

**A FINAL REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORK CAMP  
IN NÜRNBERG, GERMANY**

10 June - 14 August, 1948

Sponsor : American Friends Service Committee

**INTRODUCTION : AFSC WORK CAMPS IN GERMANY**

Preliminary Investigations :

In line with the present trend in AFSC policy of moving into areas of service rather than putting the main emphasis on direct relief measures, which are only healing the wounds of the past but not really getting at the basic causes, Douglas Steere and Steve Cary, representing the AFSC, in their discussions with officials of Education and Religious Affairs of Military Government in Berlin, in October, 1947, brought up the subject of the possibility of launching into work camps in the American Zone of occupied Germany. Education and Religious Affairs people were quite receptive to the ideas presented, and suggested that immediate work begin on drawing up concrete plans for the anticipated program. The finished plans were to be presented to Mil. Gov. officials for their final OK.

Douglas Steere and Steve Cary then contacted Ogden Hannaford, who was at that time representing AFSC work camps in Europe, and related to him the discussions which they had with the Berlin officials. Upon their request to Mil. Gov., a military permit was issued which allowed, to come into Germany to investigate possibilities for work camps in the American Zone. After some preliminary discussions with various people in Germany, Ogden felt that he was in a position to make the survey and asked Heinrich Carstens (German Branch of SCI) and myself, then working with the relief team in Koblenz, Germany, to accompany him.

After spending about ten days visiting different suggested projects throughout the American Zone, three projects were tentatively decided upon :

1. Clearing rubble from a burned-out building which was to be rebuilt to temporarily house wandering youth; located in Würzburg.
2. Lending assistance in helping to lay the groundwork for what is eventually intended to be a Jugendsiedlung (Youth community) for young men without homes, families, or a trade; located in Nürnberg.
3. Clearing rubble from a partly destroyed building to be rebuilt as a youth center; located in Kassel.

Cooperation with IZD (German branch of Service Civil International) :

During the latter part of January, 1948, I was invited to attend the "Arbeitsausschuß" meeting of the German Branch of SCI, at their regular meeting which was being held in Duisburg. One of the main points of discussion was the proposed AFSC (Quaker) camps in the American Zone of Germany. There seemed to be a difference of opinion on the exact role that the AFSC should play in coming into Germany with work camps. There were those who felt that the role of AFSC should be to introduce or open new areas for IZD expansion; others felt that each organization should work as closely as possible with the other, but nevertheless retain its own identity; still others felt that AFSC's entrance into Germany was violating the Askov understanding which suggested that no member organization should establish work camps where it would appear to be competing with already established or local organizations.

The whole question was finally referred to a small committee which worked out what we thought was a satisfactory arrangement. Briefly stated, this was as follows :

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- a. It was agreed that AFSC and IZD should share equal responsibility for the operation of camps in the American Zone.
- b. To facilitate this cooperative action, it was suggested that a committee of three, including the IZD secretary, myself, and one other chosen by us, be established to carry out this cooperation.

However, it was felt by those in Paris that such an arrangement at this time was not practical and would lead to more confusion than we were in a position to meet. Therefore, at a meeting held in Freiburg later on Willy Begert, from the International Secretariat; Ralph Hegnauer, SCI; Heinrich Carstens and Herbert Böttger, IZD; and Ogden Hannaford and myself, AFSC, reached the following Decision :

AFSC camps in cooperation with IZD :

- a. AFSC carries full responsibility in relation to Mil. Gov.
- b. AFSC responsible for policy and Administration of camp life.
- c. A coordinating committee (consisting of Weber, Böttger, and others they might wish to add) to consult on such matters as the selection of personnel, distribution of Food, camp dates, and insurance.

#### Invitations and Entry Permits for volunteers :

Foreign volunteers were recruited through their respective secretariats who sent us a list of their names and personnel data. This data was then submitted to the Youth Activities section of Mil. Gov. in Munich, who passed it on to the Exit-Entry Division, then in Berlin. At the same time we (AFSC) sent out invitations to these selected people, which they were to use when applying to their local consulates for permits to enter Germany.

German volunteers came through the German secretariat or were recommended by other agencies in Germany. For those volunteers not coming through the IZD, invitations were sent out by us (AFSC) inviting them to come to our camps. A large number of those volunteers came from recommendations given by our AFSC units in Germany.

#### Choice of Leaders :

It was hoped in the selection of leaders that we could find people able to fulfil some of the following qualifications :

1. Previous experience (if possible, in a work camp) in areas of the work camp movement, including some knowledge of AFSC relationship to SCI.
2. Some background of the "Quaker way of life" and its everyday application.
3. Some experience in living and working in post-war Germany, coupled if possible with a fairly good knowledge of the German language.
4. Ability, through camp council or other camp governing agencies, to develop to the fullest the real meaning of group participation.

It was hoped that the leadership in the camps would be of the type that could give strength and guidance in the direction of the camp, but remain in the background as much as possible in the general daily operation of the camp.

#### Food and Finance :

Over half of our food needs were met by the purchase of supplies from AFSC sources. The German market was able to furnish the camps with a fairly good assortment of fresh fruits and vegetables. It

was also possible to exchange certain food items against certain other items which the IZD had received of in their shipments from Denmark and Switzerland.

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Due to the money reform which occurred the latter part of June, it was necessary for AFSC to finance the complete operation of the camps. For full details on this matter please refer to the section on Finances of Camp, which appears in the Appendix.

## **NÜRNBERG CAMP AS "WE" KNEW IT**

The Nürnberg camp was in many respects quite different from most of the work camps which had been held earlier. It was an attempt to integrate a work camp community into the surrounding community (some 34 young men from Friedensdorf and Jugenddorf) in such a manner as to make all feel a part of one close community.

There are several ways that one might go about writing a report, however, it is my feeling that the best reports are those which the volunteers themselves write. Therefore I will attempt to take excerpts from the many interesting letters which a number of you have written and let "you" write the report of the Nürnberg camp, my job to be only to fill in those missing links which are needed to make the story complete.

What was this "Jugendsiedlung" later known as "Friedensdorf"? Where had the idea gotten started? Who was behind it? These and many other questions are still probably a bit vague in the minds of some of you.

During the International Youth Conference held in Munich in 1947 quite a bit of discussion took place on how best to meet some of the very acute problems of German youth today, the problem of thousands of young men, taken from their homes at an early age, directly into the army. When the war was over they were alone in a society struggling to exist, a lost generation, no family, home, or trade, nothing to look forward to in the future but to get what they could while the getting was good.

Roaming, shoved from one city to another, sought oft times by the police for petty thefts or crossing of borders illegally or being without an identification card. Young men disillusioned as to their own role in today's society, cynical at times, unable to understand why they should spend the whole day working for a 5 RM note which meant nothing when they could spend an hour or so in Black Market dealings and make double or triple that amount and in goods.

These were the circumstances of Youth; the job was to find some way in which their latent talents might be developed, and, at the same time, to give them a feeling of importance and of belonging to a family, a community, and to a very important part of society.

Faced with this situation, a group of leading men of Munich got together and formed a committee to work on the problem. Near Nürnberg, on what were earlier the camping grounds of the big Nazi Party rallies, were available land, water, and gas installations already laid. Why not use this land, which had played such an important part in furthering the ideas of Fascism, why not use it now to further the ideas of peace and brotherhood among men?

Investigation of the area showed the possibility of obtaining the type of clay necessary to build "rammed earth" houses; it was felt that due to the shortage of building materials in Germany the lost art of building "rammed earth" houses should be revived. Plans then went forward on drawing up the architectural blueprints, estimating the amounts and the cost of building materials and getting the approval of the Reconstruction Commission of Bavaria to purchase the needed supplies. The anticipated money reform, which retarded almost all types of activity to a greater or lesser degree, made it impossible for any work to commence on the project itself before the middle of May.

It was during the earlier planning of the project that we (AFSC) contacted this "planning committee", having learned of the plans and ideas which they had in mind from the Youth activities officials of Military Government of Bavaria. This body had referred us to the Bayerische Jugendring, which was taking some interest in the affair as well as giving some financial support.

The "planning committee" asked us to meet with them and out of this meeting, when we were able to hear more details of the project, came the desire from the committee to have us help with an International Work Camp for the coming summer. It was felt that such an International Work Camp would not only lend an international character to the project itself but that the aims and purposes of such a camp would be of great value in strengthening and giving form to the purposes of the proposed "Jugendsiedlung". Our camp would be the very beginning of the project, and those boys who would form the core of such a project would be those who had had the opportunity of close association with an international group dedicated to building for peace. It was with this background that the Nürnberg camp opened on June 10th, having been postponed for 10 days due to the buildings not being in order to house the camp. From now on, the volunteers themselves will "take over the writing of this report", beginning with a short description of the camp's location by one of the volunteers who came shortly after its opening.

"The hostel where the work camp is lodged is in fact just about ten minutes walk beyond the end of the car line which leads out of Nürnberg to the south-east. The highway before the hostel is now a dead end and about 200 meters beyond it stand the unfinished stone towers which mark the entrance to a colossal arena (Märzfeld) which Hitler was building between 1934 and 1938 as a center for mass meetings and military reviews. Between the two central towers stand three groups of three steel flag masts surmounted by eagles. The enclosed area I would estimate at about three times the size of Soldiers Field in Chicago. But on the stretch of pavement between the hostel and that anachronistic skyline are eight couples of square dancers and two volley-ball teams in full swing. As of this Saturday night, the work camp is made up of Germans, British, Swedish, Finnish, Swiss, Dutch, Danish, Indonesian, and American. --- I also notice among the volley-ball teams some of the "Friedensdorf" boys --- part of a group of about thirty homeless German youth who have come here with a few capable leaders, supplied by the city, to begin the construction of a "Peace Village". In this way they will have a chance to do their apprenticeship in a family atmosphere, and eventually, I am told, build smaller homes which they may call their own and settle down if they choose.

During working hours we help them on the construction of their first house (to hold a master carpenter, his wife and four apprentices) or in the cultivation of the large vegetable garden."

"--- This hostel, which was to have been only temporary accommodation while the new "Friedensdorf" was being built, consists of three communicating wooden, two-story buildings, two of which were bomb damaged, all of which were badly ravaged by occupying armies and vandals. One of the barracks is used by the city as a hostel for delinquent youth; there are some twenty or thirty of these boys and it is in the second story of their barracks that we are living, sharing their washrooms and, at the moment, their eating facilities. Of the "Friedensdorfers" there is now a nucleus of about ten boys; more are expected later as soon as accommodations are ready. Both the boys from the hostel and from "Friedensdorf" share in almost all of our activities outside of our weekly house meeting."

"All this time the camp had been growing no fewer. In fact, on this Sunday morning, we had to rearrange things to make more sleeping space for the girls. But it is not so bad to have an oversupply of females since the other institutions, "Friedensdorf" and "Jugendhof", have very few attached. Speaking of the reform school, many of us have felt deeply about the fact that we have such close contact and relations with the boys here, even though they will not all go over to "that we must do all we can" to bring them a fresh view while we are here, and also what material help we can manage. The first assistance was an unavoidable one : there was only one small kitchen, at the beginning of the camp, for the whole establishment, and we had no choice but to put all our weekly supplies into the big pot and supplement their diet. We of course, gained on the fresh vegetables from their provisions from the city. But even so, we probably should not have been able to leave them with the diet they had before our camp started and go on with a much better one ourselves. The poorness of the diet before was known to me : it cost me four or five chocolate bars a day to keep alive those first two weeks. ---

When the "Friedensdorf" got a new kitchen, all the "Friedensdorf" people moved out and into their newly repaired provisional quarters in the two other wings of the building where they will live and carry on the apprenticeship training of the boys until the new houses of the village itself are built. And we all started eating over at the new dining room. This brought up the problem of the reform school boys again, who are really not bad boys - they have just come across borders with no papers or been picked up for vagrancy (no families), or, in the worst cases, were caught in petty black market dealings. They had had very bad food once and we were afraid they would have it again now that we had left. But since the currency reform so many more things have been on the unrationed market that it is possible to fill out their diet better now. We make occasional extra supplements such as today half a loaf of white bread for each boy from a shipment we received through GYA. We take as much personal interest in the boys as time allows and the girls who do housework try to work in mending and washing for them. We had a wonderful opportunity to get to know them while we were working out on the ill-fated building project."

"It rained almost every day for the last four weeks. --- Now the weather has turned fine again, and work is being tackled with more joy, especially as we have had a few days of work on the Baustelle, which brings us together, raking newly ploughed land, a long line of us discussing, singing, or meditating in good fellowship. There is now more readiness to understand each other and a good contact with the boys of "Friedensdorf" and "Jugendhof" has been started. We are sharing many things with them and helping in as many ways as possible. The growing spirit of the camp can be noticed particularly in the discussions which arise spontaneously at work."

"In general, however, I think that the work project lost stimulus when it was no longer possible to work at building the peace village. Due to the change in currency, "Friedensdorf" found itself without enough money to continue laying the foundations --- aside from the great disappointment and loss to them, it narrowed the scope of the work camps work, and tended to lessen the challenge. Gardening developed into one of the main jobs, and since "Friedensdorf" was trying to get all of its land under cultivation as quickly as possible, it meant clearing away trash and rubble, grubbing up some stumps, breaking through heavy turf and high weeds and spading over the earth before laying it off in beds for planting. The campers have helped with all of this and now the girls have been doing a good deal of transplanting and thinning as well as weeding. Truly fine and delicious radishes have been the only fruit of our labor that we have tasted as yet. But everything looks thriving. I hope that the rain will soon stop and good strong sunshine feed the plants for a time to assure good yields all over Germany to provide enough for the coming winter."

"Other jobs have been : brick recover from the ruins, cleaning and hauling to the builders, housework, washing and mending for the boys of both "Friedensdorf" and "Jugendhof"."

"Vague organization within the camp has been one of the key factors in making it difficult for all to really participate to our fullest. I was talking with one of the English girls and she described a little sing evening we had last night because five people were leaving today. "It wasn't right that the singing should have sprung up just by a couple of people starting over in one corner. It was messy; I think it is far nicer to have one person say a couple of words and suggest and start the songs." And this has been the theme through many of the activities of the camp. Work didn't seem to have definite hours to start and to stop. --- You weren't sure just what you would do for the day, meal hours were not always regular. Arrivals and departures would come unexpectedly. This is not a complaint. I think it comes more as a self-evaluation. In our striving for democracy we have not been clear on the snags that can be struck. So we go along waiting for people to take initiative and suddenly the camp is over."

"The meeting last night turned to the subject of purpose and leadership in these camps. I think I am right in saying the general opinion and most certainly the AFSC opinion, was the "spiritual growth" or "the development of the individual" towards peace was the main purpose. I use quotes for these terms

because I am not clear as to their exact meaning. I am all for them so far as I can see, but not only in camps; and I felt that this line of thought tended to cloud the issue.

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It certainly took the emphasis away from the practical work of the camp. On the question of leadership, the leader asked, "Is a leader necessary?" He felt that individuals should find for themselves what their best contribution to the life and work of a camp would be, and if they did not find it (with help from all the other), then it had best not be pushed. The responsibility for help and advice, as for the general activity of the group should be shared by all, and only administrative matters be delegated as one person's special responsibility. I opposed the implication that there is an antithesis in leadership and individual development, and urged that proper leadership should make it easier for the individual by knowing the job and the background and being able to advise and negotiate. I urged the appointment of a leader as a first essential and thought a deputy advisable from the training and the division of responsibility standpoints. --- I could see no obstacle, given the right attitudes, in that set-up, to the most suitable folk playing the most suitable roles in a camp; nor to a chance of leadership, nor to the acceptance of full communal responsibility for activities. I think this view was shared by many, yet I know there is still a divergence of opinion. I think the leader would have rather seen a group drift till it sorted itself out than get together under an appointed leader. That he felt would give the maximum opportunity of spiritual growth and integration. I don't quite get it."

"One of my main Failures was in presentation. I didn't put it straight enough at the first meeting for business what "we Quakers" mean by democracy. I did not take time to talk it over deeply with each camper, and I did not see to it that it was presented and explained at each subsequent meeting. The usual "taking too much for granted" plus laziness plus may be a little resentment over nobody loving my brain child. The main point I wanted to make clear to each was that each was to consider himself leader in as much as the leader was the fatherly figure to others, a stimulus to thought, also a planner, each should always think of how things could better be run. But if everybody can get in the act and everybody is always thinking of how things could be better, argue some, then you never know just what you want. But I think this is good, being wide open to ideas of change and improvement as they come. This is the high offer of the Quaker type of Democracy; every dreamer has his day and each dreamer is encouraged to dream further. Also there is no moral limit to the amount of responsibility one may undertake. I say moral limit meaning nothing that says, you don't have to go further; this is your job and your place.

But this letter poses a new problem in community living, that of people not being protected by the system from undue pangs of conscience, at least as far as relatively unimportant but nonetheless necessary daily chores are concerned. We had discouragingly little response to requests for help in organizing just these jobs in Nürnberg. If I had it to do again, considering better preliminary presentation of my idea of democracy and every-member leadership, I'd try to make clear the difference between group policy-making and key-man carrying out of these policies. Thus I would put to the group the decisions on how in general the system for doing the various jobs should be set up and then ask for and suggest the people who should do the setting up itself.

But I had not done all this and what to do about it; there were ideas I had picked up. "Leadership from alongside" was one; go out after the ones I thought could influence the group and convince them of the program I held to be the best. Make brilliant cohesive speeches at special meetings, turn gay and exercise a bright cheery effect on the group. But I couldn't see it that way, may be because I still had faith in each one's bringing it out himself one fine day, and then we'd have something indeed. ---

Then I got panicky and made a frantic cry for committees on work, food, finance, evenings, and program for the German boys around us in camp. A few of us were getting snowed under with it all, and the others weren't reaping the benefits of helping. Committees had been tried before but then as now they had remained so nebulous, (signing your name to the committee on which you would like to serve) that many did not at all, and there was some feeling against the method if I remember correctly. But we caught a few on our line at that, enough to ease us over the hump. But they did OK finally, and the general tone was still democracy."

"Meeting for worship was held in the girls dorm this morning. We have no common room as yet so either the boys or the girls' room must be adapted when it is not possible to have it out doors in the lovely little grove of birch trees a few hundred feet from the camp. Perhaps I had forgotten a little how fresh and moving the meetings for worship in a work-camp can be; at least I have been most struck with the vitality of this group here. According to the leader, everyone arrived here not only expecting that a quarter-hour would be set aside each morning for meditation, but looking forward to it as one of the principal things this camp had to offer. These meetings have become the core of the camp life and spirit, simply because that is the way the volunteers wanted it to be."

"I would also say that for the first time I have felt some significance for me in the short silent meeting before breakfast, which I have attended on every occasion when I had got the upper hand on sleep. I gather also that the Sunday meetings for worship have been particularly valuable to those who go. Although there are few Quakers here, Quaker thought does predominate; it is a harmonious, democratic group and I feel quite at home in it."

"Camp has consciously tried to deepen and strengthen the lives of its members. Campers have tried to build bonds of unity among themselves that are stronger than separating influences of language differences, nationality and race. Each day the entire group has met for silent meditation. In openness of spirit all have sought the basic source of peace, unity and motivation in our own lives and in society today. Discussions have grown spontaneously and through leadership of authoritative speakers. International planning, politics and economics, war and peace, race and religion have been laid open for examination. By giving talks on their home countries, campers have acquainted each other with new lands."

"During the day, the weather had improved somewhat and in the afternoon the sun had come out from time to time; some of us went outside and others soon followed. We tramped along looking for a suitable place, but it took some time to decide since no place seemed quite good enough. Finally we sat down along the light-coloured limestone blocks which were destined to be used some day for the construction of Märzfeld, and which lie around now uselessly, and forgotten, accusing in their implied message of warning. I believe that these stones and ruins had helped to determine a good portion of the entire mood of the camp. But back to the discussion. We deposited ourselves on blankets, and Wolf, one of the German boys, translated an article on Pacifism into German. Several of the boys from "Friedensdorf" were present, and to them such a meeting was something new. They looked around as if to secure our consent to participate. A discussion about the basic of pacifism was then to follow, and although Hollis took the first step and encouraged others to follow, none wished to declare himself. And when something was said it evidenced partially the existing misunderstanding, partially we talked past each other. It was simply our first attempt at having a discussion. Soon we had to yield to darkness and the coolness of the evening. In our commonroom, where it was comfortably warm, we continued the discussion in smaller circles. During the following week we continued to occupy ourselves with these basic questions, and gradually we emerged from our cocoons."

"Nearly every evening is booked up with talks, lectures, visits, folk dancing, parties, singing etc. In almost all of these activities the boys and staff from "Jugendhof" and "Friedensdorf" join us. --- On two days of last week, groups from the camp and the boys spent the day at the Palace of Justice at the session of the Nazi trials. Many of us found the proceeding too soothing so that the time was spent in fighting sleep. The effect of sitting on a soft seat for hours, listening through head-phones to a droning voice was usually too much for tired campers. But it was an experience none the less, and if it caused any of us to think with sympathy on the psychological and moral position of these wretched prisoners, then it was not entirely a wasted day."

"We had another visitor this week - an Estonian from the local DP (displaced persons) camp, who worked with us for a day on the project and joined in two of our evening activities. We are glad that



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