

APPENDIX to Memo on International
Work Schemes to include German Youth

REPORT ON WORK CAMP ORGANISED IN THE FRIEDLAND REFUGEE
TRANSIT CAMP FROM 25th FEBRUARY TO 25th MARCH 1946

The idea of enlisting the help of University students from Göttingen to supplement the insufficient labour supply was put forwards by students' representatives when RS/109/IVSP was engaged in relief work in connection with the Friedland Camp. For two months and during term 50 students daily helped the refugees on the road between the border and Friedland and also within the camp administration. Each student worked in this way one day per month.

The success of this voluntary work encouraged RS/109/IVSP to suggest to the University authorities that a short-term full-time work camp during the vacations would enable work requiring more continuity to be done and would provide an opportunity of living and working together for a minimum period of a week. Despite the present need for intensive study during vacations there was an immediate and increasing response to the suggestion.

PERIOD OF CAMP

25th February to 25th March 1946.

Average Number of students at one time	14
Total number of students	39
Number of student-weeks	70
British Personnel	3

WORK

- (1) 8 Nissen barracks were reconstructed from old materials and new wooden floors were laid.
- (2) 200 yards of draining was done along the camp road sides.
- (3) 10 yards of pipe draining repaired under road when traffic had damaged same and caused surface flooding.
- (4) 2 Adrian huts (30 yards) dismantled and transported for re-erection.
- (5) 200 yards of wire fencing repaired and re-erected.

Note :

An 8-hour day was worked, but further voluntary work was undertaken, morning and evenings, when refugee traffic was behind schedule; help was then given in loading and unloading baggage and refugees.

METHOD OF ORGANISING CAMP

(See also "Conditions of Service")

Accommodation was simple in Nissen huts within the Camp. Students helped to improve the facilities, and camp organised its own cooking, cleaning, washing pots, etc., on a rota basis with permanent cooks (2 women, one British and one German). While a service leader was ultimately responsible for the work and conduct of the camp, weekly Camp Meetings were held to decide how best the organisation of the camp and work undertaken could be carried out.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES :

Dances and a concert were organised, the latter being open to the 500 camp staff.

Evening discussions on National Socialism and European Politics, Christianity and the Churches, etc., provided revealing and frank exchanges of opinions and an interesting lack of uniformity.

International sing-songs, table-tennis and chess competitions.

Facilities for reading English magazines, papers, and books of various points of view.

Visits to Göttingen Stadttheatre.

PERSONNEL

The majority were students of Göttingen University, mainly from the Medical, Jurisprudence and Theological Faculties. Most had experienced several years soldiering, and were more serious and responsible than the average student. A few had held high military ranks and most were officers.

The sense of communal living was exceptionally high in routine matters such as orderliness, punctuality and regular habit of washing, etc.

In discussion, individually and collectively there was at first a general shyness in speaking of past association in the Nazi regime, but having worked together for a day or two and realised the unofficial and international nature of I.V.S.P., they were quite anxious to open their minds to an English point of view. Politically - this should be taken with the reservations operative on all generalisations - they stood in three categories, roughly in the following percentages : 20% who had joined National Socialism with all their hearts and still felt that with an altered international attitude and the "cleaning-up" of high Party officialdom it was the best style of government for Germans; 60% who had enthusiastically accepted many of its internal techniques - youth movement, work camps, winter help, physical training, work for all, etc., - but who had disagreed with the more fanatical of its teachings and practices, though supporting the regime in general; 20% who had disagreed with the regime, mostly through mere abstention, and who had had their studies suspended for the past ten years.

As a whole, all loved the Fatherlands, and discussions on conflicting loyalties to principle and country often brought emotional, confused and troubled thinking. 50% were thinking in terms of Social Democracy for the future, the other 50% on the surface turned from politics as being dirty and were concentrating on commercial careers. Communism was practically absent, but the fear of it ever prevalent and often used as a rationalisation justifying Nazi steps. All were looking for and anxious to work for better relations with Britain and other western democracies.

The British members of the camp emphasised throughout

- (1) Disinterested service on a wider basis than mere nationalism
- (2) The cultivation of self-discipline rather than imposed discipline
- (3) The development of personal responsibility for group organisation
- (4) Open discussion and criticism of camp organisation, through a weekly camp-meeting following which democratic decisions were carried out during the week.

The opportunities of introducing young Germans to British ideas and traditions were endless and examples of tolerance in British public life were often received with an incredulous and gratifying respect.

CONCLUSION

There has been a very encouraging response to this camp, and granted similar facilities and appropriate work there would be no difficulty in developing and maintaining such camps at a high standard of work and conduct.