Sacred Rights of Free Expression

Mr. John J. McCloy, US High Commissioner and Military Governor for Germany, spoke recently to German citizens at ceremonies marking the turning over of Radio Stuttgart to German control. The text of his broadcast follows.

This transfer of the operation of the Stuttgart radio station from the hands of the Military Government of the United States to private German control affords me the first opportunity I have had since my arrival in Germany to deliver a message to the German people by radio.

In the undeniably long and difficult road back to normal living and respected and responsible intercourse with other nations, the transfer of this radio station to German control is another symbolic step. It has to date been operated in Germany by the representatives of an occupation power. That such an instrument was used objectively and for the benefit of the German people as much as in the interest of those who manage it does not alter the fact that its direction was not in the hands of Germans.

It is now, and for the first time in many years German owners can determine how this station shall speak. The station represents, like the invention of the printing press, one of the historical developments in the dissemination of human thought, and as such its potential for good or evil is apparent.

Past and present uses of broadcasting facilities have given us frequent and vivid examples of how such instruments can be abused. The air has often been defiled with all manner of distortion and calumny. By this transfer the Military Government of the United States in Germany has sought to signify the adherences of the people of the United States to the doctrines of free and truthful inquiry and expression by which that country in the course of many vicissitudes has lived and prospered.

Some say such doctrines cannot flourish in Germany. I do not believe it. The aberrations of the recent past cannot obscure the fact that at least for a certain period in her history Germany pointed the way to just such freedom.

By this step that we take today we seek to nourish again that old tradition, a tradition which enlightened much of Europe for too brief a period. It is likewise significant that control of this station does not pass to the unlimited control of the state. It is not an instrument of the state with its all-powerful tendency to favor the broadcast with state doctrine.

This transfer is a further earnest of the faith we have that Germans are capable of sustaining and enjoying the sacred rights of free expression. The German individual cannot enjoy the repression of his physical liberty or his thoughts by his leaders any more than can the individuals of other nations, but the world has had reasons to feel she has been far less jealous of these rights as far as his fellowmen were concerned than he could well have been. Here is now a further opportunity to demonstrate to the world that left to their own devices, Germans are as capable as others of maintaining and preserving free institutions.

In transferring this station we do so in the great hope that Radio Stuttgart under its new management will in a measurable period of time become known and accepted throughout Europe as an objective, efficient and thoroughly reliable disseminator of news, entertainment and culture to all who listen.