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No. 3

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IVSP

IVSP News :

Approach to CCG - Major Andrews is at the time of writing in London and discussing with Derek and possibly Donald ways and means of persuading the High Levels to accept the proposals for IVSP work. Meanwhile we are to go ahead, unofficially.

Youth Camp at Geldern - has received the blessing of the local Mil Gov, and plans are now I think going ahead.

John Harvey is expecting to come over in July along with H.G.Wool and perhaps Horace Alexander to lecture in the British Zone, and hopes to come three weeks or so before he needs to - i.e. about the middle of June - to visit the teams.

IVSP and FOR - I attended on Easter Monday a conference of the FOR called by Pastor Mensching at Petzen, at which I was asked to outline the development and work of IVSP. I regret to say that I was the only person during the conference to speak in English, having funk'd trusting so weighty a matter to my limited grasp of the German language. A brief account of the rest of the conference is given below.

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General News :

Pastor Mensching's Youth Peace Week is to be at Bad Pyrmont during Whit Week, from Friday to Friday. He expects about 60 German young people (of whom Ernst Hoffman will probably be one) and 10 British's from Relief Sections - Mike Rowntree of FAU is dealing with that end of it. I hope to be there for at least part of the time, and certainly when IVSP is being dealt with. Pastor Mensching hopes to have some English person who knew Pierre Ceresole to address the gathering, but if that is not possible, the session will probably be delivered between me (or someone else from the teams - probably a better German-speaker than I am) and Herr Enno Narten, Jugendpfleger in Hannover, who is a member of the FOR and who knew Pierre.

Easter Monday Conference :

It was held in the church; about 100 people were there. The first session was taken up with arrangements for the Whit Week, then I was called upon to perform and Herr Narten followed. Then we had tea (about 3,30) and reassembled to hear about Pastor Mensching's visit to the IFOR Conference at Stockholm. He said it seemed to him a miracle that he got there : he left without papers or passes of any kind - with only 1000 RM in the way of travelling accessories, and arrived by RAF plane at Copenhagen, where he had an introduction to the Swedish Embassy. His only way to explain what he was doing, he said, was to tell people about the FOR, and he had very friendly conversations, in one of which an official asked him if he really believed he would get a visa; and when he said he really did, the official decided to give him one. And so on.

But also, he told the meeting very simply that he had found great difficulty in getting about not so much because he was foreign and without papers - that was overcome in "miraculous" ways, but because he was a German. He said his people had got realise that Germany was without a friend in Europe; he was advised by a Danish Pastor with whom he stayed while in Copenhagen not to speak German on his journey through Denmark, but English; the Pastor himself said that if he had not known him to be a Christian and a pacifist he would not have given him hospitality.

And in meeting the delegates of the other countries at the conference he learned of the great bitterness and difficulty in relations with Germans. He said "our British friends find it difficult to believe that the countries which have suffered German occupation can hate Germany so much". And he had found a tremendous difference in discussing problems with the Anglo-Saxons and the Continentals - it was much freer with the former. He emphasised two points

- (1) that the most important thing for them now was not pacifism and anti-militarism but making friends in a hostile world ("I have spent my whole life unceasingly trying to make friends" he said). And one of the difficulties is that people say "Ah, yes, They're trying to make a comeback now, by sending their pacifists and left-wingers to insinuate themselves into our friendship and prepare the way for the others".
- (2) Friendship was particularly necessary now with the eastern peoples. "And we haven't much time."

It was a sober conference, but not without its enthusiasm and hope, and I think would stimulate the German people there to do something about it.

Other points were short messages from one or two Quakers, among the Elizabeth Fox Howard who is now in Pymont in charge of the Quaker Rest Home there, and a typically American address by a Baptist pastor from Detroit Michigan who is on a tour to find out the needs of Germany for American churches' supply organisation. He was called Hoover; whether he was connected with the other one I don't know.

The conference finished with the reading by Pastor Mensching of three letters from people who couldn't be there on the subject "How can I become a better Reconciler", and a final contribution on the same subject by another Pastor.

People from Göttingen, Hannover, Pymont, Bielefeld and Münster were there. There had already been a somewhat similar conference at Cologne.

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David L. Sainty