The CARE Legend

By JAMES STANLEY
CARE Mission to Germany

SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, German newsboys on the streets of Frankfurt hawked their evening papers with the challenging cry:

"Hitler’s vest found in CARE package! German family is sent Hitler’s vest!"

The announcement caused considerable curiosity on Frankfurt streets, but in CARE’s Frankfurt offices, in the Chase Bank Building, it brought simply resigned frustration. As anticipated, an examination of the report showed that it was not a CARE parcel that was involved, in the strict copyrighted sense of the term, but a personal gift package assembled and mailed by somebody’s Uncle Hans in Milwaukee. In it were several articles of clothing, including one jacket which was later discovered to bear the mark of Hitler’s private tailor.

How the garment got to the States in the first place, or how it happened to be mailed back here, CARE did not attempt to check. It was enough to discover what was already known all too clearly — that "CARE Paket" has become a generic term in Germany to cover any kind of gift package.

In one respect, CARE realizes and appreciates the indirect flattery involved in the situation — the fact that it has functioned so successfully that its name has come to mean any welcome gift from overseas. During the past three and a half years, the German recipient has come to regard CARE almost as a synonym for American good will, and on numerous occasions German cartoonists have simply used the CARE package symbol to indicate the American zone, or American occupation policies.

AT THE SAME TIME, this over-optimistic appreciation carries its own built-in penalty. If a parcel post package fails to arrive, or if the Peachy Parcel Service, operating out of Box 26, Chicago, Ill., delivers inferior goods, CARE is apt to be blamed. Many people, including Americans, continue to confuse CARE’s non-profit welfare services with the 24 pounds of coffee, nylon and penicillin parcel systems, and cast a suspicious eye at CARE whenever headlines proclaim another gift parcel racket has been uncovered. Hitler’s vest has become the price of popularity.

Since August 1946, CARE has delivered in Germany a volume of scarce foods and textiles which will shortly total 6,000,000 packages. Statistically, this means a donor contribution of about 120,000,000 pounds of goods, 90 percent of which was food, or an aggregate gift of nearly DM 500,000,000 worth of supplies if measured by prevailing German prices. It means that, on the average, one in every seven American families has sent a CARE package to one in every two West German and Berlin families, if distributed equally.

Something of the net impact of this $60,000,000 collective family-to-family good will was measured in a recent HICOG survey. It revealed that more Germans are aware of CARE than know about the vastly larger Marshall
Plan. Furthermore — unlike the Marshall Plan — CARE is regarded as 90 percent pure and unadulterated friendship, untainted by political or economic motives. In answer to the question "Do you believe that CARE packages are sent primarily to help, to gain a profit, or to gain a political objective?", percentages ranging from 86 in Bavaria to 94 in Berlin checked the first alternative. In conclusion, the survey stated:

"It is noteworthy that only two persons (out of 2,000 polled) had volunteered such statements when asked whether they had complaints about the organization. One said 'The organization is run solely for profit.' The other comment was 'America sends the packages only to get itself talked about.'"

SUCH OVERWHELMING ACCEPTANCE is primarily due, of course, not to CARE but to the American people who continue to send parcels in surprising volume to Germany, and to 15 other countries in Europe and Asia, without thought of political or economic return. CARE has merely provided the non-profit channel for this good will flow, insuring fast, guaranteed distribution.

To do this, it still uses the procedure, somewhat refined but not basically altered, which proved so successful at CARE's debut in Europe. Standard packages, now including a wide selection of food and textile parcels, are stockpiled all over Europe. When a package is ordered in the States, instructions are sent over by air from CARE's New York headquarters to release the desired parcel to the recipient, and packages are now being regularly delivered within one to two weeks after the order has been placed. The beneficiary in turn is asked to sign a receipt which is returned to the donor, thus proving the delivery of the proper parcel to the proper recipient.

The relative simplicity of this procedure, together with CARE's bulk buying and ECA-subsidized shipping costs, still result in a package whose contents cannot be duplicated in New York for CARE's $10 price, not to mention costs of packing, mailing, insuring and receiving a signed receipt.

There are two additional by-products of the CARE procedure which are, perhaps, not so well known. The first is CARE's practice of declaring "dividends" from time to time out of the funds which in any other firm would be retained as profits. CARE dividends, however, are turned over to recipient countries in the form of additional parcels. These are given, not by individual donors but by CARE itself, and distributed strictly on a basis of need by the leading German welfare societies. To date, CARE has distributed $1,700,000 worth of dividend parcels and bulk supplies to Germany.

Thus the donor aids not only his specified beneficiary, but also contributes toward a parcel which will go to some other particularly needy family.

THE SECOND BY-PRODUCT has reached an extent which has been something of a surprise to CARE officials themselves. It is the result of the fact that many Americans still address gift parcels, not to any specific recipient, but to general relief. Sometimes they may specify "A needy family in the Ruhr," or "A widow with
children," or even — in an attempt to find their exact counterpart abroad — "A telephone employee with three children under 10." In the great number of such cases, the widow with children or the telephone company family writes a letter of thanks to the donor, a warm correspondence ensues, and the recipient is unofficially adopted. The HICOG survey cited earlier disclosed that as high as 20 percent of CARE recipients received, or had first received, a package through general relief channels.

The immediate popularity of CARE in the years right after the war was chiefly due to the fact that it offered quick and guaranteed delivery of a standard package to meet a standard need. Clear across Europe, everyone needed pretty much the same things.

Today, five years after the war, that standard need does not exist to anything like the same extent. Countries and individuals have recovered at different speeds and in different directions. In Germany, for example, there is now an enormous spread between the haves and have-nots; between what is available in the exclusive shops and restaurants, and the standard of life in the average or below-average income groups.

There are still great masses of people whose lot has improved very little, if at all, from the dark days of 1945 and 1946. These would include most of the people in the Soviet Zone, a large share of the more than 8,000,000 expellees and refugees in the West, the unemployed and the university students. To these people, the lavish shop windows are pure frustration.

TO MEET THESE changing conditions, CARE has widened the range of parcels available to include not only several types of food packages, but household linen, blankets, layette, woolen suitings, knitting wool, and others as well. It has also made a more strenuous effort to direct the flow of parcels toward the lowest economic levels in the population.

Bulk Purchases from German Economy Authorized

Bulk purchases of food and agricultural products from the German economy by the US Army Quartermaster, European Exchange Service, US and Allied clubs and similar organizations are authorized by a directive issued by the Office of the US High Commissioner early in June.

Removal of restrictions on bulk purchase of food by US and Allied groups and institutions is expected to result in material benefit to the German economy, according to officials of the Food and Agriculture Division, Office of Economic Affairs, HICOG. Under the new regulation, the German economy will be able to increase substantially its dollar earnings.

Restrictions on individual purchases of non-rationed items by members of the US Occupation Forces and their dependents were lifted last September. Prior to issuance of the new directive, which ends most remaining controls on purchases of food from German sources, organizations desiring to purchase in bulk quantities were required to obtain advance clearance from HICOG headquarters.

Purchases by US and Allied groups and individuals will continue to be "limited to quantities normally required to meet personal consumption needs of individuals and ... of personnel serviced by clubs or other institutions," the directive states. "No food will be mandatorily requisitioned from the German economy." The directive adds that "bulk procurement may not be made for any food or agricultural item on which the German internal price is subsidized by the German government."

Munich Medicos Fail to Cast Votes

Dr. Robert I. Hood, public health adviser of OLC Bavaria, declared recently that Munich physicians "clearly indicated a woeful lack of interest in exercising their democratic prerogatives" in the recent balloting for local members of the House of Delegates of the State Medical Society. More than 70 percent of the eligible physicians failed to vote in the elections.