on the pre-arranged day, we had a pleasant afternoon in the house with coffee, song and party games, which made everyone happy.

"The Men's Evenings, while not as well attended as the women's evenings, have nevertheless been interesting, and show signs of growth. The men, being from the neighborhood and feeling a sense of responsibility for the safety of the property, have discussed such matters as the installation of an alarm system. A list of people from the neighborhood who would stand ready to respond to any alarm signal was prepared. One member of the group led two discussions relating to political and economic matters, and pointed out the danger of a false development into state socialism.

"Work on Christmas presents in wood and knitting is going forward in the Handcraft hours. The boys' handcraft hours will now be held in the Heim.

"The Youth Committee of our House has planned, in a discussion, a meeting of representatives of the different youth groups of the city. We want to give these young people the opportunity to meet together for cultural and friendly programs and try to make possible the wishes expressed in the planned discussion.

"We had several open programs in September. On the 10th was a puppet show day. The Koenigsteiner puppet players gave two shows in the day for children and one evening show for adults. The room was full for each show and the joy of the children as well as the adults was very great.

"The Children's Work stood very much in the foreground in the month of September. The children came in such crowds that we had almost daily on the average of 80 - 85 children to care for. Packages of dolls and other toys, drawing material, etc., were sent to us from America. Since our children have lacked these things for so many years, it is understandable that they come daily in flocks. Three students from the newly-established school for Kindergarten teachers are sent to us three days a week. They receive credit as practical work from the school. These students take care of a group of children, mostly the small ones, so that our own Kindergarten teacher is a little freer."

The program is a full and active one. One of the most interesting recent developments is reported by a returned worker. It is that of a group of women who came to use the facilities of the sewing room every Wednesday afternoon. After they had taken care of their own sewing, they set out to make clothing with what material we could provide to be distributed through public welfare agencies. The group has grown from a handful to a group of some fifty women.

THE FREIBURG NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

The Center in Freiburg serves basically the same purposes as those in Frankfurt and Darmstadt but to a more selected group. It is situated near the University and serves the needs of the students effectively. Its primary purpose is to open some means of contact with the outside world to the students who have been cut off from any outside influence since the coming of the Hitler Regime.

It also has an important function to serve in practical assistance. The Center offers a warm room where students can study, a work room where clothes can be mended, typewriters that can be used at will, and a shoe repair shop to mend worn boots.

Food packages are also distributed from the Center to the most needy students, but this is not considered a part of the Center program. It is more in the nature of direct relief.

An article in the *Badische Zeitung* of July 25 under the heading "Eine Heimat für Studenten" (A House for Students) gives an excellent resume from a German point of view of what this Center purports to be. It reads:

"The barracks in the little park opposite the University, which the Quakers have erected for the students, lies concealed in the green of the shrubbery and high above the street like an island in the haste and noise of the day. A reading room, which will also be much desired as a warming-hall in winter, is the main convenience. At little wooden tables reading, writing, and studying is going on, and only rarely does a whispered conversation interrupt the silence. The newspapers displayed there offer particularly reading material. The London Times, Figaro, the New York Herald Tribune are among the representatives of the great foreign press that offer to those versed in foreign languages a glance across the borders -- something that has been denied to us so long. Magazines from France, America and Switzerland with gorgeous illustrations arouse our interest. Side by side with English and French monthlies the most important German periodicals and university newspapers are represented.

"A small library is at the disposal of all visitors. The University Library has loaned a number of books: some 500 of German and foreign authors, especially of those formerly banned. The department labelled 'Political Books' consists of Swiss purchases and gifts. Here the reader finds an abundance of documents that are important for an understanding of the intellectual situation of our times. These books are entrusted to the care of the students, one reads in a posted notice of the library rules, and the friendly tone of these words imposes a greater obligation upon the visitor than the customary 'under the pain of penalty.' At present it is not yet permissible to take books home (this applies only to recent publications) but as it is, many a student prefers the cozy reading hall to his own room. The girl student in charge jots down wishes and suggestions of the readers. To her one also may apply for the use of one of the two American typewriters in a small adjoining room. These are in great demand.

"In order to alleviate the material distress of the students, the Quakers have furnished a sewing-room in the barracks, in which two seamstresses repair the clothes and laundry of students away from home. The sewing material was purchased in Switzerland. Experienced students will be given an opportunity to sew themselves, as soon as a second machine is provided (this has now been done). A shoe-repair shop (now transferred to the main Wiehre barracks because of the noise) looks after the footwear of students who are bombed-out or fugitives. And, thanks to a sizeable gift of Quaker food, 200 undernourished students were recently provided with a supplementary monthly food package.

"The rooms of the barracks are adorned with reproductions of modern paintings, among them a Picasso. They furnish the stimulus for many a conversation for and against modern art.

"The administration of the building is in the hands of a small committee composed of representatives of the faculty, students and the AFSC team, which meets every two weeks."

And in the July report, Betty Collins, who is the representative of the AFSC in charge, tells us:

"Throughout July the Student Center was increasingly used by students, as more and more of them realized that the wooden barracks half-hidden in greenery on the bank opposite the University contained rooms where they could study in quietness and pleasant surroundings, read foreign newspapers, periodicals and books, use a typewriter and even bring their clothes to be mended. Many made first acquaintances with the Center at one of the Sunday teas to which 50 students and 5 professors, all random choices, are invited and which give the team an opportunity to meet with small groups of students and in an informal way.

"The sewing-room opened on July 10. A sewing-woman is there in the morning to mend underwear for men students who are alone in Freiburg, while in the afternoon a tailoress comes to repair heavy clothing -- and poor, threadbare, over-patched stuff most of it is. Women students may bring their own sewing and receive thread, bits of material and small accessories. About 70 garments have been refurbished each month and some of these represent a great deal of work.

"Students pay a small amount for these repairs, as most of them do not like to feel they are receiving charity.

"The library and reading room have been steadily used. So far the open access system has not led to any abuses and misunderstandings over ownership. A student is on duty all day in the library for lending out books but there is no kind of oversight in the reading room. One day brought a horrid shock when all the Swiss monthlies for August were seen to be missing. However, they were later brought back safe and sound. One of the students had had wrongful permission from a temporary student in charge to take them home. A small selection of American and English fiction has been popular. There are a number of students, ex-prisoners, from America and England who speak excellent English.

"The typewriters, 2 American and 1 German, have been used almost continuously, even throughout August, when the number of students using the Center dropped to a few 'regulars.' Luckily, a good repairer lives nearby and can quickly give the first-aid treatment often required.

"During August, the entrance hall was transformed into a small 'picture-gallery' where fortnightly exhibitions of pictures are planned to take place, mostly of modern artists who were banned during the Dritte Reich, or whose work has been produced during the War. However, the first exhibition has been of some interesting and valuable German 16th century woodcuts, lent by the University library.

"The 200 monthly packages to under-nourished students were discontinued during August. Packages were given to 17 medical students whose final examinations stretch over the two months vacation period and who normally eat at the University canteen which was then closed.

"The shoe-mending service continued to take about twenty pairs of shoes a week. Herr Hummel, the cobbler, is an excellent workman and manages to do a great deal for the battered, gaping footwear.

"The most interesting side of the work is the contact with individual students who come to talk over problems or to ask for information, ranging from how to get to America to study to a request for a Braille typewriter for a war-blinded student who is doing a doctorate in Political Economy."

THE MITTELHOF - THE BERLIN CENTER

When the Mittelhof, the Berlin Center, opened on September 10th of 1947, the New York papers ran stories on it, for standing as it does at an international crossroads, it has dramatic qualities that the other Centers do not possess. It is located within a few minutes ride of the Russian Zone and if it is to succeed in creating a "neighborhood feeling," it must bridge nationality and include Americans, Russians, and British as well as the German people, for they are all part of the neighborhood though they seldom come in contact on other than an official basis.

The Center is not housed in a barrack erected in the rubble, but in the "Mittelhof," which is the name of a 3-story building in the residential section of Zehlendorf. The Mittelhof affords the same community service as that of the Centers with the addition of a rest home for tired professional workers -- doctors, social workers and others. Elmore McKee, who was chief of the American Friends Service Committee team founding the Berlin Center described the property:

"The Mittelhof is a three-story, modern residence, built around a small court on a wooded property of one and a half acres. The property is owned by Frau Dr. Ramin, and until March was occupied by an American Red Cross Club. The Buergermeister and the City Council, after careful consideration of various proposals for the use of this desirable property, have given their cordial consent, in writing, for the proposal made by the Friends. The property is in excellent general condition; its plumbing and heating facilities appear to be sound, and it is suitable for the various practical purposes of a Neighborhood Center."

In November, Lucille Day reported on the Rest Home:

"The first guest was received in our Rest Home on August 2, 1947. Since that time we have had 62 guests staying for a period of from 5 days to one month. Most come for two weeks each. Usually they pay RM5/ for a double room and RM6/ for a single room. A few have been received on 'Freeships.'

"Most have come from the city of Berlin. Of those who have come from the Zones, 13 have come from the Russian Zone and 1 from the American Zone. Ages have varied from 17 years old to 64 years of age.

"Klaus, the youngest guest, is one of our most beloved. He is a student, 17 years old, who has tuberculosis of the bones. He walked up and down our stairs for two weeks, leaning on his cane. He sleeps in the youth room, and often enters into the activities of various youth groups meeting here. He tends the door and the telephone when we are all in staff meeting. And now, after two weeks, he is walking without his cane. His pallid cheeks have taken on color, and his eyes are bright with a new light. When the staff voted to keep him one more week, while our social worker talked with his mother and the social worker who referred him to us about future

training for him (we discover he is very clever with his hands), he was sincerely grateful. He helps teach the children paper-folding which he learned when he was in the hospital."

Alice Shaffer's report of the Christmas festival at the Mittelhof indicates that there has been something of success in creating a sense of Neighborliness radiant from the Mittelhof in Berlin.

"We know that numbers mean nothing, but when we can feel that we have shared a bit of the Christmas message with 700 men, women, young people and children, then we believe it was significant for all.

"I must tell a bit about everything. The house was well decorated with greens, with little shades on shields standing before candles, through which one could see the lovely Christmas scenes cut by the children. Everyone seemed to have brought in some green branches and we of course had a lovely big Advents crown hanging in the hallway. Candles came from Americans here and in the United States. The wife of my assistant at the State Department sent a big box of all sizes of red candles which arrived just on time as did a box from Frances Emmons. I was very popular in being able to produce candles for every party and it was a pleasure to be able to pass them on for our friends so that so many, many persons were cheered by them. To have candles was a joy but to have red candles -- well, I can't tell you all the comments that were made about them!!

"Wood was given us from the Bezirks Buergermeister (some big logs) and boys from the Jugendhof (Correctional School) came and chopped them and piled the wood high on either side of the big fireplace in the wood-panelled hall. They are boys who work with our work camp group and we give them a meal when they help us extra and always try to have friendly contact with them. The fireplace was used Christmas Eve and occasionally since then. Unfortunately we have been getting brown coal and it just does not heat, though it does take off the worst chill, but we are usually not warm without several layers of sweaters. So the fire was a great treat and so beautiful and 'gemuetlich.' Rudy, our fine cook, Hilda Wagner, who in addition to planning of the meals gives a fine homey touch to everything, and Fraulein Hass, their able assistant, worked late hours to make Christmas cookies to use for the various groups. Again I was able to add some extra spices, sugar, raisins, dates, nuts, etc., sent by Frances Emmons and friends near Wallingford. I wish they could have been here to have heard the delight expressed as the good odors came from our kitchen. It was like home!

"The carpenter, with his quiet manner and serious look, took great pains in supervising the putting up of the 20 ft. Christmas tree which stood in our music room so it could be seen from two rooms as our sitting room is adjoining the music room. Our children were so jolly and did all their work with great joy and faces just beaming. Volunteers sat in the sewing room getting the last things ready to be given to our children and to the Hilfscommittee for Christmas. Frau Bolling scrubbed things so shining clean and said she did not feel alone this Christmas since she could help others.

"Every staff member devoted full time to the job and if ever there was work done with love I did feel that they had done so this Christmas. Rest Home guests helped us in plans and preparations and participated one way or another in almost everything that was done. Staff members helped one another whether they were specifically responsible or not.

"Our fine spirited shoemaker and his wife stayed late nights to get shoes repaired and old army shoes ready for each and the women volunteers had repaired old army trousers. Old bits of leather and cloth bound round the feet and legs were pulled off, the newly-repaired shoes tried on, a pair of trousers for each were found and then they all wanted to change their clothes before returning to their barracks. When they came in at first they had no signs of spirit or interest and I thought I had never seen 5 men who seemed less like real people. As they began to look at the clothes, then wore them, their faces lighted up and they began to tell about their experiences, speak of home, of family, pull out old pictures and to speak of future hopes and plans. Staff members who saw them said we must set a table and invite them to eat a bowl of soup and have tea. Then someone came with a few candies and Christmas cookies and the men were so happy they just were like children with a wonderful gift. They stayed with us several hours and upon their departure we sent enough tea for all the men (300) in the camp since CARE gave us so much and we were free to share it. We also sent along candles and the men were delighted. One could see them straighten up and they seemed to have been given more than a pair of shoes and a bowl of soup. Elmore had gotten these shoes and trousers as scrap material and so we decided that at Christmas time we would use some especially for Heimkehren and later it goes to Hilfscommittee. It did our staff good to feel their problems firsthand as they saw and spoke with the men.

"Heilige Abend (Christmas Eve) was especially fine with 80 otherwise lonely persons brought together in a pleasant, cheerful Christmas setting. The staff had everything all ready at 4:30. Small tables set for 6 each, candles and greens on each one, the big tree ready to be lighted, Christmas bag for each, filled with candy, fruit cake (sent by Francis Dart's family) and cookies. The children had decorated the bags, I made place cards for all. The staff members said they would like to come and so we went upstairs. It was a good feeling to prepare oneself, in the presence of God, and to dedicate ourselves on this Holy Eve to make others happy and to help them, perhaps, find a sense of peace within themselves. There was a quiet, a serenity and a joy that everyone felt. It was one of the happiest experiences I have ever had and our guests were so very happy with everything but especially because it was all so personal. Six children were present and they helped give out the bags of candy. The father of Hilda Wagner, one of our staff members, had said he would be Santa Claus. He has a lovely beard and twinkle like Santa, but he is old and when he came he was so moved by everything he said he felt he couldn't do it. The children were glad to help and the guests enjoyed seeing them and hearing them sing. After coffee and cakes were served and we had read the Christmas story and had sung, we took a few minutes to shift things a bit for supper. That is, to set place cards, etc. Everyone had a specific task assigned, each staff member was responsible for a table, and so it worked smoothly. We had a very simple abendbrot, but how it was enjoyed. Some of the people at my table appeared really hungry and one elderly woman, mother of a Lutheran deacon, was like a child who was torn between eating the food or saving it. We sat and visited a long time. All was quiet, no rush, and it seemed almost ideal. The staff were so happy and our guests left telling us how they had dreaded Christmas until this invitation came but they had no idea they could ever feel so happy as they had felt here at Mittelhof.

"After they left, staff members and Rest Home guests went caroling nearby where American families live. The Germans had never done it before and they haven't gotten over it yet. We were about 20 men and women. As we sang, the window shutters rolled up, real American-appearing Christmas trees with many electric lights were visible, windows opened and they sent out boxes of candy, big plates of cookies, etc., and asked us to sing certain songs again -- usually they requested Stille Nacht. We sang

both in English and German. After about 1½ hours in the streets ending up by the Lutheran Pfannen's home, we returned to Mittelhof, sang in our court, then joined those sitting about the fire. We had another cup of coffee and sat there and sang till 12. I shall always remember the feeling of that evening."

The two Centers in the British Zone are those at Cologne and Brunswick. Both of them are under the direct administration of the British Friends Relief Service.

The facilities of the Center at Cologne are given over almost entirely to a day care program for children certified to be in need of it by the Public Health Authorities. In News from Germany, Number 9, "A Cologne Diary," the program was described by Roger Craven, who is a worker there.

The first soil for the erection of the barracks in Brunswick was turned on September 1. This Center will be under the direct supervision of the Brunswick Friends Group.

On December 8th, Douglas Steere of Haverford College paid a visit to the Center and reported on a tribute paid to Peg Atkinson, the AFSC representative there, by the German Friends, at the dedication of the cornerstone. He writes:

"So far Peggy seems to have gotten no further than a great hole in the ground with some masonry creeping up toward the street level as a foundation for the barrack when it comes. I certainly saw what living by faith meant, when I saw Peg with gleaming eyes telling me where this and this was going to be, and all I could see was a hole! When they laid the cornerstone in the basement they had a public ceremony, and they would not let Peg see the stone beforehand. When it was unveiled it had chiseled into it her initials -- AMA: Anna Margaret Atkinson. Peg protested to the group and said that it should not be, for they had all helped and planned. Adolf Beiss, the wonderful German Friend who was chairman, assured Peg before the crowd that AMA stood for 'love' in Latin and that it was on love that this Neighborhood Center was being built."