“Mach Mit” -- At RIAS

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A NEW TWIST to radio “give away” programs was inaugurated by the American operated station RIAS in February when thousands of gifts ranging from cash and clothing to offers of marriage and blood transfusions were collected from west Berliners for distribution among returnees from Soviet Zone concentration camps.

In lobby of theater, all ticket holders were asked to contribute goods or money to the cause. (Pollaczek photo)

The program, a special benefit quiz broadcast, was staged in Berlin’s huge Titania Palast and was participated in by well-known personalities from film, theater, cabaret and radio. Tickets for the performance were completely sold out within two hours and all purchasers were asked to bring with them gifts of clothing, food, or household or toilet articles to aid several hundred political prisoners recently released from the Soviet camps at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen.

Large crates were set up in the lobby of the theater into which ticket holders dumped their gifts while special telephones were installed on the stage and at RIAS to accept the hundreds of calls from listeners offering assistance.

Net proceeds of the ticket sales and all of the prizes, contributed by Berlin firms, were turned over to the “Fighting Group against Inhumanity” and its director, Dr. Rainer Hildebrandt. This group has since undertaken distribution of the thousands of gifts received and reports that several hundred victims of communist oppression were directly benefited as a result of the broadcast quiz show, “Mach Mit” (Join with Me).

At least 50 RIAS employees contributed the equivalent of one working day in unpaid over-
time to insure the success of this production and all musicians and artists appearing on the program voluntarily contributed their services.

Offers of assistance were still being received three weeks after the broadcast. The latest compilation of assorted gifts totals 13,421. Additionally, 3,672 DM and 648.80 East marks were contributed, of which 2,275 DM resulted from ticket sales.

A breakdown of the gifts, by number and category includes:

1,328 offers of food and groceries.
1,205 gifts of tobacco.
8,347 gifts of toilet articles.
525 offers for medical, dental and optical services, including two offers of blood transfusions.
496 gifts of household articles, including an offer of a moving firm to move 10 tons of household goods to western Germany without charge.
70 offers of book and magazine subscriptions.
7 offers of apprentice and job training.
13 offers of temporary employment.
1,100 articles of clothing.
206 miscellaneous gifts, including five offers of marriage — and one canary!
63 offers of stationery articles.
61 offers of tools and machinery.

Dr. Hildebrandt, in accepting the many contributions and in thanking RIAS for this demonstration of public service, praised not only the material assistance thus rendered but also the morale encouragement which such a community action gave to those unfortunate people who either still are or have been victims of Communist oppression. — END