

IV. C. COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Without exception, the America Houses have been successful in establishing themselves as cultural institutions. This is basic to the acceptance of an effective operation of a foreign nation in a German community. A gratifying community relationship has grown up in those instances where the America House has jointly sponsored programs with other groups in the community.

The problem now is not to increase the community acceptance of the America Houses but rather to capitalize on their position in attaining the Public Affairs objectives without becoming too much of a general civic institution. It has been a temptation to become so enmeshed in performing functions as a community cultural institution that the Houses are frequently prone to weigh program desirability first in terms of what the community finds most popular rather than in terms of promoting Public Affairs objectives.

Use of America Houses by Local Organizations

During the difficult post-war rehabilitation years when meeting places for organizations were difficult to find, the America Houses followed a liberal policy in making their facilities available. This was and is good. The practice serves both as a civic service and as a means of drawing visitors inside the America Houses. The idea should be continued, but a consistent policy should be followed to capitalize on it. Something more is called for than space and janitorial service. This does not imply that the America Houses should insist on tightly tailoring programs of organizations to its own activities, but there are many subtle as well as direct opportunities to capitalize on the presence of other groups. Splendid opportunities are afforded to make bibliographies, films, pamphlets, and exhibits either directly or indirectly available to these organizations.

The Director in the Community

The need for caution in the director's personal relationships with the community is apparent. He must have intimate contacts, and usually does, with the leaders of the community, and he must participate in community activities. The call for caution stems from the natural tendency to follow too avidly the philosophy of "to see and be seen" in the community. If followed without selectivity, it is easy for a director to find his time and energy vitiated with so many community affairs that sufficient time is not left to perform the fundamental Public Affairs program.