

HICOG Houses Its Employees

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Space, light and comfort are outstanding features of each living room.

THE UNITED STATES has erected a living monument in Frankfurt—a monument built to stand for decades—a reminder to Germany of the high standard of living earned by the people of the United States through democracy.

This monument is the HICOG Housing Project.

It was first envisioned with the shiftover of occupation responsibility from Military Government to the Department of State, when HICOG centered its administrative agencies in a Frankfurt headquarters. Though this meant increased efficiency from an administrative point of view, it was an impossible task to find adequate hous-

ing for the influx of personnel. Here is the situation which greeted planners:

Frankfurt was crammed far beyond its housing capacity as expellees, displaced persons and Germans from the rural areas sought jobs and better wages in the city. Seventy-five percent of all Frankfurt housing had been partially or completely destroyed in bomb raids; available space was loaded with an average of 1.6 to 1.9 Germans per room.

Occupation quarters, requisitioned in 1945 from the houses which remained, were in continual need of repair, and by mid-1950 many had deteriorated to a point where repairs were no longer economically justifiable.

Close to 200 quarters inhabited by HICOG personnel were considered substandard and were used only because nothing else was available.

With the HICOG move to Frankfurt, many had to be quartered in hotel rooms, often outside the city. Others drew small apartments which lacked such necessities as iceboxes, adequate heating equipment and operating sanitary facilities. Many employees were forced to leave families for months at a time in other German cities, awaiting the availability of homes.

SUCH CONDITIONS DEFLATED morale and interfered with efficient work.

In facing this problem, HICOG officials simultaneously felt it was time, by 1950, to begin vacating requisitioned property; the infant German Federal Republic should not be burdened economically with additional requisitioning.

Against this background came the decision to build the 420-unit housing project which last fall opened its doors to HICOG personnel.

From it have come many benefits:

German morale is higher because Americans are building of their own volition and paying for it.

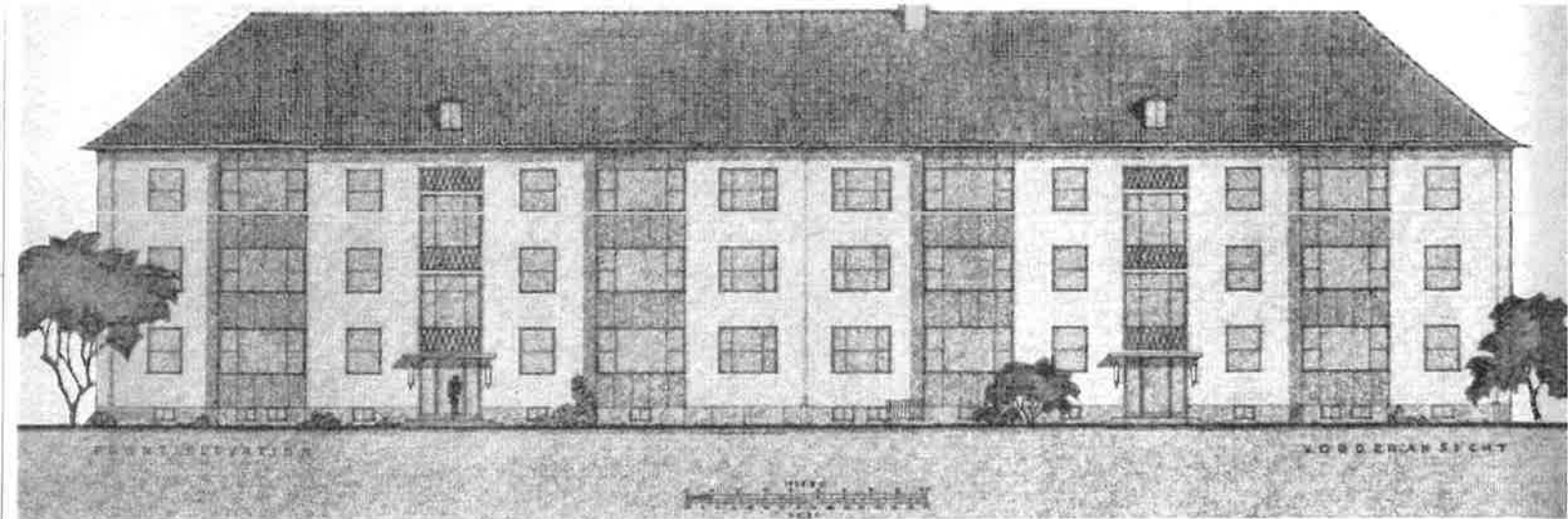
The Frankfurt housing situation looks brighter as derequisitioning of old apartments becomes a possibil-

Letter of Friendship

"In view of the successful completion of the outstanding Carl Schurz Housing Settlement I cannot but extend to you the deep gratitude of the city of Frankfurt-on-Main for the execution of this most important and widely acclaimed project." So wrote Frankfurt's Mayor Walter Kolb in a letter to US High Commissioner John J. McCloy.

"The housing project is an exemplary achievement of American and German cooperation and visible evidence of common efforts made by men of our two nations in an ideal spirit of good will.

"This American housing settlement in Frankfurt justly bears the name of a man who is famous for his ingenious accomplishments and who will, at all times, be looked upon as the prototype of a great democrat and champion of good will and understanding among nations. When those American families who are now occupying the housing settlement... return to their native country, the beautiful houses which they leave behind in Frankfurt will always remind us of the fact that friendship and cooperation alone are the basis of prosperity among the people of all nations."



Architect's drawing exterior of typical apartment in the HICOG Housing Project in Frankfurt pictures front of building.

ity and Germans are aware that the project will one day be turned over in its entirety to the city.

Moreover, the project will perhaps present a challenge to German traditionalism in the housing field. It will be a focal point and yardstick around which modern German housing may be constructed, an advancement for all concerned.

The HICOG project stands out today as the highest quality building job in Germany since the end of the war and is similarly its largest postwar housing development.

TO ACHIEVE THIS RECORD, hard work and good will were required on the part of both Germans and Americans.

Trail-blazing in German-American relations began when HICOG officials and Frankfurt authorities sat down to negotiate for a plot of land on which the project could be built.

The result was the first lease-agreement drawn up between Germans and the American occupation government, with both acting as equal parties and concessions coming from both sides of the conference table.

Twenty-four acres, approximately a quarter-mile north of the headquarters building, close to the commissary and shopping center, were granted without charge by the city for as long as the United States requires the property for housing purposes.

In return for this temporary property loan, the city will inherit the project block by block as US housing requirements diminish.

At the same time, HICOG agreed to release "those housing units which are presently under requisition in the city and which are no longer needed." It was left to HICOG to determine which units are no longer required.

Compromises were made by both parties on almost every article included in the agreement.

HICOG yielded to the city's plea of no funds in agreeing to pay for installing utilities—sewage system, streets and lighting—in the project area.

The Americans consented to conform to the city's 50-year roadway plan and to lay out and construct the streets in accordance with city specifications.

In every practicable instance HICOG assented to use of building materials produced by the partly-city-owned rubble processing company, while Frankfurt building firms and local labor were promised preference where conditions were equal.

THE CITY ASSUMED responsibility for moving a small number of truck farmers, then cultivating sections of the chosen site, to suitable farmland nearby, and further agreed to pay substantial damages for crop losses resulting from the move.

The city conceded to the planners' wishes on landscaping and architectural requirements.

In sum, the agreement was hailed in the German press as an important step on the road to fruitful democratic relations.

The city of Frankfurt had another part in this project: the city assembly passed a resolution to call the settlement the *Carl Schurz Siedlung*, after one of Germany's illustrious contributors to American history. Two new thoroughfares inside the project were christened *Ernst Schwendler Strasse* and *Jakob Leisler Strasse*.

A retrospective glance identifies all three men with the building of American tradition.

German-born Schurz served not only as US minister to Spain under President Lincoln, but also as a major general in the Union Army. Climax to a busy career came when he was named secretary of the interior under President Hays.

Schurz' name is inscribed on a bronze plaque set in a modest monument on the settlement site, presented HICOG by the city in tribute to the friendly relations sustained during the project's development.

Ernst Schwendler was the first American consul in Frankfurt, the city in which he was born.

Another Frankfurter, Jakob Leisler once served as lieutenant governor of New York.

IN ADDITION TO FRANKFURT officials, German contractors cooperated to such a laudable extent with HICOG representatives that construction often was completed before deadlines. The desire to participate in erec-

tion of the modern American settlement in many cases exceeded financial considerations.

Layout and plans for basic structure were prepared by the American project engineer, Lt. Col. George G. Davies, who also supervised construction, but HICOG sought a German architect.

Frankfurt's two architectural associations were consulted for the names of their 10 top members. Specifications and plans were submitted to them and their estimates invited on costs. This method of selection varied from the usual German procedure whereby architects compete for a drawing prize.

When blueprints and specifications had been prepared by the selected architect, all qualified contractors in the US Zone were given a chance to bid on construction.

As there are no safeguards for the builder in Germany, comparable to American bid bonds and performance bonds, each firm wanting to bid had to qualify financially as well as on the basis of past performance. All interested bidders were screened by HICOG representatives.

It was decided that firms excluded from the bidding could align themselves, if the general contractors so desired, with any of the selected bidders.

COMPETITION WAS STIFF. It was quite evident that the question of prestige and experience again motivated to a great extent concessions made by competing firms. The great majority of those selected were Frankfurt concerns. Many reliable losing contractors were able to take on sub-contracts with winners; others concentrated on obtaining contracts for outside work.

To spread contract benefit, the work was let out to four general contractors.

With workers so aligned, construction was launched with an official ground-breaking ceremony. The nearly 200 Germans and Americans there heard it emphasized that all work would be done by Germans — to aid the German economy.

An American official described the ceremony as a "significant occasion which marks another high point in the good relations between the Office of the US High Commissioner and the City of Frankfurt," and added that "the project was undertaken in pursuance of our policy to de-requisition as much housing as possible."

The ceremony closed with praise from Frankfurt's mayor for the good will of American taxpayers whose money would finance the project.

THERE WERE MANY PROBLEMS which the builders faced. It was difficult to avoid regimentation in a housing development which would contain 420 units. The solution was a garden-type layout; the 32 buildings were kept low and spread over the site at a generous distance from one another, separated by spacious lawns. Each building was ranged at an angle to guarantee it both morning and afternoon sun.

This method contrasts sharply with existing German housing developments where rigid apartment blocks are built almost wall to wall.

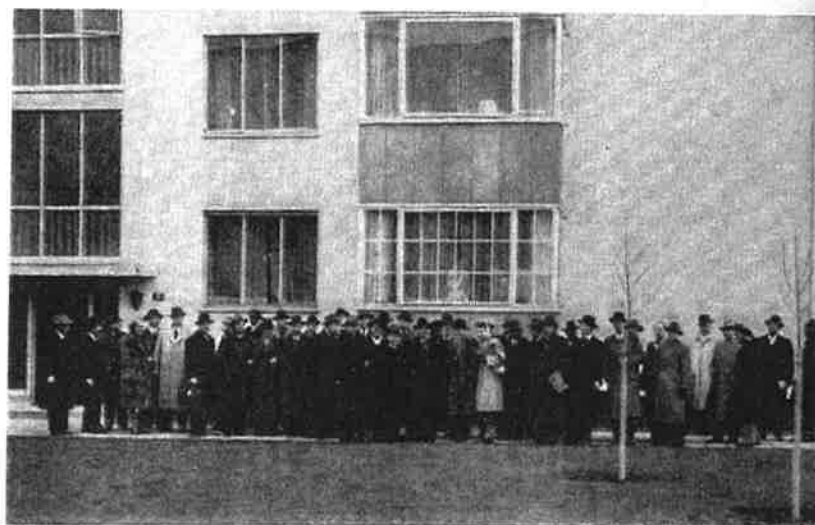
Of Spanish influence architecturally, the buildings are designed with vertical lengths of pale red or green com-

pressed rubble, in contrast with the cream-colored exteriors.

Except where absolutely necessary, roads passing in front of buildings are eliminated — a farsighted safety measure for children who can play within apartment areas without hazardous crossing of streets.

For landscaping, the 5,000,000 plants — flowers, shrubs and trees — donated by the city of Frankfurt, were set in clusters interspersed with large plots of grass. Within the scheme of landscaping and building arrangement, there have been provided emergency repair shops, play areas, tennis courts and a billeting office.

HICOG used the basic building elements available in Germany for permanent construction. Masonry, tile, structural steel and concrete went into the fundamental structure. Steel was used in all window frames as it was in doors and door frames in basements and attics. The tile roofings rest on steel frames.



Scores of German officials inspect newly-completed project.

Use of wood is limited in Germany as it is not considered permanent enough, although this opposes most US building opinion.

Used extensively in the HICOG project were building blocks, both solid and cellular, wrought from rubble scraped out of Frankfurt's ruins. Use of this material, made available by an organization jointly owned by city and private interests, aided considerably in the city's cleanup program. Project engineers believe this to be the first time reconditioned rubble has been extensively used, and it has since been employed for several other projects in and near Frankfurt.

TWO MONTHS AFTER the ground-breaking — and four weeks ahead of schedule — the framework of almost half the buildings had been completed. American officials joined German construction supervisors and laborers in a *Richtfest*, the traditional German roof-raising ceremony.

By German custom, laborers constructing a new building ask the owner to give a party or festival to "encourage" them towards completion. Should he refuse, a broom, omen of ill luck, is affixed atop the building,

rather than the good luck symbol of a beribboned tree or bough.

HICOG observed this tradition by distributing gift packages containing food and tobacco, and by serving beer after the ceremonies to the 2,500 workers gathered to hear speeches and the music of a Bavarian band.

A German speaker said the HICOG settlement was the first postwar opportunity for local builders to employ their full capacities.

Tradition was again followed with the reading of the *Richtspruch*, a poem composed and recited by a member of the carpenters' guild. The carpenters were garbed in the costumes prescribed for their trade by custom — bell-bottomed black trousers and vests, full white shirts and wide black hats.

In climax, the huge green wreath, twined with floating streamers, was hoisted into the rafters of one of the nearby buildings, after which, according to the English translation of a German newspaper article, "German workers delightedly waved their beer bottles" in approval.

AS BUILDING PROGRESSED, and interior finishing became the task, **new problems** and policies arose.

Numerous features were new to German construction and had to be carefully worked out between the project engineer and German architects, builders and manufacturers. Germans were highly receptive to all new ideas.

The maximum degree of privacy was among the first considerations in planning. Service, living and sleeping areas are completely separated.

Spaciousness in the living areas was accomplished through liberal use of built-in furnishings in bedrooms, yielding this gained space to the living room.

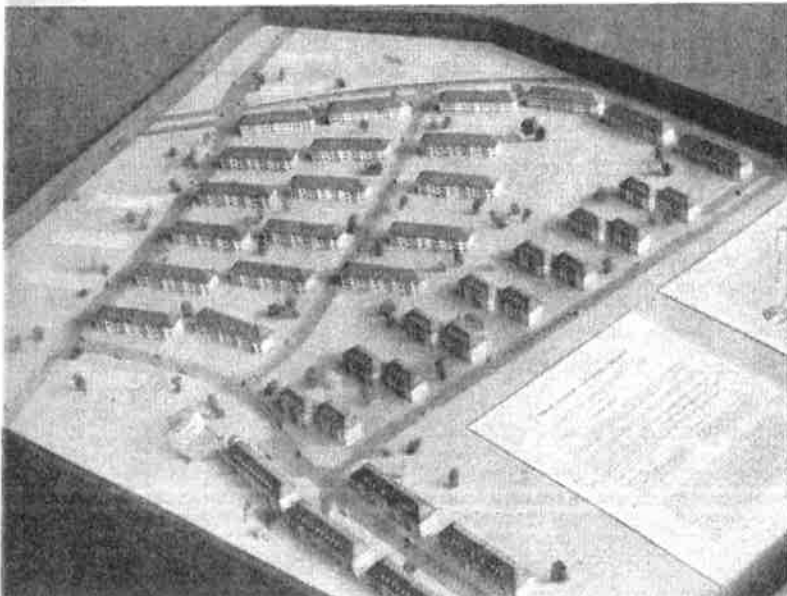
Bathrooms were completely Americanized, incorporating in one room all facilities — toilet, shower, tub, washbasin.

Many other American features were incorporated, but not without a fusing of German building ideas.

One example of American know-how which may be of far-reaching value to Germans is the US practice of standardizing window sizes, reducing the cost substantially.

Further reduction in window costs would also be possible if an American-type casement or double-hung window

Project, shown in table model, contains 72 apartments with one bedroom, 174 with two, 174 with three, totals 420 units.



Mark of friendship — Frankfurt's Mayor Walter Kolb signs as Glenn G. Wolfe, Office of Administration chief, holds pen ready. At left is Jack Lennon, project coordinator, and at right Karl Rasor, Frankfurt notary public.
(PRD-HICOG photos)

were used. The project also introduces provision for fly-screening, which is practically non-existent in Europe.

HICOG HAS EXERTED a strong influence in German kitchens through the project. The HICOG kitchen is being used in some instances as a German trade name and has created widespread interest among Germans.

The HICOG variation is a bit more elaborate than lower incomes can afford. However, it has given German manufacturers numerous ideas, and contractors who manufactured and installed the HICOG kitchens have already developed kitchens of various sizes for German use. Influenced by HICOG design, German industry will soon present a sample kitchen prefabricated down to the piping for sinks.

The HICOG kitchen is typically American, planned on a functional basis, from layout to placement of the final tile.

The entire project is heated by a system of circulating hot water, pumped from the central heating plant which services the entire area of the headquarters building. This hot water supply likewise serves the basement laundry room and the American automatic washing machines installed there on a concession basis in each building block.

One Frankfurt firm took on the complete job of furnishing the apartments, then parceled out the enormous undertaking to sub-contractors.

IN A COSTLY EFFORT to increase West Berlin employment, more than one-third of the sub-contracts were placed with manufacturers in that city. This meant an added cost of from 12 to 17 percent over the cost of US-Zone manufactured items. In addition, inspections had to be conducted in Berlin, and a transportation system worked out with great difficulty.

It turned out to be one of the toughest problems in the whole project. The difficulty of assuring compliance of Berlin manufacturers with specifications, completion

dates and coordination of transportation schedules through the Soviet Zone combined to retard the project's finishing date by several weeks.

Remaining furniture contracts were awarded to nearby manufacturers.

Careful selection as to quality and design — and creation of several new designs — went into the furnishing of each apartment. Furnishings were arranged according to 12 different layouts.

When the keys were turned over to first occupants, each apartment contained the best that mass-produced German design could afford in basic removable-type furniture, built-in furniture, rugs and draperies, table silver, chinaware, glassware and complete kitchen utensils.

TAKING STOCK UPON COMPLETION of the project, Germans and Americans alike could point to a number of benefits which evolved with the building.

Employment of German construction workers reached 2,500 at the peak of the building period; almost all of Frankfurt's skilled labor was employed. Construction speed was evenly maintained, except during the two-week building workers' strike and slowdowns in tile setting and fine-wood finishing, both of which trades lacked skilled labor.

Though project work came to a standstill, HICOG maintained a hands-off policy in the Hesse-wide strike.

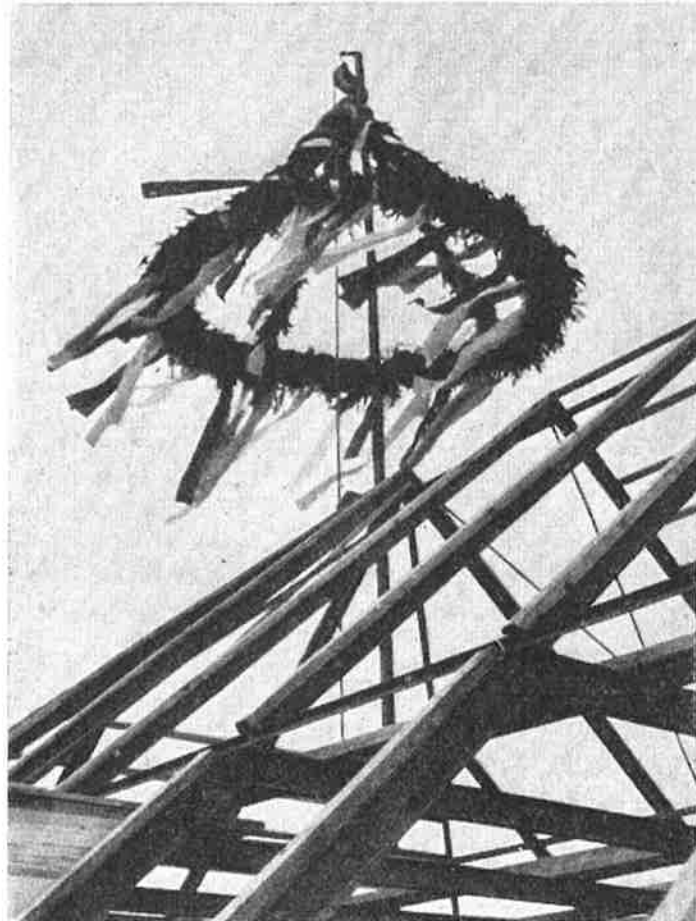
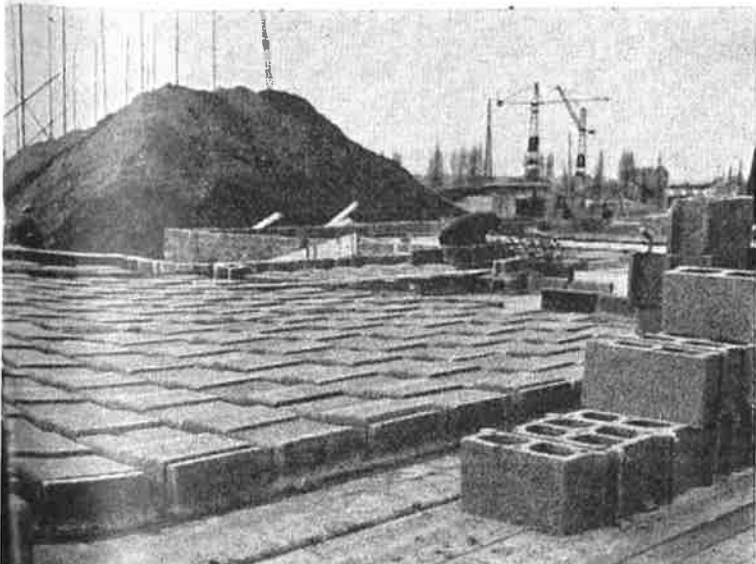
American ideas, developed by German manufacturers, in several instances were seed for German patents. Locks on the apartment entrances were later patented as were the suspension and track for the retracting sliding doors in bedroom wardrobes.

Several struggling businesses got a much-needed boost through sub-contracts. Thanks to project orders, a number of small businesses took root and expanded considerably.

Financial rules set up for bidders were relaxed in one instance to include two associations of small refugee wood-working firms. Though their financial position was weak, the two groups formed associations in order to command the necessary manpower and machinery required to produce the minimum quantity allowed in the bidding.

THAT HICOG RECEIVED remarkable value for the GARIOA (Government and Relief in Occupied Areas) counterpart funds spent would be apparent if a

Project pioneered in use of renovated rubble for building.



Beribboned wreath marks completion of building framework.

rough comparison were made between cost of the Frankfurt project and a similar one in America. Fundamental estimates — though difficult to arrive at due to variance in conditions — show a 25 percent savings on the Frankfurt buildings. Important, of course, is the lower cost of labor in Germany.

In an American city of the size of Frankfurt, no contractor or real estate firm could afford the construction as designed for HICOG. Where this settlement took root on borrowed, city-owned land, high real estate costs in the United States would require investors to build vertically rather than spread out as the HICOG project was able to do.

An equally spacious US housing development could only be erected on cheap land some distance from the metropolitan area, whereas the HICOG project is but a few minutes away from downtown Frankfurt.

HICOG's building achievement continues a source of intent interest to Frankfurt citizens. Large numbers have visited the site, while contractors, architects and builders in no way connected with the work kept close tabs on construction efforts. Tours were arranged for German newsmen as well as a home economics group.

Perhaps through the project's example, better housing will emerge where rubble marks the vast destruction of war. Perhaps the necessity of building again can be turned into an advantage for Germany's next generation if higher housing standards are given a chance to contribute to building a new, healthy mentality. +END