ONLY SEVEN years ago millions of cartridges, grenades and bombs had been stored in a pine forest in Westphalia of western Germany, where today German refugees from eastern Europe look back on the first phase of a real pioneer resettlement undertaking. On the grounds of a former ammunition depot of the German army a community of approximately 3,000 has mushroomed up since 1946. "Operation Pioneer" offers a singular opportunity for expellees and refugees to build a new life and regain the self-respect that the Communists would destroy.

In 1946, when the ammunition depot Espelkamp-Mitwald, 25 miles northeast of Osnabruuck, was scheduled for destruction, a study group of the Relief Organization of the Evangelical Church under the direction of the Swedish Pastor Birger Forrell intervened with British authorities to have the project and its undamaged buildings spared in order to house German refugees. The dynamiting was temporarily halted and the first settlers moved into the sheds and bunkers of the depot.

ALTHOUGH IT was uncertain at that time whether the dynamiting would be continued, the area attracted refugees in increasing numbers. American Mennonites were the first to bring actual assistance to the settlers from outside of Germany. Tall men with wide-brimmed hats came into the thick-set forest region to live with the disillusioned refugees, mending and remodeling with their own hands the shacks that provided shelter, felling trees and clearing underbrush to provide fields so that potatoes and vegetables could be grown. This presence of the American Mennonites at Espelkamp combined with the sympathetic understanding of the state officials had at the same time a stabilizing effect on the early settlers, many of whom were deeply depressed by their seemingly endless flight through Europe.

In 1948 General W. H. A. Bishop, then British state commissioner of North Rhine-Westphalia, released the area of the Espelkamp depot to the German authorities. So encouraged, the Relief Organization of the Evangelical Church initiated a survey of the economic and traffic conditions of the Espelkamp area to see whether it would be suitable for the establishment of a large-scale refugee community.

THE FINDINGS of this survey prompted the Evangelical Church and the German state to join in a common enterprise for the first time in Germany since 1918. A planning and administrative corporation, known as the "Aufbaugemeinschaft Espelkamp," was founded to
plan and erect at Espelkamp a town which could harbor a large number of refugees and expellees. These people would be living by their crafts and whatever large-scale industry could be settled in this area. The Church and the German state hold equal shares in this corporation.

The treks of refugees to Espelkamp then were organized by the corporation. The only persons who would be admitted were those who could be employed by the various industries settling in Espelkamp or else were persons who knew a craft useful for the community. Manufacturers of rubber and steel products and furniture, evicted from East Germany, reestablished themselves in the town; others were asked to move to Espelkamp from nearby areas in order to create an industrial center which could provide work for some 15,000 refugees scheduled to be settled in the town within the next few years.

However, only part of the program has been realized so far and yet Espelkamp in only one year has grown from 1,200 inhabitants to 3,000 or more today.

**THE BIG HEADACHE** of Espelkamp has been the financing of the building program. As a rule the construction is subsidized from the refugee funds of the German government. These funds, however, were not enough to fill all needs. Recently the United States financed the erection of two large housing projects from ECA and HICOG funds. Other European countries, including Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands, also contributed to the construction.

Building material came roughly cut from the surrounding forest. Concrete quarried from the dynamited bunkers and pillboxes of the former ammunition depot serves as foundations for the streets. The ammunition

sheds and halls today house the industrial works with newly erected halls apparently following the construction pattern of the old ones. Most firms, when moving into an old shed, set up their machines and start to work long before even the most primitive repairs have been made to the floors, ceilings and windows.

The town of Espelkamp is growing fast and soon the responsibility for electing a community council, a mayor and county representatives will be placed in the hands of the people. There are already men and women in Espelkamp who realize the responsibility of local government and it will be very likely that they will activate the interest of the refugee in his community and teach him to utilize democratic self-government apparatus on a local level.

**THE YOUTH** present the most pressing problem of Espelkamp today. When the German residents in Poland, Latvia, Hungary and Yugoslavia were evicted in 1945, many children were mostly separated from their parents and put in internment camps where the Communists in most cases either tried to indoctrinate them or consigned them to labor. Many of these youth were shipped to Germany after a few years and others escaped to the West on their own. They ended up in refugee camps in West Germany or made an obscure living in the big cities for some time. A great number of these young people are presently gathered in an institution at Espelkamp named "Steilhof" (named after a German welfare worker). This is a social welfare institution operated by the Evangelical Church and subsidized by the German state.

Here the refugee youth, mostly orphans, are separated by age groups and at first receive schooling in the German language. Their chief problem, however, is to get professional training so that they can become useful members of the community.

The past of many of these boys and girls is packed with heartrending stories and one boy casually depicted his with the understatement: "It was not easy to come to my parents. It took me two years." He had been interned by the Polish police and then escaped. He was caught in East Germany by the Soviet Zone police who sent him back to Poland. His guards there beat him unconscious when he arrived and put him to work in the coal mines. Again he escaped and managed to cross into East Germany; this time he passed himself off as a Pole. After months he located his parent's whereabouts. His father had died in the meantime and his mother lived in southern Germany but he was unable to join her. He came to Espelkamp on his 15th birthday. He likes it here.

**HERE AT ESPELKAMP** the Steilhof Institution plans to build a trade school where the young refugees will receive professional training in crafts which are desirable for the Espelkamp industries.

The area, and the Steilhof in particular, is a good example of the interest the free world takes in the
problems of one of its members. Thus one of the homes for refugee juveniles was erected recently through a donation from the HICOG fund, the costs for other buildings have been contributed by the Lutheran Churches of Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands. A young Dutch pastor has been assigned to the youth camp of the Steinhof by the Dutch Evangelical Church. He and his charming wife have already established a close personal contact with the youths, helping them with their individual problems and increasingly receiving the confidence of even the most suspicious youngsters.

Espelkamp is pioneer country in more than one respect. The town is still quite primitive and there is no entertainment to speak of for either young or old. There is a sporting field on the grounds of the Steinhof and in the neighborhood a swimming pool is being built but that will be hardly enough to satisfy the hungry minds of the refugee settlers and the younger group. The nearest town with a motion picture theater is some 12 miles away and a visit of a traveling movie to Espelkamp has become a major social event.

THEREFORE, the Film Section of the American Consulate General at Duesseldorf recently lent a film projector and equipment to the Steinhof Institution. This equipment presents entertaining and informational films to the refugees and to the youth in particular. Informal discussions after these films combined with a wide variety of pamphlet literature encourage the people to express their opinion freely, thereby strengthening their self assurance and preparing them for active participation in discussions of civic matters of their own community.

One of the main problems has been largely overcome: not to have the Espelkamp project end up as a refugee camp but to make it an integral part of western Germany and North Rhine-Westphalia, where it may well become an important economic and social factor.

A woman teacher at the Steinhof states: "These refugees could be the pride of any nation in the world. They are industrious, enterprising and talented in many ways. But they are disillusioned by their past experiences. The efforts of the West to help them build a new future must not fail to seize the refugees' imagination by getting the fact through to them that they are being received in a free world in a new home." Operation Pioneer has pointed the way.

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**Carl Schurz Exhibition**

An exhibition, commemorating the life and work of Carl Schurz was presented in October at the Bremen America House under sponsorship of the Carl Schurz Society of Bremen.

Attending the opening ceremony on United Nations Day Oct. 24 were members of the Carl Schurz Society, the Bremen Consular Corps, the Bremen Senate, as well as Michael Harris, chief of the MSA Special Mission to Germany, and Dr. Peter Mueller, chairman of the Steuben-Schurz Society of Frankfurt.

The ceremony was opened by Consul General Edward D. McLaughlin who remarked that every effort of Carl Schurz was directed on a binational scale toward those basic humanitarian goals which seven years ago were underwritten on an international scale by 50 nations in the United Nations Charter with the aim to secure freedom of mankind to live in peace under a clean and honest government dedicated to affording equal opportunities for its citizenry. After reviewing a few of the international accomplishments during the past, such as the activities of the International Refugee Organization, The United Nations Commission for Prisoners of War, The United Nations Commission for Human Rights and the Ford Foundation, and noting that these activities would have received Schurz' hearty endorsement, Mr. McLaughlin expressed the hope that the exhibition may serve not only to cement good relations between Carl Schurz' homeland and his adopted country but also show men of good will that the desired world order can be attained through cooperative effort.

Dr. Hermann Apelt, president of the Carl-Schurz Society described the conditions prevailing in Germany and the United States at the time of Carl Schurz' emigration.