

I. V. S. P.  
SUMMER SCHEMES, 1946  
MESCHÉDE

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R E P O R T

STATISTICS

The Scheme ran for eight weeks, from 5th.Aug. to 30th.Sept. During this time 55 volunteers served; the majority for two consecutive weeks and 15 for at least four consecutive weeks. Students working on the Scheme totalled 25 (Law 3; Philosophy 3; Economics 4; Mathematics 3; Theology 3; Medicine 5; Languages 1; Geology 1; Biology 1; History 1). The others included 10 Ostflüchtlingers, 2 Nurses, 1 Interpreter, 1 Journalist, 1 Draughtsman, 1 Business-man, 1 Metal-worker, 1 Farmer, 9 Schoolboys, 1 Housewife, 2 Commercial Workers. 11 of the volunteers were women. The eldest volunteer was 60, the youngest 16; the average age over the whole period being 24.

7 British volunteers (IVSP members) served at different times and the leadership of the Scheme was shared by two of them: the second period of leadership commencing 28th.August.

THE JOB

During last winter the town of Meschede was flooded by the outfall-water from the Hennetal-sperre being too much for the river Henne. The river Ruhr, which receives the Henne near the town-centre, was also swollen the result being that the town was divided into four sections by the flood-water.

Arrangements for river-regulation were put in hand by Mil.Gov. and the contractors who accepted the work estimated that 1000 men with modern equipment commencing work in March would finish before November 46. By the summer the number of workmen was about 30 and the proffered help of an IVSP Scheme was eagerly accepted both by the town authorities and the contractors.

Two operations were to be carried out: a new cutting to obviate a wide bend in the Ruhr and a similar work in connection with the Henne. The work on the Ruhr had been started but the site for the 'new' Henne was still virgin soil, and IVSP was entrusted with the task of 'moving a river'.

The initial stage was clearance: trees were felled and the turf removed from an area of about 20 x 70 yds., this turf being stacked by the side of the workings. The second stage was excavating and removing the soil to a depth varying from 3 ft. to 5 ft. from the cleared space.

This work was all of the 'Pick & Shovel' variety, though the pulling of loaded trucks brings the word 'Horse' into the description.

For the last three weeks of the scheme volunteers were taken off the direct work of river-digging and transferred to the subsidiary work of making the foundations for a new building to replace one standing in the way of the new river course. The main part of this work was the cleaning of bricks which, though not hard, was not very congenial although it did allow for continual and constructive conversation.

Being employed by a firm of contractors was quite a satisfactory arrangement and all went well. During one week there were a number of young volunteers who found the work too heavy and boring for them and needed spurring to greater efforts: but on the whole the 'gang' worked very well. The German foreman in charge of our work would direct operations but would not attempt to 'ginger up' anybody not doing their fair share of work. His attitude was that the men were volunteers and the person responsible for their work was the IVSP scheme-leader. However the engineer-in-charge expressed himself as being well satisfied with the amount and quality of the work done. This satisfaction was shown in a concrete form by the firm volunteering to pay 'skilled-workers' wages instead of 'unskilled' rates.

The total number of 'man-hours' worked during the scheme was 5.475.

### ACCOMODATION

The town authorities repaired a large house attached to the Evangelical Church for the use of the scheme; although the repairs were speeded up especially for the benefit of IVSP it was also to the benefit of homeless people who were to be housed there on completion of the scheme. Three days before the scheme opened the building lacked doors, windows, walls and ceilings but after a few uncomfortable days it seemed that luxury abounded.

### EQUIPMENT

Much of the household equipment was provided on loan from the town and remainder from BRC sources: much help was given by RS.109.IVSP in Menden. The furniture and the kitchen utensils were eventually passed on for the use of the homeless people in the town.

### FOOD

By virtue of the type of work being done by the men they were entitled to German civilian heavy-workers rations. These alone would have been insufficient to enable them to do their work properly but supplementary food from BRC sources provided the necessary calories.

### FINANCE

Because IVSP does not work for its own financial gain it was decided to make a gift to the town of Meschede of the whole of the wages earned by the volunteers (approx. 3.600 RM) and it was arranged that the money should be paid over directly by the contractors to the authorities. In return the town agreed to pay the food, insurance and medical expenses incurred by the scheme and in addition gave a contribution towards the cost of volunteers railway fares for both the Meschede scheme (which were not heavy) and the Hannover conference. It was agreed with the town authorities that the balance of the money after all expenses had been met should be used for the benefit of the refugees in the town.

### ORGANISATION

The scheme was run in accordance with the IVSP principles. The Leader and Head Sister were previously appointed and on this scheme were both British. The function of the Leader was to ascertain the wishes of the volunteers and act as their representative and to be responsible for the smooth running of the scheme; the Head Sister was in charge of domestic arrangements and to attend to the welfare of the volunteers in co-operation with the Leader.

The only compulsory duty was a rota for washing-up after the evening meal; for any other tasks volunteers came forward on their own initiative. House-meetings were held each Friday on a democratic basis to which all suggestions and criticisms were brought. At each meeting a program for the following week was arranged and a representative for the IVSP Winter Conference was elected: nine representatives (including one women) were elected

### LEISURE

Organised discussions were held under the following titles: Why Democracy?; Responsibility of Christianity for the War; The Possibility of educating people to an appreciation of Art; The Philosophy of Nietzsche.

Twice the Oberkreisdirektor visited the scheme and on each occasion gave a talk both of which were followed by lively discussion: his subjects being German History between the Wars and Germany during and after the recent War.

Political interest was keen and several visits were made to local electing meetings.

At two musical evenings held in the town to which volunteers were invited representatives of IVSP were given the opportunity to speak about the aims and ideals of our organisation to a very receptive audience.

A small library of English books and periodicals was build up and was well used.

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A suggestion by the contractors was the arrangement of a Sunday excursion. Accompanied by the foreman and the engineer-in-charge the volunteers travelled by bus on a grand tour which included a visit to the Möhne and Sorpe Talsperren..

On three occasions parties, including a dance, were held in town and for the last week-end a variety show was produced by the volunteers. Talent in the group was of a high standard and 'home-made' entertainment was provided on several occasions in addition to 'song-evenings'.

At a final dinner to which all those who had helped to make the scheme possible were invited, the Burgermeister expressed his gratitude for the service to the community rendered by the volunteers and the hope that next year IVSP could continue with the Henne-regulation.

#### DIFFICULTIES

A particular difficulty of the scheme was the bad feeling which arose between the volunteers and one of the sisters at one time. After an appeal had been made to both sides to practise mutual tolerance a better spirit seemed to obtain and the scheme continued smoothly.

#### SUGGESTIONS

To enable a scheme to begin smoothly it is very necessary for the leader to make the arrangements from the beginning: this is better than trying to pick up the strings from some other organiser.

Before accepting any piece of work for a scheme it is necessary to know all details. At Meschede a mistake in organising gave the erroneous impression that the work could and should be finished by October. Was the work done the best use for an IVSP scheme?

The Type of work and age of volunteers should be considered together: Younger people to lighter work.

Food on the schemes must not provide the main incentive for service: there is a danger when ordinary rations are supplemented.

No particular type of volunteer (e.g. student) should predominate in any one week

#### CONCLUSION

That the work played the part in a longterm policy but lost some of its value by being part of a two-year plan and not something of immediate use. That the communal living and working of German and English volunteers made a big impression on the German volunteers. That the democratic way of life as seen in the working of the scheme provided much food for thought. That a truly International scheme in Germany as soon as possible will be well received.

Charles Balchin

R. Eric Rodham

7th.Oct 46.  
Duisburg