THE TOP LETTER in the daily mail, addressed in an elaborate scrawl on a soiled envelope, was postmarked from a Thuringian village in the Soviet Zone.

"A friend of mine from the American Zone," it said in German, "has sent me a newspaper carrying an article from your AMERIKA-DIENST about the new scientific methods being used to save American forests from certain blights. Could you send me more details? Parts of our forests here in Thuringia are threatened..."

The next, crisp and carefully type-written, was a request from the chief editor of the Sueddeutsche Sonntagszeitung, a Munich Sunday newspaper, for an article comparing today's budgeting, marketing and other domestic problems of the average German and American housewife.

The editor of the Hamburger Echo, a Hamburg newspaper, wanted to express his appreciation for receiving the full text of President Truman's State of the Union Message. He needed the text in full, he explained, to be able to write an informed, intelligent editorial.

Der Spiegel, the news-magazine weekly in Hanover, needed a photo of American humorist-cartoonist James Thurber in 24 hours, it possible.

The Stuttgarter Nachrichten, a Stuttgart daily, would like an aerial photo of the White House.

Could AMERIKA-DIENST compare the Berlin airlift with the wartime record established by the US Air Forces in flying the "hump" to China for the Berlin magazine SIE?

Could the Hochland Bote in Garmisch-Partenkirchen have an article on winter sports in the United States?

THIS WAS the daily mail addressed to the US Feature Service in the quiet little Hessian spa city of Bad Nauheim, 20 miles north of Frankfurt.

This was Germany, 1949, asking for facts, facts, facts: About the United States. About US people, schools, churches, politics, medicine, music, sports, foreign policy. About everything in the United States which Goebbels and Reich Press Chief Dietrich and their batteries of distortionists had twisted into vicious half-truths or conveniently stricken from the Nazi version of world history.

About things in the United States which the Soviet controlled press and radio have sought to distort since the end of Goebbels & Co.

The postman's arrival with the daily mail found the combined American-German staff of US Feature Service, known in German as AMERIKA-DIENST (literal translation: American Service) already pounding typewriters, grinding mimeograph machines, operating teleprinters, sorting photographs and stuffing mail sacks.

FROM THIS information fountain-head on the sprawling ground floor of what once was a Bad Nauheim sanatorium, 50,000 words and more than 40 pictures and illustrations go out each week to tell the US story to the three western zones of Germany, the Saar Region and Berlin.

The US Feature Service was established in Nuremberg as part of Information Services Division, OMGUS, in August, 1948, and moved to Bad Nauheim early this year. Today, a staff of four Americans and 34 Germans handle the eight services distributed by US Feature Service to newspapers, periodicals, press agencies, radio stations, information centers, libraries, colleges and universities, doctors and hospitals.

Likewise, special requests are handled with the same precision.

FOR THE DETAILED scientific information requested by the worried Thuringian forester, the AMERIKA-DIENST's American chief editor appealed to the State Department's Office of International Information, which operates from headquarters in Washington, D. C., the world-wide chain of US Information Services bureaus. OII, in turn, appealed to US Department of Agriculture forestry experts. The exact information was quickly forthcoming, and—if the letter succeeds in getting through into the Soviet Zone—a new American discovery may help save some Thuringian forests.

The women's editor of AMERIKA-DIENST was assigned the story on the comparative problems confronting the American and German housewife. From interviews, files and her

(Continued on next page)
THE OVERALL mission of US Feature Service can be summed up in five words: "to tell the American story."

The Amerika-Dienst trademark —"telling the American story:"— came from German staff members themselves, most of whom are young (average age: under 25) and hoping for an opportunity to visit the land about which they write every day. Only one, the chief of the Translations Department, has ever been in the United States, and he returned to Germany as a child.

To Americans, the word "propaganda" has a sinister connotation; something akin to "organized lying." Long exposure to "colored" or "tainted" news has led to a general acceptance in Europe of the word. But even here, the expression, "to make propaganda," is taken to mean that someone is grinding the axe of political ideology or a real estate development in the Bavarian Alps.

In the case of the Amerika-Dienst, its greatest so-called "propaganda" value has been the complete absence of what we know as propaganda. When US Feature Service was established, a few basic rules were laid down and have been enforced rigidly ever since. Among them are:

1. Amerika-Dienst would be a background, feature and general information service, non-competitive with the commercial wire agencies delivering "spot" news to Germany.

2. There would be no charge for Amerika-Dienst material and no credit-lines would be required by users, but the service could not be redistributed on a commercial basis.

3. The service would be strictly factual and informative, i.e., non-propagandistic in the propaganda sense as we know it.

There were several basic, sober considerations behind the third rule in particular. Years of Goebbels and his distortions had made the average German, the newspaperman especially, wary of any information bearing an "official" stamp. There was a great informational vacuum to be filled in Germany, stretching as far back as 1936. And, to engage in any campaign of rebuttal against the tirade of anti-American blasts from the East would only be dignifying the ridiculous.

Amerika-Dienst belongs to a school of thought which is convinced the Germans are hungry for the truth and believes in making factual information available to as much of the population as can be reached through the normal, respected outlets —newspapers, periodicals, existing radio channels, films and the rest.

To those who believe that the American heritage and way of life are worthy of dignified, forthright presentation, the acceptance of the Amerika-Dienst by German newspapers and other recipients should be gratifying.

When the US Feature Service was moved from Nuremberg to Bad Neuenheim in April, the announcement was made in circular letter to 130 individual editors. No replies were solicited, but in less than a week 17 editors had volunteered tributes such as these:

"...We can confirm that your service is increasingly popular..."—Wetzlarer Neue Zeitung of Wetzlar, Hesse.

"...the propaganda tendencies of the Amerika-Dienst are in most cases non-existent..."—Augsburger Tagespost of Augsburg, Bavaria.

Woll von Eckardt, Chief

own knowledge, she found that budgeting and high prices were common problems. There was no rationing in the United States, but basically, she concluded, housewives were pretty much housewives everywhere. She explained this in her story.

The picture files, now numbering more than 2,000 individual prints, produced photos of Thurber and the White House—and off they went by special delivery to Hanover and Stuttgart.

For the figures on the "hump" flights to China and the roundup on US winter sports, Amerika-Dienst appealed to Press Section, Reorientation Branch, Civil Affairs Division, Department of the Army—otherwise known as the New York Field Office or NYFO. This is the servicing agency for Information Services Division in US-occupied Germany and similar information units in other American-occupied areas — Austria, Japan and Korea.

Files of 3,000 pictures

Translators put American texts into German
"We regret that the large scope of your Dienst does not find sufficient reflection in our paper because of lack of space..."—Frankfurter Rundschau of Frankfurt, Hesse.

...still most enthusiastic about Amerika-Dienst. It illustrates background material on American problems..."—Braunschweiger Zeitung of Brunswick, Lower Saxony.

...For newspapers which use it as extensively as we do, Amerika-Dienst does the job of a special correspondent in the USA. It thus fills a gap which most German papers today could not fill themselves."—Aachener Volkszeitung of Aachen, North Rhine-Westphalia.

ANYONE WHO has spent time in Germany knows that the majority of Germans are ill-informed on basic, everyday history during the war years and the three or four years before. This correspondent has yet to find a young German who knows that Hitler declared war on the United States more than 24 hours before the US Congress declared a state of war existed with Germany. The Germans were given to believe the United States was the aggressor.

From the outset, US Feature Service devoted itself to filling Germany's great informational void with hard facts supplemented by charts and pictures. It didn't matter so much that the Empire State Building was the tallest in the world or that the United States had the greatest automobile industry in the world. What mattered more was that the farmers in Nebraska and Iowa worked from dawn to dark during the harvest season, just as the farmers in Germany. And that the over-all problems of Americans and Germans were those common to our Western civilization.

While the Soviet overt and controlled press and radio raised their voices in daily vilification, the Amerika-Dienst devoted its energies to bringing the information-hungry Germans factual accounts of the US elections and electoral system, the origin and development of the free trade unions in the United States, the living standard of the US citizen under a free economy, the preservation of civil liberties in the United States and the story of the free American press.

YOUNG GERMAN staff members, skeptical at first, suddenly became enthusiastic as the infant grew. Browsing in the newly-created library, the chief German editorial assistant came across an issue of the Sunday New York Times, tested its weight, carefully examined its various information-crammed sections and went to his typewriter. At least eight papers printed his signed article, "Two Pounds of Information," describing the wonders of one of New York's leading Sunday newspapers.

The German women's editor voluntarily pored through American magazines for women, came up with practical hints for German housewives on American discoveries and developments that could be adapted to the German home. The weekly Women's Service has become the backbone for expanding women's pages of newspapers throughout western Germany, and at least two radio stations rely on it almost exclusively for their weekly women's broadcasts.

A young German medical student was discovered pounding a teleprinter in the newsroom. This incipient doctor (a young girl), an editor found, had been forced to learn teleprinting to defray her medical school expenses. She was pressed into service as a consultant on the Medical Service, which is prepared by the American Medical Association in the United States and distributed through the Department of State to give doctors and hospitals the world over the benefit of the latest US medical and surgical developments.

THE NEED for an Agricultural News Service turned up a philosophy student. This young German volunteered to be the medium through which the Germans could learn about US agricultural progress—if he could have a little time. He sought out books on agriculture from the nearby Amerika Haus (US Information Center), and became an expert on the care of spring pigs and crop rotation.

A former German civilian policeman from Heidelberg, interested in journalism, was given a "trial" in...