GYA Christmas Plans

— Yuletide Fetes Arranged at All Posts

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If GYA were to select a theme for this year, it would be a simple word—"Others."

"It is more blessed to give than to receive," said Christ, whose birthday we honor each Christmas Day. This year GYA, in cooperation with German citizens of every community as well as with the American personnel at every military post, is turning from a Christmas which is only a friendly handout to a Christmas which more nearly typifies the true meaning of Yuletide spirit, cheer and service for others.

During the last few Christmas seasons in Germany there was a greater need to make some sort of Christmas for every child because the stores were bare of gifts and goodies. This year, the Germans want to help provide a Christmas for their children. It is especially for the unfortunate children without parents, all those who are ill or disabled, that most lavish plans are being made by GYA.

In Wetzlar, a special GYA Craft Shop has been opened to make toys for orphans and other needy children, and the girl’s sewing classes are making garments to be given away. Groups of children will visit all of the hospitals and sing Christmas carols. Wetzlar also plans a big Christmas festival for the entire community.

The Bremen Port of Embarkation is preparing a Christmas play which will be presented for the cheer of hospital patients, and also plans Christmas pageants and musical festivals in Bremerhaven and Bremen which will be attended by both Germans and Americans.

In FRANKFURT, special effort is being made to provide Christmas entertainment at all orphanages and old people’s homes and to present the unfortunate with handmade gifts and sweets. A German-American youth committee in Stuttgart is working through GYA to bring Christmas cheer to 15,000 crippled, blind and sick children.

In the Heidelberg Military Post, a Christmas program is being organized to provide special parties for 35 orphanages and hospitals. Several staff sections of EUCOM Headquarters are each sponsoring a special party under the supervision of American personnel for one of these institutions. The GYA personnel are assisting hundreds of individual clubs and schools in the organization of their Christmas program.

German businessmen in Augsburg are donating gifts which GYA will use to bring Christmas cheer to the local hospitals and orphanages. Groups of children from the GYA Centers will present entertainment and Christmas songs to these orphanages and hospitals and make small gifts to the children. The American Women’s Club is emphasizing the necessity of warm clothes and food rather than candy and nuts.

The BERLIN Military Post is making provision to bring cheer to 65,000 to 70,000 children. The German Welfare Office is providing the GYA Christmas committee with the names of needy children in addition to those who are in hospitals and orphanages. Special Christmas parties will be held at each GYA Center, and groups of children participating in GYA will provide Christmas trees and small gifts for those children.

In Garmisch, clothing and toys are being made at the GYA Center for presentation to many of the children.

Members of the Berlin Teenagers’ Club collected toys—broken and new—to be given to needy German children at the Berlin Military Post’s Christmas parties. The toys were taken to the All-American Service Club, where they are being repaired and painted by soldiers of BMP. L. to r. are teenagers Ralph Eitzold, New York City; Florence I. Siebens, Toledo, O.; Pat Ashworth, Dallas, Tex.; Jimmy Cobble, Rouge River, Ore.; Freddy Martin, Iron from Washington state; and Miss Ruth Parks, of Stoneham, Mass., Special Services hostess at the All-American Service Club in Berlin.

(US Army photo)

INFORMATION BULLETIN
GI's of BMP supervised the making of toys of every conceivable sort which were given to German children at Christmas 1947, when the 759th MP Bn. fed well over 3,000 boys and girls, which, it is believed, is the largest number so entertained by a single unit in the history of the occupation. (US Army photo)

In this small Bavarian town. On Christmas Eve groups of youngsters will serenade the Old People's Home and the Welfare Kitchen with Christmas carols.

In Nuremberg, a special fund is being raised by the Christmas committee to provide assistance for needy German and DP children. Representatives of military units in this area will visit the hospitals, orphanages and refugee camps during the season.

At Oberammergau, the GYA staff, the American Women's Club and the citizens of the community are working hand in hand to organize a Christmas program worthy of the occasion for all the people of that community. At the suggestion of Mrs. Joseph Shiebot, wife of the GYA officer, many of the American ladies of the community have already visited German families. In many cases this is their first visit in a German home.

When the ladies from two countries met each other as friends, they found that there was no difference in their fundamental ideals. Maybe the dressed differently or there was some superficial difference, but these do not matter.

This is all leading to a gala community pageant, the theme of which will be religion in keeping with the real meaning of Christmas, all of which will be very fitting to the life of this community which next year will again present the Passion Play.

Personnel of Air Force Installations throughout the US Zone are each planning to bring Christmas cheer to all the needy youth within their communities.

In Munich and Wuerzburg, plans for a gala celebration with big community Christmas festivals are under way. The 1st Infantry Division and the US Constabulary units will take an active part in the season's celebrations.

In addition to the special provisions for the unfortunate, the boys and girls who have been regularly attending the GYA Centers' special classes and groups will each have their own parties. Most of these parties will be planned and actually conducted by the children themselves. They will draw names to discover for which of their friends they will provide a gift. A Christmas committee of club members will plan the program, while another committee works out the details for refreshments.

Parents and relatives of the children will attend these parties and inspect the various exhibits of art, sewing and handicraft which have been made by their children. The entertainments will consist of plays, puppet shows, ballet, Christmas poems and group singing of Christmas carols.

Through all of these activities the German youth will continue to learn how people live in a democracy. They will also learn that with the many privileges which are extended to them in democratic activities there are also responsibilities which each must accept.

Americans and Germans through their cooperative effort on behalf of the children are proving that even in this muddled world of today there is still a majority who have "Good will to all men." If peoples of this world would continue to work together as the Americans and Germans are doing to provide Christmas cheer for the German children, we would be able to better understand the true meaning of the Christmas Angel's message of "Peace on earth."

Christmas 1946 was brightened for these German kiddies by Yuletide meals and gifts donated by American occupation personnel, both service and civilian. Left, typical group of eager youngsters queue up outside a mess hall; right, Christmas carols at a tree party, a scene enacted at all military posts and GYA centers throughout the American Zone each year since 1945.

(US Army photos)