"School Clean-Up Day"

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THE DIRECTOR of one of Munich's large schools was shaking hands with a group of American soldiers late one afternoon some weeks ago.

"My English is so poor," he said, "but even if it were perfect, I could not find words to thank you enough for what you have done for us today.

"What has happened today is almost a dream. We thought it would be many years before all the rubble would be removed and our school grounds once again made a fit place for our children to play in."

What had happened at this school was duplicated at 42 other schools of Munich as result of the city-wide Schul-Schuttraeumungstag or "School Clean-Up Day," staged by more than 2,000 volunteer citizens, with the co-operation of Munich Military Post and nearby Air Force bases. The event was a perfect example of civic co-operation. Plans for work in each district were made by committee members and in every case more than enough citizens volunteered.

The joint effort by Germans and Americans has enabled the schools of Munich to offer the youth better playgrounds, cleaner buildings and improved facilities. Originally planned for one day, Saturday, June 3, the work was continued and completed on June 10.

The project, which was the direct result of demands made by numerous citizens at various town meetings here, was planned and administered by the 41 district citizens' committees of Munich, in co-operation with city authorities and American military forces. Office Munich, HICOG, served as liaison and co-ordinated details.

PROMPTLY AT 8 O'CLOCK on June 3 more than 2,000 volunteer workers, 150 trucks, 12 digger cranes and two bulldozers were all in action. The most important phase of the work was clearing of several thousand cubic yards of rubble from school grounds, and removal of ruins of buildings. However, it was not possible to complete this at 13 of the schools, and the workers cheerfully agreed to return the following Saturday.

At many schools the playgrounds and other facilities were improved,
in addition to the thorough cleaning. The interest aroused by the action is expected to result in further improvements, school authorities state.

Although equipment donated by the army units and by private firms in Munich took over the larger projects, there was plenty of hard work to be done by the individual citizens. At many of the schools it was not practical to move in machines. There the volunteers, among them many of the older school children, cheerfully did the work by hand.

THE SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN who participated in this event displayed the usual American enthusiasm and zest, and one German was overheard to remark, "After watching these Americans work it is no wonder that they won the war!" The citizens were especially amazed at the skill with which the operators manipulated the bulldozers and other machinery, and at the cheerful attitude displayed on what would ordinarily be a day off for the men.

Munich Military Post contributed 111 trucks, three crane shovels from Erding Air Base, 19 miles away, a crew came with a crane digger and trucks. Other equipment was donated by firms and individuals of the city. Munich breweries furnished ample food for lunches and enough beer for all workers.

In a letter to Office Munich, HICOG, Dr. Anton Fingerle, superintendent of schools, warmly praised the US military units for their co-operation in making the event "a great success." He especially thanked officers and men of the Munich Post Transportation Section, Munich Post Engineer Section and of the Air Bases.

"We would never have obtained this great success without the technical support and encouraging personal initiative of the Americans," he stated.

The action was similar to the cleanup day held in Munich last October, when more than 15,000 volunteers turned out for rubble removal and other work. +END