

AJC SPONSORS BROADCAST FROM GERMAN SOIL

Nazi Shells Fall Near Scene of Jewish GI Services Close to Aachen

Jewish religious services held by Jewish GI's on Sunday, October 29 near the captured city of Aachen, Germany—the first to be broadcast to the United States from Nazi soil—constituted an effective proclamation of the restoration of freedom of worship and equality in Hitler's country.

Explosions of German shells 200 yards away dramatically accompanied the services as listeners tuned in on a coast-to-coast network. A subsequent trans-Atlantic telephone call revealed that the program, which was arranged by the American Jewish Committee in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company, almost had to be called off because of the dangerous closeness of Nazi artillery.

Catholic and Protestant chaplains also took part in the ceremonies, which were held in the open air in a sector of the American First Army's front, marking probably the first interfaith demonstration inside Germany since the rise of Hitler. A touching note was lent by the proximity of the ruins of the Aachen synagogue, destroyed six years ago by the Nazis during the pogroms which swept Germany following the assassination of Ernst vom Rath in Paris by a Polish Jewish youngster, Herschel Grynszpan.

Chaplain Sidney M. Lefkowitz, formerly rabbi of Congregation Beth-Ahabah in Richmond, Va., led a group of fifty Jewish soldiers in the services. Afterwards, Catholic Chaplain Edward J. Waters of Rochester, N. Y. and Protestant Chaplain Bernard F. Henry of Chambersburg, Pa. made brief talks.

"We observe here not merely a religious service," Chaplain Lefkowitz declared; "it is far more than that. It is a proclamation that the days of darkness are passing . . ."

He pointed out that the service was not the first to be held in Germany, but the first to be broadcast to the world. "With the prophet we say, 'How sweet upon the mountain are the feet of the messenger of good tidings.'"

Catholic, Protestant Chaplains Speak

Catholic Chaplain Waters paid tribute to Jewish heroism and martyrdom and praised the Christians who gave shelter and protection to Jews at the risk of their own lives. He told of a Belgian priest who had sheltered a rabbi in his home for four full years.

Protestant Chaplain Henry pointed out that "actually it is not so strange that a service such as this is being held on German soil." Stating that Nazism was never able to crush the heart of man, he declared that "the tortures and death imposed upon the Jews of Germany and the enslaved of Europe have failed miserably in their real purpose."

Chaplain Henry also expressed his confidence that Jews everywhere in Europe would soon again have the opportunity to enter freely into their houses of worship.

Aachen Jewish Leader Hears Broadcast

Many comments from German-born listeners were among the hundreds of letters from the United States and Canada received in the Committee's offices praising the broadcast and asking for copies of the script. A particularly moving letter came from Karl Loewenstein, the former president of Aachen's Jewish community, now resident in New York City.

"You may imagine the deep emotion and the satisfaction," he wrote, "with which we listened to the services performed in the same city where we had lived through many happy years and where—since Hitler came to power—we had endured such cruel sufferings. It may be of interest to you that I myself was arrested in front of the burning synagogue on the tenth of November,

1938, and was taken with many of the Jews of Aachen to the Buchenwald concentration camp."

Dr. David Schoenberger, the former rabbi of the Aachen synagogue, now officiating at Temple Beth Jacob in Pontiac, Michigan, also heard the stirring broadcast. A number of correspondents reported having spent part of their lives in Aachen itself or its vicinity.

Paying tribute to the dramatic quality of the program, several letters inquired whether the noises heard were gunshots or natural static.

A good percentage of the letters came from the friends and families of servicemen stationed in Germany. In most cases the writers expressed the hope that the soldier in question was among those present at the services.

Program Extolled by *Variety*

Variety magazine, in a special editorial, described the Aachen broadcast as "a great historical moment." It further stated: "NBC has demonstrated through this broadcast, put on in cooperation with the American Jewish Committee, just how powerful an instrument for good radio can be in the post-war world."

Schools, radio stations, archives and other institutions requested copies of the script for filing and use. The words "thrilling," "uplifting," "historic," "stimulating," "truly democratic" and "touching" were among those used to describe the broadcast by both Jewish and non-Jewish listeners. Offers of contributions were made to the Committee. One man wrote:

"This is a milestone in the fight for freedom, a privilege for our brave boys on the battle fronts, and also an inspiration for us at home."

