

View of the United States' newest Information Center, opened Feb. 22 in Essen, in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

# Ruhr's Information Center

A NEW US INFORMATION CENTER, designed especially for the steel and coal laborers of the Ruhr, was dedicated at Essen on Washington's Birthday as a center of international understanding in Germany's most important industrial area.

German governmental and labor officials, speaking at the dedicatory ceremony in the new red-brick building, declared the center—known locally as *Amerika Haus Ruhr*—would improve German-American relations by enabling Germans to form freely their own opinions about America and Western democracy, to learn about American labor-management relations, and to "rediscover" the New World whose Old-World heritages have been modernized and returned to Europe.

"The principles of democracy are deeply rooted in the American people and have shaped the American way of life," said Christian Fette, chairman of the German Federation of Trade Unions. "It will be an essential func-

tion of this US Information Center to give the German people an insight into the democratic way of life of the United States. Its facilities and manifold programs can have a very positive influence on our own young democracy."

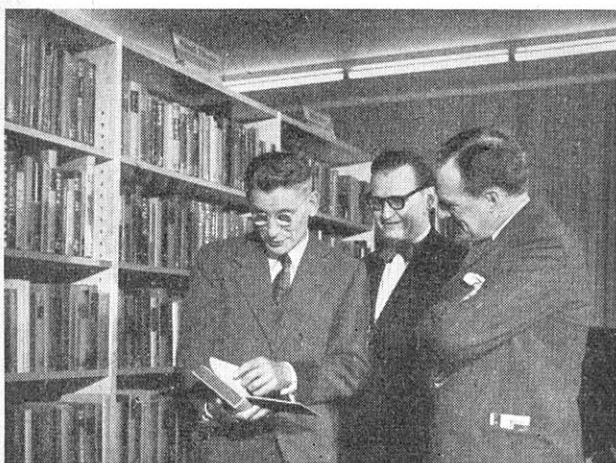
Karl Arnold, minister-president of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, said: "This building is destined to place means at our disposal which will help us to form

## Cover Photograph

The bas-relief on the front of the US Information Center symbolizes "woman" (upper left), "man" (lower left) and "child" (lower right), making up the "family" which is the "basis of society." The design is by Professor Lungwitz of the "Folkwang Werkschule" (art school) of Essen. (All photos by Claude Jacoby of Public Relations Division, HICOG).



Choice of 300 American magazines and trade publications on open shelves is offered in periodicals room. Standing is Henry A. Dunlap, chief of HICOG's Information Centers Advisory Staff, looking over a magazine with visitor.



Browsing in 10,000-Book library are, l.-r., Rudolf F. Bertram, director of HICOG's Office of Labor Affairs; Edick Anderson, Jr., director of the "Amerika Haus Ruhr," and LaVerne Baldwin, American Consul General in Duesseldorf.

Large, airy, well-lighted main reading room of Essen's newly-opened Information Center, the first in Germany-wide chain to be constructed especially for that purpose. Interior decoration was designed by a New York firm.



an opinion of our own. Thus we no longer will have to rely on the eyes of other observers. American literature, American science, American music and painting are available here and documentary films will give us an idea of landscape and work in the New World. This building is destined to become a center for free exchange of opinion and for individual forming of opinion, free from compulsion." (For full text, see page 2.)

Also speaking at the dedicatory ceremony Feb. 22 before a large opening-day crowd including leading German, American and Allied officials were R. F. Bertram, acting director of the Office of Labor Affairs, HICOG; Henry A. Dunlap, senior adviser of the Information Centers Advisory Staff, HICOG; Brigadier J. Lingham, British state commissioner for North Rhine-Westphalia, and Dr. Hans Toussaint, mayor of Essen. Presiding was Edick Anderson, Jr., director of the center.

**A**MERIKA HAUS RUHR is housed in the first building to be designed and constructed in Europe for a US Information Center—others being located in renovated or reconstructed buildings initially intended for other purposes. Located on a rubble-cleared plot in the heart of Essen, the center's building is a modern U-shaped structure of dark red brick. The two-story left wing houses the library and an exhibition hall; the center section, also of two stories, contains the foyer, a conference room and periodicals reading room; the right wing of one story has a 300-seat theater for motion-picture and stage performances.

Headquarters for US information service to the thickly populated Ruhr, the center and its facilities serve an area of 4,000,000 persons, many of whom are employed in the extensive coal mines and steel plants of west-central Germany.

The Amerika Haus Ruhr specializes in serving the working people of the coal and steel industries and their families, although its facilities are comparable to the work being carried on by the other 17 USIE centers in Germany. These facilities include an open-shelf library with 10,000 volumes principally of American literature, a library of more than 300 documentary films on labor unions and other aspects of life in America and the Western world, a children's library, a record library and player, and an extensive collection of the latest American magazines in the periodicals room.

The project for the building of the US Information Center in Essen was initiated when Patricia Van Delden was chief of the Information Centers Branch of HICOG. Mrs. Van Delden was recently transferred from Frankfurt to Tokyo to direct similar USIE operations in Japan.

Construction of the center was begun in January 1951 on a site leased to HICOG by the city of Essen. It was financed entirely from Marshall Plan counterpart funds. The building was designed by Prof. Hermann Gehrig, an Essen architect, and built by the German construction firm of Philip Holzmann, A.G. The interior decoration was designed by a New York firm.

**I**N POINTING TO THIS center as a means of giving the German people an insight into the American way of life, German Trade Union Chairman Fette expressed his thanks to the US Government for the center and extended his gratitude to the American labor unions which, he said, helped the German unions and workers at a time when such assistance was not very popular.

"I cannot, however, limit my expression of gratitude to the American unions; it would be unjust not to speak about the attitude of the entire American nation in this connection," Mr. Fette continued. "We should always gratefully remember the aid we received from the American people, later officially continued as the Marshall Plan. I think that this attitude of a victor nation of World War II represented a substantial contribution to understanding among the nations."

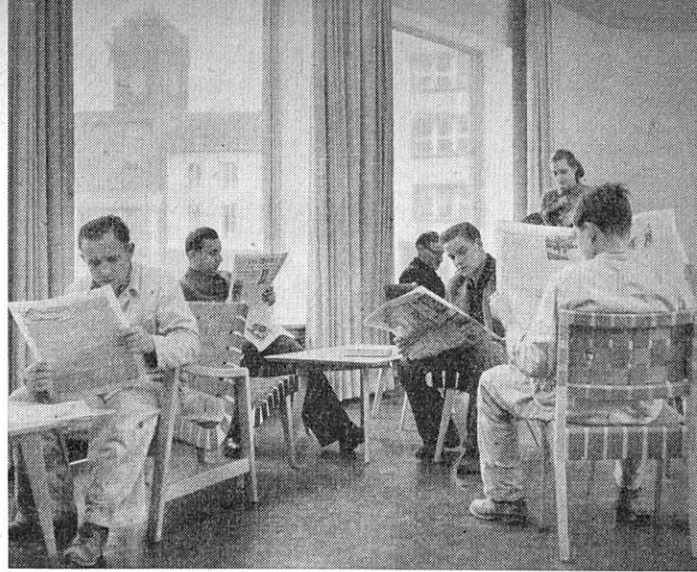
Denying frequent allegations that the Germans are by nature not suited for a democratic government and way of life, the labor-union chief said, "The overwhelming majority of the German people are about to firmly implant democratic principles in their country. They reject dictatorship, from whatever side it may come. Millions of Germans in the eastern part of our country long for the day on which they will be reunited with their brothers and sisters in the West in a free and united Germany. Their suffering under Soviet dictatorship is a demonstrative lesson which makes us day by day appreciate more the value of freedom."

Mr. Fette pointed out that the *Amerika Haus Ruhr* would be called upon to play an important part in helping to avoid anything which might impair the growth of the German democracy by disseminating information about the United States. "Knowledge about other countries is the basis of confidence, and confidence is the basis of cooperation and peace," he concluded.

**E**CHOING MR. FETTE'S thought in a brief talk outlining the purpose of the US Information Centers, Mr. Bertram said that Americans are interested in making Germans acquainted with the United States not because they want to force their way of life upon the German people, "but because we know we have to start with knowing each other better if we want to build a peaceful community of free nations."

The goal of building a European community, he continued, requires the difficult task of tearing down existing economic, social and political barriers. "The disappearance of these barriers is particularly essential for the working population, whose standard of living will constantly increase as the European economy enlarges.

"Here in Essen, in this congested industrial area, we hope to have an opportunity to give a comprehensive outline of the functions of workers, trade unions and other organizations within an American community. We do not want you to simply copy our methods, but we hope we can show you what ways and means we in the United States employ in this field." The HICOG Labor Affairs director also said, "We know that we can learn much from you, and we hope that you will learn from us, too." +END



Visitors from all walks of life now gather daily in new center's reading rooms to scan daily newspapers, magazines and books. Erected in heart of congested industrial Ruhr, center's regular callers include steel and coal workers.



Marshall Plan assistance to Germany is depicted in display in exhibition hall and attracted the interest of many on Washington's Birthday, when dedication ceremonies were attended by distinguished German, US gathering.

Scale model of complete, modern American industrial plant, reproduced for the certain appeal it would have for the inhabitants of Germany's most highly-industrialized area, is detailed to visitors by a member of new center's staff.

