

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE FOR PEACE

34, Broadway,
London, S.W.1

TO VOLUNTEERS GOING ON SERVICE IN GERMANY

As there are several special points that relate only to Germany, I have incorporated them in a special letter.

RELIEF WORK & "PICK AND SHOVEL" SERVICES

You will certainly know that the German Branch and the recognition that international work camps have obtained in Germany was initiated by the IVSP team at Friedland when they ran "unofficial" service with some German students. The "unofficial" soon become "official" and IVSP were encouraged by the authorities, particularly the Education Branch of the C.C.G., to organise more camps. From these camps the German Branch soon emerged, and is today taking full responsibility for the camps, although Basil Eastland still helps in making arrangements with the British authorities.

There are, therefore, two distinct and yet related types of IVSP service in operation in the British Zone. The IVSP teams at Schleswig, Duisburg and Berlin and the work camps. The advantages of this fact are quite considerable but it does on occasion give rise to misunderstandings due to essential and inevitable differences in the two types of service.

STATUS OF RELIEF TEAMS

To operate at all, relief teams have to accept a certain status and certain privileges from the authorities who would not otherwise allow the teams to work.

Relief teams, to carry out their task at all, cannot rely on ordinary civilian transport and have to have their own transport to get round their areas. Frequently their work involves them in negotiations with military and civilian authorities at fairly high levels, and is it a fact that on these occasions uniform is necessary.

The teams are obliged to accept the billets given them by the authorities, and because it is considered that a relief worker should be used full time on relief work, the teams do not do their own cooking and catering, and they draw rations from the British authorities which are, of course, much more generous than German rations. On work camps in Germany or anywhere else, these conditions are, of course, quite foreign to IVSP, and it has happened that a work-camper has spent a night with one or other of the relief teams after a spell of some weeks at a work camp under primitive and hard conditions, and has felt some surprise or criticism at the difference in standard.

I do not think that the relief teams would wish it to be thought that they are above criticism on this or any other score, but I think it is important for work-campers to be aware of the inevitable differences that must exist, and to remember that

- (a) relief teams are "permanent", and that means that in any case conditions of living have to be more stable than on temporary work camps;
- (b) most members of the relief teams take part in the work camps which each team is organising in its own area;
- (c) it is much easier to get IVSP 'across' when you can go to extreme length to demonstrate that you are prepared to work alongside anyone on any job, than when you have to get it across in spite of handicaps. The relief teams have succeeded in getting IVSP across, otherwise we should not now be sending volunteers out to the numerous work camps, and they do continually review the questions of 'privileges' to see if it would be possible for them to be reduced.

YOUR STATUS AS A WORK-CAMPER

The authorities are recognising the value of international work camps in Germany and give IVSP free travel for selected volunteers. Your status is therefore, that of 'a member of the Civilian Control Commission working with IVSP under the Council of British Societies for Relief abroad'. Your rank is 'RELIEF OFFICER' and you will travel as an Officer.

Now this gesture on the part of the authorities reduces the amount in "Pooled Fares" by quite a large sum, but it does bring some difficulties in its wake. I have mentioned that the relief teams have to accept certain privileges in order to facilitate their job. You are entitled legally to the same privileges but we believe that if you accept them they will tend to prevent you doing your job.

An IVSP camp endeavours to create a community in which all members are equal and it is therefore essential to dissolve as far as humanly possible the obstacles that stand in the way of bringing this about. One obstacle would arise if some volunteers came to the camp, and were enabled to live on a higher material level than others. The difference in the standard of living between different countries today is so marked that it may not be possible to prevent this completely but a conscious effort to do so on the part of the 'privileged' volunteers is a first step. I mention this point because it is not always possible to appreciate what is a 'privilege' as conditions are so different in Germany. Perhaps the following notes may help if you have not been out there recently :

MONEY :

You are allowed by the authorities to take out £ 5 sterling which should be changed in BAFVS on arrival at the nearest CCG pay office. BAFVS are the currency of the occupational authorities and is not valid in German shops etc. On top of the £ 5 you are allowed to take out some 'silver'. Meals are provided free on the journey. You will be given a small amount of pocket money on the camps in Marks to cover postage etc. and you are asked not to change any money into BAFVS as you could only spend it in such places as NAAFI & OFFICERS' CLUBS : Here you can get cigarettes at low prices, sweets etc., but German volunteers cannot. At work camps in other countries such facilities would not exist for anyone, and only exist in Germany by virtue of the 'occupation'. A gesture from you in renouncing this privilege may go unnoticed but an acceptance of it would certainly not help to bring about that equality we are striving for.

FOOD :

If cutting out smoking is too drastic, it is suggested that you take your "ration" of cigarettes with you. You will be given a C.C.G. ration book and instructions as to what to do with this the other end will be supplied to you. In any case, all food is pooled, and you may like to take with you the amount of food you are allowed to take out of the country - i.e. not more than 1 lb. of foodstuffs for every two days of your visit provided that the total weight of food (rationed and unrationed) does not exceed 15 lbs, or the weight of any one article of food 2 lbs. Soap is likely to be a commodity that will be in short supply and you are allowed to take out with you up to 2 lbs.

The camps are only possible to run because of the very generous gifts of food in bulk that have been made to the German Branch, especially from the AFSC.

KIT AND EQUIPMENT :

Please see general letter about insuring this - you are advised to do so. Travel as light as possible and don't leave things unattended on stations.

POSTAGE - HOME :

In the French and American Zones German post is the only method, but in the British Zone you can post letters through the CCG (1½ d for a letter - 2½ d airmail).

RETURN TRAVEL :

It is very likely that for your return journey you can get a ticket (free) right to your home town. Therefore, only book a single ticket for your journey to London, and notify the nearest IVSP relief team on arrival (see directions) of the date you travel back to England, the number of your passport and the address to which you want to travel.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS OF SERVICE IN GERMANY :

This is the last point and I hope that you will not feel that it is an unreasonable one.

There is no unrestricted travel in Germany and only individuals can get into the country if they are granted an Entry Permit by the authorities for a recognised purpose. IVSP gets you into Germany for the purpose of taking part in a work camp.

Last summer there were many foreign volunteers in Germany sponsored by IVSP but because so many had friends they wanted to contact, or because they were curious to see Germany, a very large proportion spent a considerable time travelling on private business. Not all of them spent the whole of their agreed time on the camp, and some spent more of their time on 'travel' than they did on IVSP work.

The result or possible results of such excursions are that

- (a) the authorities if they realised the position might take the line that the movement cannot control its personnel and that they would withdraw the facilities they grant to us;
- (b) the work camp movement in Germany becomes half work camp and half something else, and the reputation and value of the movement decreases.

The point was discussed at length last autumn by the National Secretaries meeting and an international agreement was made to the effect that volunteers before going to Germany would be asked to sign a special 'condition of service' about this point (see below). I hope that you will feel able to do this and would ask you to bear in mind that -

- i. it does not mean that you cannot visit friends who happen to be in the neighbourhood of the camp you are on;
- ii. that it does not rule out special instances being considered as an exception to the rule;
- iii. in spite of the admitted value of personal contacts, it is the job of IVSP to build up an international work camp movement, and by spending your time on the camps you will be helping Germany as a whole;
- iv. it is possible that you may find other volunteers easy-going on this aspect but please don't feel that the whole thing is just red tape which does not apply because of that.

Yours sincerely,

DEREK EDWARDS

PLEASE SIGN & RETURN TO :

34 Broadway,
London, S.W.1

CONDITIONS OF GERMAN SERVICE 1948

1. I understand IVSP is responsible for my visit in Germany to the authorities and that my permit has been granted for the specific purpose of taking part in an IVSP service. I agree, therefore, not to undertake journeys in Germany for private reasons and to journey directly to and from the service. (Should very unusual or compassionate circumstances arise exceptions to this could be considered, but permission must first be obtained from the leader of the service and from Basil Eastland who would have to clear it with the authorities.)

2. I can be in London ready to start on

.....
at 6 p.m. and can remain on service until

.....
Extension of this period can only be arranged through the leader of the service and Basil Eastland.

SIGNED :

DATE :

PLEASE RETAIN THIS COPY :

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