US OCCUPATION PERSONNEL who punch figurative time clocks at HICOG offices in the US Zone often wonder about the work done by their “distant” relatives, the resident officers. Farmed out to the counties, on call 24 hours a day, and doing work that is often 90 percent improvisation, the US Resident Officers are serving exactly the same objectives as the parent High Commissioner’s Office. But the RO’s themselves might be hard put to explain their duties.

Recently the senior resident officer of the Kassel district gave a talk to his colleagues. Here, in excerpt form, is his definition of the job of a US Resident Officer.

During the month of June, I had as my guest for two weeks the county resident officer of Soest, in the British Zone. We spent a lot of time discussing the differences in the jobs we do—and came to the conclusion that we are fundamentally serving the same objectives. I did discover, however, that there were major differences in administration and the techniques we use in gaining our objectives. I want to talk about the way all of us work.

For ease in understanding our activities in the American zone, we can pretty well divide our work into five parts:

1. Administration.
2. Intelligence. The intelligence we collect is not the cloak-and-dagger type; we are interested only in overt information. Therefore our reports cover the fields of politics, economics, sociology and related activities.
3. What I like to call “civic activities,” but more commonly known in our zone as the “reorientation program.”
4. Representation. This covers those activities attended by the RO as the representative of the state commissioner or the high commissioner.
5. Miscellaneous, which includes a multitude of items running from the petty to the important, from problems with the housing office to quasi-consular activities.

GENERALLY, THE MOST interest is aroused by our civic activities program — and in turn we generally place the most emphasis on our town meetings and forums, youth activities and exchange programs.

One of our resident officers, with much more energy than I, has put on paper 12 objectives and the methods by which he plans to achieve them. The statements made in this list of objectives are not binding on any particular resident officer, but may be used by him as a guide in developing and carrying out his own program.

1. Every community should have an active forum or public meeting with a committee of at least five members, but no more than seven. In communities with a population below 1,500, public meetings should be held at least six times a year, and in communities larger that, eight to 12 times a year.

Members of these committees should be elected; they should maintain good relationship with the community’s administrative bodies. A forum should be independent of all officials, and its chairman should preferably not be a member of a city or community body, nor an outstanding political figure. The mayor, however, may be and usually is the chairman of a town hall meeting.

2. Every community should have an active parents’ advisory committee, which would be assisted by as large as possible a number of parents in a meeting at least once every two months.

3. Where possible, every community should have a discussion group or forum for youth between the ages of 14 and 25, to meet once a month in winter and every six weeks in summer, sponsored by the town’s parents’ council and a youth committee. The groups should be self-governed.

IT IS A GOOD IDEA to have the senior class of the public school visit the council meeting and a town hall meeting three times a year. A student-government day should be held with the best student acting as mayor.

5. The senior classes of the higher schools should attend various governmental offices and public meetings such as the county administrator’s office, mayor’s office, local court, labor office, labor court, a large factory and a public meeting.

6. Establishment of a self-government student council in each of the higher schools should be encouraged.

7. Every community should have an organized women’s group of any name or purpose, to be independent and to include all groups and classes. Wherever conditions warrant, a German-American women’s club, a German-American men’s club or a combination of the two should be established.

8. As many youth centers as possible should be provided, by furnishing barracks or other rooms. A youth instructor is a desirable addition, if funds allow. Establishment of a youth center can be made a community project in which as many elements as possible participate.

9. A civic activities committee will do much to strengthen the civic activities program through criticism of old, and advocacy of new activities. The committee should include a refugee, a high school teacher, priest, minister, women’s group leader, lawyer, youth leader, trade union representative, businessman, farmer, parent, vocational school teacher, people’s college teacher and public school teacher.

10. Here’s how to keep your exchange program in shape: establish an exchange file of all persons qualified for and interested in exchange. Concurrently, establish a project file by topic and proposed departure date. Maintain contact with all exchange returnees for use in accomplishing any objective in the civic activities program.
11. Educational and cultural films should be shown in every community once every six weeks. Discussion meetings can be held in connection with the film showings.

12. It is the RO's job also to encourage and assist in the establishment of independent civic, social and cultural organizations of a democratic character, that is, a junior chamber of commerce, civil rights organizations, professional women's organizations and the like.

WHEN DO WE FIND TIME to do all these things? Actually, we don't at any one time. However, if we can get one such program on its feet, we'll find more time can be spent on another — particularly as it is a policy in the American zone to establish all activities with the exception of the exchange program as a German-directed and sponsored activity. We believe this is essential if any good we achieve while here is to remain after we leave.

It is a comparatively simple matter to establish a series of meetings under our own sponsorship and attract a large number of people to them. However, it is an entirely different matter to convince the mayor, for instance, to hold a town meeting and to persuade the people that they should come and discuss local, national and international problems. I am convinced, however, that the latter method is the only one which will bring lasting democratic ideas into the minds of the participants.

We recognize that essentially a forum is nothing new in Germany. There have in the past been many types of meetings, under many different names, where the citizenry got together to discuss their problems. Unfortunately, however, these meetings were sponsored by groups interested in attaining their own ends, and not for the welfare of the population as a whole.

It should be pointed out here that in talking to the Germans about democratization we stress the fact that we are not talking about Americanization. We suggest to them that they should investigate all forms of democratic government in the world today, be it Swiss, French, British, Scandinavian or American. Then, we tell them, they can extract those ideas which can best be applied to their own circumstances.

We believe in stimulating German thinking by pointing out democratic ways and urging that they be adapted and given a trial. We do not believe in shoving democratic ideas down their throats. This would be more than dictatorship, with which they are already familiar.

We are attempting to inculcate with them the idea that democratic government stems from the ground up — that no country can be a democracy if a small group is allowed to govern it and if the voice of the people is so weak it cannot be heard.

A FURTHER WORD about our exchanges program. This is probably the most important part, with the exception of the youth program, of the activities being carried on in the American zone.

Fortunately we are able to subsidize trips to the United States, lasting from 90 days to one year. These trips cover a huge range of activity. For example, from the city of Kassel we now have a city councilor in the United States studying local government. We made sure we picked a man under 45, intelligent and receptive toward democratic ideas. We have a number of young legal trainees studying legal procedures at various US universities. We plan to send one of Kassel's leading women to study housing conditions with emphasis on social housing.

Last May and this, some 40 children between the ages of 14 to 19 left for a year's stay in the States. These young people will live with families of the same general background as their own families — farm children will live on farms; city children will live with laborers, businessmen or professional men. While there they will attend American high schools. These young people have agreed to come back to Germany to live and work.

Regarding our youth activities program: we are doing all we can through persuasion, example, teaching or any other method to impress upon German youth that they are citizens and prospective voters. We are establishing youth forums, discussion groups and related types of intellectual activities. Realizing that one way to attract and hold the attention of young people is to offer them a sweet, we encourage camps, sports, the teaching of games, folk-dancing, music, etc. We are also attempting to break down prejudices against unorganized youth.

Wherever we give financial or material aid to youth groups we insist that it be used for all youth and not for a privileged or organized few. We subsidize to a limited extent the youth activities supervisors throughout Hesse. This of course gives us a talking point when we want county, state or other youth officials' help to gain our objectives.

We have designed our youth program with this thought in mind — that no one is too young to become aware of his place as an individual in the community, with all the rights and responsibilities that go with it.