Radio in US Zone

--- Stations Achieving Independence

WITH THE turnover of Radio Stuttgart to German management on June 30, one of the major tasks of the occupation in the information field went into its final phase. Independent community radio will have been established by law in every state of the US Zone, with German management in control. American radio officers will continue liaison with the stations only as consultants and observers to watch the progress of free, democratic radio in the new Germany.

Some of these Americans are the same men who came into Germany with the army and began the work of rebuilding German radio while battles were still being fought. It was imperative then to get radio going as a medium through which occupation officials could reach the German people with instruction and information. There was no time for leisurely surveys, planning and construction.

The radio teams who came in with the US Army moved first to locate the former German stations and decide what could be done with them. Some of them they found without difficulty in various stages of damage from total destruction to “extensive but superficial damage.”

THE STUDIO building of Radio Munich, for instance, was bombed out, without windows and roof and with all the delicate studio equipment shattered. The transmitter, however, was found some 15 miles out of town, virtually undamaged. The US radio men wheeled up a portable studio van, built for use by the Psychological Warfare Division, SHEAF, got the lines to the transmitter hooked up and in two days Radio Munich was on the air.

There was somewhat similar luck at Stuttgart where the transmitter, also located out of the city, was found with “extensive but superficial damage” and was quickly patched and restored to use. Once again, however, the studios were gone. They had been stripped first by the Germans as they got out and then taken over as a bivouac by Moroccan occupation troops. Nothing but the walls was left.

So another army studio van was brought up for use and 45 old timers at Radio Stuttgart like to tell now how at one time they had developed the technique of jackknifing performers into this cell-like studio until they managed a broadcast with 16 participants in the 6-by-8-foot box. That, they agreed, was the full capacity. Today Radio Stuttgart has modern roomy studios not only at Stuttgart but at Heidelberg as well.

Radio FOR Frankfurt proved the knottiest problem. For a time, the former studios couldn’t be found at all. After several months they were discovered buried under the ruins of what had been the office building of the radio station. Today that studio building has been restored and is in full use, although at first, studios were improvised in a house in Bad Nauheim.

The transmitter in the meantime had been located but it lay in jagged ruins. No amount of improvising with string, wire and scrounged equipment would put that together again. So this time a mobile transmitter was moved in—a United States one kilowatt transmitter built on six vans. This was later supplemented with a powerful sender which had been installed in a train for projected use by the German army. The latter is still in use at Radio Frankfurt and is emitting 60 kilowatts, 18 hours a day.

So the three big stations in the US Zone grew up out of war ruins. Today (Continued on next page)
they are modern, smoothly operating installations, each with more broadcast power than any individual transmitter in the United States. A smaller station also was set up under US auspices to service the state of Bremen. And at the same time, RIAS—Radio in American Sector, Berlin—was being developed from its modest Drahtfunk (wire service) beginning into the powerful multiple transmitter station which is now the only remaining MG station and the only United States outlet in “iron curtain” country.

These are the foreshortened facts of the physical reconstruction of radio in the US Zone of Germany. The full story, which could fill a book and probably will one day, is a saga of scrouting, adapting, improvising and getting on with a big job. It has been a new kind of American pioneering, with German help.

In this hurry-bury of repair and construction, the major task of radio—the reorientation of a demoralized people—went forward. Originally all stations were manned with German-speaking Americans, but very early in the occupation began the task of training German newscasters and announcers. (No one worried about entertainment in those days.) The problem was where to find Germans with some radio experience, but politically unobjectionable.

There was no desire to go back into business with the Goebbels clan but obviously unless a radio man belonged to that persuasion he hadn’t been getting any experience in radio in Germany in the last dozen years. Many came, protested purity and were hired. Almost as many, as quickly as their Fragebogen (political questionnaires) were received, were fired again. For a time it was 100 percent turnover with the American radio team scrambling to gain a little ground—and staff.

Eventually the new German news and commentators’ staffs were built up largely of men and women without previous experience in these fields. Even so they have been trained by experienced American news and radio men serving with military government and are now stout champions of objective news presentation, of freedom of the air for all responsible opinions, of on-the-spot broadcasting of community activities and of independent radio stations.

These men and women are perhaps the most important product of four years of occupation in radio. They must constitute the nucleus of future free radio, taking the place of tradition, professional books and college courses in educating the next crop of radio workers in the democratic concept of free information.

An attempt has been made to write the free, independent character of these stations into law. With the encouragement of American Military Government, each state has adopted a radio law which sets up a public radio council to be responsible for broadcasting. The laws all aim to keep the council free from domination by government or any special...
Radio Bremen sends its microphone to many community events as (left) open-forum meeting, (center) delivery of 2,000,000th CARE package in Germany, (right) athletic contest.

photos by Oliver, DENA, Bors

interest and to provide full representation of all the significant elements of community life—politics, culture, religion, agriculture, industry, labor and special youths' and women's groups. Broadcasting codes stipulate the obligation to present news objectively and to afford equal airtime for divergent views on public matters. With reservations only to protect the security of occupying powers and to prevent advocacy of militant nationalism or totalitarianism, commentators are assured the right to air their views. Thus a legal skeleton for free radio has been provided. Whether or not it takes on flesh and blood depends, of course, on how much value is placed on freedom of expression by the Germans themselves and how vigilant minorities will be to protect their legally granted rights.

The "COMMUNITY" character of radio has likewise been given a legal basis in the laws enacted in the US Zone. Since the first days of the occupation, it has been the goal of American Military Government, to see established a decentralized broadcasting system which would be difficult for a central regime to seize, as the Nazis did, for a one-voiced propaganda instrument.

Ideally, from an American point of view, there should be numerous, independently-owned stations. But up to now this has not been possible in postwar Germany. In addition to the difficulty of securing equipment and the expense of operating individual stations, the basic limiting factor has been and will continue to be shortage of frequencies. Establishment of state stations consumed all frequencies available and there is furthermore some question if all of these wavelengths can be retained.

The Copenhagen conference on European frequencies held last summer proposed drastic cuts in the facilities now in use in Germany. The United States entered into the record a formal reservation stating it would not be bound by this agreement threatening the high-powered transmitters in the US occupation areas in Germany.

While holding firmly to the reservation and making no preparations to conform with the Copenhagen agreement, US radio officials have encouraged the development of Frequency Modulation as the only solution of the frequency shortage problem. US-sponsored stations are already operating experimental FM transmitters to test their suitability for wide use and German manufacturers are studying the prospects for providing both transmitters and receivers necessary for such development. If this is the turn German radio takes, it opens the possibility of expanding and diversifying the present radio setup along a number of lines, including that of financing.

At present, German stations with the exception of those in Berlin are financed by the collection of listener fees as is customary in European countries. This fee system is conducted on a state basis and the public radio council in each state administers the funds for radio uses. It is apparent that such a system, while it has ardent proponents in Europe and has worked out admirably in many cases as the British Broadcasting Company (BBC), lacks the incentive which is provided by commercial competition in American radio.

It is too early to say if commercial radio will ever come to Germany. With Frequency Modulation opening up more frequencies, perhaps it will be possible to grant licenses to small commercial stations which will furnish competition to the state radio system and to each other. There is considerable interest evident among Germans anxious to experiment in such a venture.

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Radio Frankfurt inaugurated a round-table of the air to promote public interest and discussion of public problems. But the Germans were puzzled. For one thing, how could they have a round-table discussion when the studio had only square tables. So a round table was found and the program went on.

(photo from ISD OMGUS)
THE DOCUMENTARY treasures of German history must be made available to all the people and not reserved for scholars and government officials,” commented an expert consultant to the Cultural Affairs Branch, OMGRUS. The consultant, Mr. Ernst Posner, director of the School of Social Science and Public Affairs, American University, Washington, D.C., is touring the US Area of Occupation to promote a two-point program for improvement of German historical archives.

Use of new techniques for preservation of old documents and extension of archival service to the general public were cited by Mr. Posner as two aims for German archivists. He criticized German archivists for an “ivory tower” attitude, said documentary records of the past must contribute to the cultural growth of the whole people and recommended that German documents be popularized rather than reserved for research.

EXHIBITIONS, lectures and school tours were suggested by the American educator as practical means to make historical records a part of today’s culture. He pointed to the “Freedom Train” in the United States as a dramatic and effective means of increasing popular interest in a nation’s documentary records.

Mr. Posner, pointing out that Hitler’s racial program forced archives to concentrate on genealogical research, said this concentration on “family trees” diverted archivists’ attention from technical developments in other fields.

During Germany’s 13-year isolation the “lamination process,” which speeds restoration and preservation of documents, was developed in the United States. With the lamination method documents are preserved between two chemically-treated transparent plates. This process has replaced the time-consuming hand labor method still in use in Germany.

GERMANY’s greatest loss of documents as a result of the war was removal of the Bremen archives to Russia. Almost all other historical records are intact after careful protection and concealment during the war.

Among the documents preserved in German archives are official papers dating from the eighth century. Parchment documents issued by Charlemagne with a horizontal stroke as signature and the Golden Bull of 1356 which created the legal basis for further development of the Holy Roman Empire are among the greatest documentary treasures.

Radio Educational Campaign

MG radio personnel at Radio Stuttgart are conducting an educational campaign among the organizations proposed for representation on the radio council to be created under legislation passed by the Wurtemberg-Baden assembly. This campaign of conferences and lectures represents the final phase of a long-term educational project entered on by Military Government at the time it was decided to transfer control of the radio stations to German hands.

Now concentrated on those organizations with potential representation on the council and devoted to the functions and duties of council members in preserving freedom in radio, the educational work initially was directed to radio listeners and the general public in an effort to establish high standards of conduct for radio officials through widespread public awareness.

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