

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE FOR PEACE
I. V. S. P.

" P i c k a n d S h o v e l i n G e r m a n y "

An account of the work in Germany in 1946

(A) B A C K G R O U N D

By the beginning of 1946 IVSP had three relief teams in Germany helping Displaced Persons and German Refugees. The work of the 12 volunteers, men and women in each of these teams was not the hard manual work, traditional to the IVSP; liaison between officials of the Military Government and those of the German administration, distributing bulk supplies, transport of the sick, youth work, a certain amount of individual casework - these were their duties as Relief Workers.

An opportunity to get their jackets off to hard manual work came to members of one of the teams working near Göttingen in the spring of 1946. About 50 students from Göttingen University nearby, already friends of the team, were volunteering daily to help carry luggage for some of the German refugees pouring over the Zonal frontier. A new transit camp was being built for these refugees, and there at **FRIEDLAND** grew up the first IVSP "Pick and Shovel" service in Germany.

At Friedland during the month of March 1946, fourteen students shared their humble living quarters in the refugee camp with three British IVSP relief workers, working eight hours and more a day, eating, sleeping, enjoying their social life together. Eight huts were erected; two others taken down from another site for re-erection in the Friedland camp, and essential fencing and draining carried out.

Encouraged by the outstanding success of the first German Scheme, and by the interest shown by the Education Branch of the Control Commission in the experiment, the IVSP decided to organise four further schemes in the British Zone in the summer, and one more was organised in Berlin. The latter was necessarily in many respects different from those in the Zone.

(B) S U M M E R S C H E M E S

(1) Location, Duration and Size of Schemes
(See table at end of report)

(2) The Work

All the work was useful and aimed at helping someone other than the volunteers on the scheme - e.g. refugees, children, aged or sick, the community as a whole.

All the work was of the hard, manual variety - unskilled - e.g. digging (sand and soil); carrying and loading (peat); cutting, chopping and bundling wood; cleaning bricks and mixing concrete; demolition.

Excepting the most ambitious project - helping to cut a canal to divert the river Henne - all the work was left completed.

A 48-hour working week was adhered to, with as far as possible alternative wet-weather work.

The foreman was either the leader of the scheme, a delegated volunteer, or any employee of the

contractor or Town authority.

At times the "sisters" were able to take part in the outside work, although their work was usually indoors, cooking, sewing, washing, cleaning &c.

With very few exceptions the volunteers worked well, and at the end of the scheme the responsible officials expressed their satisfaction with the amount and quality of the work done.

In the one case where the work was paid for by a contractor, the "skilled-" and not the "unskilled-" workers' rates were paid after the first week.

It was stated that the 15 - 17 age group at one scheme, - i.e. those who had not seen any active service

- worked, on the whole, with more diligence than the older volunteers of 17 - 19 all of whom had served in the German forces.

(3) Food

Volunteers obtained the Heavy-workers' ration.

Food was paid for in all cases except Hamburg, where voluntary subscriptions met the cost, by the Town authority locally.

Rations were supplemented by food supplied through the British Red Cross Relief Sections.

Even though far more than the normal German ration, the food was found to be only just adequate.

The

conclusion was that the German Heavy-workers' ration, unsupplemented from black-market or other sources, is not sufficient to enable a man to do really heavy work. The "sisters" produced excellent meals from the food available.

Shortage of food in the first three weeks of the Hamburg scheme caused some discontent.

(4) Accommodation

In all four schemes accommodation was adequate - a good, accessible tented camp for Geldern; the top

floor of a school-building, used as refugee accommodation for the peat-diggers of Rendsburg; and the luxury of a house to themselves for the canal-diggers of Meschede. This house which had been a bomb-

wrecked building, had been specially repaired for the IVSP by the Town authority, and one beneficial result of the scheme was that refugee families were able to move in directly the scheme moved out.

The least satisfactory accommodation was in the Children's Holiday Home at Hamburg, where twenty beds were crowded into one room for the men's dormitory. This should be avoided at all costs in future

schemes.

(5) Equipment

Furniture, crockery, beds, blankets, and tools were all supplied on loan by the Town authority, supplemented by the local Mil. Gov. and by Brit. Red Cross Relief Teams.

(6) Expenses

Day to day running expenses were met out of IVSP funds. Food and insurance costs in all cases, except

Hamburg, where they were met by local subscriptions, were met by the local Town authority.

The heaviest expense incurred was volunteers' railway fares, one third of which they paid themselves. Of the total 2.600 RM which had to be met, 1.400 RM were collected from voluntary subscriptions, and 1.200 RM were subscribed by the Town authorities.

The money earned at Meschede, some 3.600 RM was handed over as a gift to the local Town authority.

The latter responded that the money would be used to assist refugees in the town, and contributed a considerable sum to defray railway fare expenses.

Expenses in the Berlin scheme were negligible.

The total cost of the summer schemes to IVSP was approx. £ 16.

(7) Organisation

Each volunteer had to apply in writing on a special application form before being accepted on any service.

The schemes were organised as far as possible on a democratic basis according to IVSP principles.

The

leader and headsister were appointed by IVSP, and in the circumstances peculiar to the present situation in Germany, they were British personnel with a considerable amount of experience in IVSP life and work.

The function of the leader was to represent volunteers, to assess their wishes and the "group-feeling" about questions of work and the use of leisure, to exercise a little guidance, to keep the records of the scheme, and to maintain contact with British Mil. Gov. officials. He had also to write reports on each of the individual volunteers.

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The function of the head-sister was to deal with all questions of food, to superintend in the kitchen house, to assign duties to the sisters, and to look after as far as possible, in co-operation with the leader, the welfare and comfort of the volunteers.

The minimum of compulsory duties were assigned, such as rotas for "early rising" or washing up; for any other tasks volunteers came forward on their own initiative.

At the weekly "house-meetings" full opportunity was afforded for discussion of internal affairs, the voicing of complaints, criticisms and suggestions; and a representative elected to attend the IVSP conference in Hanover at the end of October. Altogether 36 representatives were elected.

A further "staff-meeting" of adults was held during the first "Youth Scheme" period of the camp at Geldern.

Each scheme kept log books, recording events day by day. Each, also kept "autobiography books" where for the interest of the others, volunteers could record the facts of their own careers.

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If requested the leader supplied a certificate to the volunteer that he or she had served with the IVSP a certain period.

(8) Leisure

i) Organised Discussions.

These were mostly introduced by a volunteer, though sometimes an outsider was invited. They included religious, political, cultural, and philosophical subjects, industry, and current problems of the day. Much intelligent thought and interest was shown in them, and they were often continued in the next day's work.

ii) Literature.

Newspapers, periodicals and books in English, German and a few in French were available in the "Common Room" of each scheme. Songs suitable for a possible song-book were collected

iii) Excursions.

Visits were paid at weekends to local beauty spots and places of interest.

iv) Entertainment's.

Musical evenings, parties, "home-made" shows, visits to theatres, concerts and cinemas were features of the evening programmes of all schemes, together with indoor and outdoor games and sports.

Participation on leisure-time activities was purely optional, but in fact everyone joined in.

(9) Visitors

The schemes aroused a good deal of local interest, and it was usual for the Mayor and Town Clerk or Town Youth Adviser to pay one or more visits to the scheme. Heads of youth organisations, representatives of societies with outlooks similar to the IVSP, and the chairman of the IVSP himself were also included among the visitors.

(10) Support

The Education Branch of the Control Commission, supporting the schemes had made available the possibility of volunteers travelling on military trains; and the possibility of getting equipment from Army sources.

Local Military Government Detachments were found to be interested and gave active support on occasions.

Relief Sections, not only IVSP but Friends Relief Service, Salvation Army and Don Suisse gave invaluable assistance with transport and food, and helped to solve individual difficulties.

Local Town authorities readily accepted the services of the IVSP in the spirit in which they were offered, and relations with individual Germans - shopkeepers, contractors and officials, and friends were of the best.

Above all, the good-will of the volunteers themselves provided the mainstay and support of the schemes.

(11) Comments

- i) It was generally agreed that there were too few volunteers of other nations on the schemes - inevitable in the present circumstances. Whilst this tended to whet the appetites of many volunteers for experience of really international work-camps it also tended to give the impression - at least to the young people in the "Youth Scheme" period at Geldern - that this was just like any other camp they had known.
- ii) There were too many students together, especially from Göttingen. In Order to avoid this it will be necessary to bring into IVSP all classes of German society.
- iii) Although it takes a stronger influence than 3 or 4 English people living and working together with some fifteen ex-German army officers for a week or a fortnight to begin permanently to destroy their militaristic attitude, there was much to be learnt from the democratic way of life as seen in the working of the schemes. Doubts and criticisms were often dispelled by freely expressing them.
- iv) The fact that some of the volunteers must have come for the wrong motives was more than counteracted by the big impression that communal living and working together of German and English made, the one on the other.
- v) It is especially necessary to organise camps where there is plenty of work for the "sisters" to do. Many young women whose interest has been aroused in the IVSP ideas cannot be absorbed into schemes where the main job is hard physical work.
- vi) The leaders of future German schemes should continue to be selected from countries outside Germany; or, if German persons are elected, they should have served abroad on a similar IVSP work camp.
- vii) The leader should as far as possible, share the task of making the preliminary organisational arrangements. It cannot be overemphasised that precise details of the job in hand are vital to the success of the scheme. The type of work and age of the volunteers should be considered together - i.e. light work for a youth camp &c. If the leader delegates any responsible task, such as financial or catering arrangements, it should be to two people, co-operating in the carrying out of the task.

- viii) Volunteers should be encouraged to stay for two weeks. One week is too short a time to accomplish anything but getting volunteers used to the idea of IVSP. In the second week, when volunteers have to teach the new-comers the ways of the scheme, the most permanent impression is made. It is usually only students who can afford to spend so much of their holidays on a scheme; when ordinary workers have to concentrate on laying in stocks of winter fuel, or doing their share of clearing up the debris in their own home-towns. The acute shortage of male labour probably prevents any possibility of getting local authorities to give special leave to workers for the purpose of taking part in IVSP schemes. But an effort should be made as stated in para ii) above, to bring into IVSP all classes of German society.
- ix) Much incidental good has been accomplished as a result of the schemes. The Kindergarten opened by the "sisters" on the Rendsburg Scheme is being continued, and the accommodation and equipment of the same scheme is being made into a Youth House. Volunteers living in Cologne have come back from the four various schemes and have started work in a hospital in their spare time. Refugee families, formerly homeless have inherited the accommodation and equipment gathered for the scheme by the town of Meschede.
- x) The study of Esperanto has been very strongly recommended by one scheme.

(12) Conclusion

The schemes have been in every way successful. The ideals of IVSP seem to fit exactly the needs of the young people of Germany today. Indeed there is just the danger of an extremely popular movement

developing quite rapidly. The growth of the movement should be very closely watched by members of

IVSP from other lands, particularly the IVSP Relief Teams working in Germany, from whom personnel could perhaps once again be drawn when further schemes are organised.

Such schemes should, however be much more international, and they should take place fairly soon if the good impressions that this summer's services have undoubtedly made are to be consolidated, as consolidated they must be.

Meanwhile the spirit of IVSP can best be expressed through regional groups who might undertake spare-time "pick and shovel" work for the good of their community, in the way in which the Cologne group is working. But here again, at least 50% of the people constituting such a group should have worked on an IVSP scheme, in order to prevent dilution of the right spirit of the work.

Finally such groups should be knit together by some central "office" where information and plans can be exchanged. Such a function is at present carried out by the IVSP Advisory Officer for Germany, who has also been responsible for the organising of the Summer Schemes, and of the conference at Hanover. It is to be hoped that he will be able gradually to hand these functions over to German volunteers, elected for such purpose by the Germans who have experienced IVSP life and work.

B. Eastland
IVSP Advisory Officer

HQ 5 British Red Cross Commission,
(Civilian Relief)
B. A. O. R. - Germany
(21) Vlotho

1) Location, Duration and Size of Schemes											
Location	Duration		Particulars of Volunteers								
	Dates	No. of Weeks	Number of German Volunteers								No. of Brit. Vol.
			M	W	Σ	Stu	Ref	Wor	Sch	Age	
Rendsburg (Schleswig-Holstein)	5 Aug - 22 Sep	7	25	15	40	20	9	11	-	26	3
Twisteden (Geldern, near Dutch border)	a) Youth scheme 5 - 26 Aug	3	34	5	39					16	
	b) Adult scheme 26 Aug - 14 Sep	3	8	4	12					24	
	Averages (some stayed over both periods)	6	38	7	45	10	-	4	31	20	6
Meschede (Sauerland, south of Lippstadt)	5 Aug - 30 Sep	8	44	11	55	25	10	11	9	24	7
Hamburg	5 Aug - 29 Sep	8	63	19	82	48	2	24	8	26	3 + 1 Amer.
Total			170	52	222	103	21	50	48	24,3	14
Average		7,3			55						3,5
Berlin	10 Aug - 10 Sep	4	8	8	16	1	-	6	9	25	2

M = Men
W = Women
Age
Σ = Total

Stu = Students
Ref =
Wor = Workers

Sch = Scholars
Refugees
Age = Average