Three Years of GYA

— Review of Armed Forces Assistance

April 14 marks the third official anniversary of a unique and unprecedented youth reorientation program which has given every American in Germany an opportunity during his off-duty hours to have a very real and effective share in accomplishing the occupation mission.

On April 14, 1946, the first official directive was issued by USFET Headquarters which recognized, organized, and gave material support to the Armed Forces Assistance Program to German Youth Activities.

During the intervening three years, GYA has gone a long way, starting with the "candy bar and Coca Cola" stage which often brought criticism from Germans and Americans alike; progressing into the baseball and sports stage which had the very limited objective of teaching fair play, and finally arriving at the present stage of a well-organized program of varied assistance aimed at demonstrating and teaching the everyday principles of democracy and providing opportunities for German youth to occupy their time profitably rather than in ways which lead to delinquency.

It is of interest to trace the development of this program which began without blueprint and without official support.

GYA had its real beginning in the spontaneous efforts of individual soldiers to assist German youth before and immediately following the end of hostilities. In the fall of 1945, after the relaxation of the non-fraternization order, individual tactical units inaugurated local programs designed both to supply recreation and basic essentials for German youth and also to provide a wholesome outlet for the energies of troops awaiting redeployment.

As early as Sept. 14, 1945, an interim occupation program for German youth activities was outlined in a 7th Army Headquarters directive. Also, in the fall of 1945, the 29th Infantry Division in the Bremen area inaugurated a program of assistance which was effectively publicized and popularized by a public information officer.

The early beginnings, plus awareness by Military Government youth officials of the need for initiating activities to help mold German field of reorientation and rehabilitation.

In August 1946, a complete study of the reports submitted during the summer, combined with numerous visits to the field, indicated that a directive broader in scope and more detailed in nature was needed so that the military might render more positive assistance which would reach a greater number of German youth. General Joseph T. McNarney, then Theater Commander and Military Governor, called a conference of representatives of the major commands and MG youth activities personnel. At this meeting, General McNarney made the following statements which outlined the objectives of the program and gave it the all-out official support which it had lacked:

"It want to impress on you that this is an extremely important job and perhaps more important than any other one job that we today can do. In the end, what we hope to achieve is that a great number of German youth will absorb our democratic (Continued on next page)
ideals, and that they, in turn, will become the future leaders of the German nation, which they will in a relatively short time, and that they will lead the German nation along the paths we wish them to learn, so that it will not be necessary for us again to come to Europe to wage war."

A S A RESULT of this conference, a comprehensive directive on military assistance to German Youth Activities was issued (AG 353.8 GCT-AGO "Army Assistance to German Youth Activities, US Zone", USFET, Oct. 5, 1946). This document established the assistance program as an official, positive military mission and made the following important provisions:

1. Stated the mission and objectives of the program—the providing of worthwhile active assistance to German youth in order to reduce juvenile delinquency and teach the basic techniques of democracy to German youth.

2. Established a well-rounded program of cultural, sports, recreational and community type activities which were permitted within the framework of regulations established by Military Government.

3. Required the assignment of full-time commissioned and enlisted personnel to implement the program in units of company and greater size.

4. Authorized the establishment of youth centers and other physical facilities through which German youth could be reached and assisted more effectively.

5. Recognized the need for volunteers of all categories and directed that efforts be made to secure volunteer assistance, especially dependent wives.

6. Made provisions for the use of supplies, equipment, transportation and facilities.

HAVING BEEN provided with official stature and progressed from the experimental to the proven stage, the Armed Forces Assistance Program was conducted during the following two years essentially as stated in the Oct. 5 directive. Certain milestones indicating the growth and increased efficacy of the program are interesting to note:

1. The establishment and development of 300 youth centers throughout the zone in which activities of all types are held for both organized and unorganized youth.

2. Development of large scale community projects such as gardening projects, soap box derbies, handicraft contests and Golden Gloves tournaments.

3. Assignment of a WAC officer in each post to plan, implement and supervise activities for girls and to stimulate American and German women in volunteering their services to the program.

4. Formation of youth center and community councils to enable German youth to plan and guide their own activities.

5. Inauguration of a group correspondence project known as Youth Helps Youth. To date, more than 600 American and German youth groups of similar interests have been paired through the medium of correspondence.

6. The obtaining of active support from the United States in the form of supplies and donations. Through one US project alone, $30,000 of textile-type CARE packages have been received for use in GYA handicraft shops.

7. The holding of large scale Christmas activities and parties, involving several hundred thousand dollars worth of donations each year.

IN SEPTEMBER 1948, the Armed Forces Assistance Program was officially recognized and commented upon by the Department of the Army. This recognition came in connection with a feature article on the program in the National Geographic Magazine. General Omar Bradley, Chief of Staff, wrote General Clay:

"Your men and women, who have worked so hard with the youth of (Continued on page 34)