CANDY RAINED DOWN from the skies and gifts of shoes, toys, clothing and turkey dinners were showered on tens of thousands of Germans as Americans celebrated their sixth postwar Christmas in Germany.

The big-bellied, deep-voiced US version of Santa Claus became as real to Germany's needy as the *Christkind* which symbolizes gifts and Christmas plenty to Germans everywhere.

Americans emptied their pockets for those in need, but managed, in 1950's comparative prosperity, to make Christmas more of a party-time than a time for handouts. For kids there were new shoes, but toys, too; for the aged warm clothing, but also parties. Where orphans no longer needed food or shoes, Americans gave a sandbox, swings or chinaware to the institutions where they live.

Germans took more than a passive part in the American-style Christmas; German children used halting English to perform holiday plays at Information Centers and youngsters in the GYA programs used US-supplied materials to make toys and clothing for the less privileged.

There was a touch of the Cold War to Christmas in Berlin — kids from the Soviet Sector poured across the border in response to loudspeakers to collect gifts from East Berlin youngsters trudge across the border from the...
Tempelhof Air Base personnel. And to some endeavors there was a tinge of Big Business as whole areas were canvassed for needy and given gifts on a giant, all-inclusive scale.

The American who didn’t contribute in some way to Germany’s Christmas was a rare bird indeed.

AT THE HICOG HEADQUARTERS in Frankfurt, Americans topped any previous fund drive with contributions of $2,756 (part of which was given by State Department’s Bureau of German Affairs). Germans employed at headquarters gave DM 2,608 (around $620). The Frankfurt Allied Women’s Club and the Bad Homburg Women’s Club, working with Frankfurt’s welfare office, distributed gift packages and shoes-and-clothing certificates (redeemable at a local department store) purchased with the funds. Well over 1,000 children living in squalid camps and bunkers, benefited by the project.

HICOG offices in US Zone states, Bremen and Berlin handed out hundreds of pounds of fruit, nuts, candy and other foodstuffs, arranged movies and parties, entertained local personnel, their children and the underprivileged of all ages.

(Continued on page 66)